

So this is, as the series' objectives prescribe, a new narrative history, written by an expert in the field, offering an authoritative and accessible survey for students and readers alike. This is an excellent model of how it should be done, and I am sure that it will be not only students who find this a valuable reference work.

HELLENISTIC LITERATURE

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Kathryn Gutzwiller, *A Guide to Hellenistic Literature*. Blackwell Guides to Classical Literature. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007. Pp. xv + 261, incl. 11 black-and-white figures, 3 maps, notes, chronological tables of the Diadoch dynasties, suggested reading, bibliography and index. ISBN 978-0-631-23321-3. GBP19.99.

This book in the Blackwell series of Guides is a reviewer's dream: the style eloquent and clear, the structure firm and logical, the subject matter perfectly designed for its target audience, and the final product elegantly produced. Gutzwiller has spent a long time in the field of Hellenistic literature and produced works of major importance.¹ Throughout the book one is aware of her knowledge, expertise and insights. In line with the series, the book aims to provide 'an introduction to the literature of the Hellenistic age for students of classics and for general readers with an interest in the ancient world' (p. xi). In addition to literary works in prose and verse, texts of a technical nature are discussed. Although the author defines her goal as 'to inform rather than to argue positions or develop interpretations' (p. xi), her treatment of authors and texts presents considered views and assessments that are based on up-to-date developments in scholarship.

Chapter 1, 'History and Culture' (pp. 1-25), traces the events that led to the creation of the Hellenistic age from the death of Alexander (323 BC) to the battle of Actium (31 BC) (pp. 1-4) and gives an account of the new political, social, economic and cultural aspects of the kingdoms of the Diadochs, the 'Successors' of Alexander: the Antigonids in Macedonia and Greece (pp. 4-8), the Seleucids in Antioch and southern Asia Minor (pp. 8-12), the Attalids in Pergamum and northern Asia Minor (pp. 12-16), and the Ptolemies of Alexandria and Egypt (pp. 16-25). Amid the wars, political intrigues, assassinations, polygamous and incestuous marriages, and the creation of dynastic rulers and their worship, one encounters the more enduring intellectual and artistic products. In Greece, for instance, we read of the Colossus of

¹ K. J. Gutzwiller, *Studies in the Hellenistic Epyllion* (Meisenheim am Glan 1981); *Theocritus' Pastoral Analogies: The Formation of a Genre* (Madison 1991); K. J. Gutzwiller, *Poetic Garlands: Hellenistic Epigrams in Context* (Berkeley 1998); K. J. Gutzwiller (ed.), *The New Posidippus: A Hellenistic Poetry Book* (Oxford 2005).

Rhodes (built to celebrate the failed siege of Demetrius Poliorcetes in 305-304 BC), the royal tombs at Vergina (perhaps including that of Philip II), the earliest surviving Greek literary papyrus, with a description of Orphic cosmology (from a tomb at Derveni, *ca.* 340-330 BC), poets (Aratus of Soli, Timon of Phlius, Menander of Athens, Rhianus of Crete), philosophers (Bion of Borysthenes, Menedemus of Eretria, Aristotle's successor Theophrastus, the founders of the great philosophical schools: Diogenes, Epicurus, Zeno, Pyrrho), the historian Polybius, and buildings (the Stoa of Attalus). Among the achievements of Seleucid Asia, there was the creation of the city of Antioch and Eutychides' statue of Tychē, who was to figure prominently in Hellenistic religion and thought. Attalid Pergamum became famous for its imposing Acropolis (with the Great Altar of Zeus) and library of 200 000 scrolls written on *charta pergamena* ('parchment'), studied by scholars such as Crates of Mallus, and donated to Cleopatra by Mark Antony. But Ptolemaic Egypt, with its cultural centre Alexandria, was preeminent in all fields. Its numerous achievers and achievements, expanded on in the following chapters, deservedly gave the alternative name 'Alexandrian' to the age.

Chapter 2, 'Aesthetics and Style' (pp. 26-49), deals with the 'new aesthetic sensibilities' (p. 26) and their expression in emerging genres: mime, idyll, epyllion, literary epigram, prose treatises on scientific subjects, and didactic poetry. Most of this literature was now written to be read, rather than heard during an oral performance at, for example, a symposium. The poet's role as inspired vehicle of divine inspiration yielded to a new criterion of a poet's worth: *technē* ('skill'). Examples of this 'modernist movement' (p. 30) are discussed: epigrams by Posidippus of Pella from the recently discovered Milan papyrus (pp. 29f.), Erinna of Teos (pp. 30f.), Asclepiades of Samos (pp. 31f.), Callimachus (pp. 33-35), Theocritus (pp. 35f.) and Meleager of Gadara (p. 36). The poets' skill was demonstrated by the art, learning and versatility with which they employed metre, dialect and diction (pp. 36-43). In this new aesthetic, there was the ever-present awareness of literature as a written text committed to papyrus scrolls and preserved in the library.

Chapter 3, 'Authors and Genres' (pp. 50-167), is the longest chapter and the core of the book. Major authors are first dealt with: Menander (pp. 50-60), Callimachus (pp. 60-74), Apollonius of Rhodes (pp. 74-84), Theocritus and the other bucolic poets (pp. 84-97). Then follows discussion of genres: didactic poetry (pp. 97-106), epigrams (pp. 106-20), dramatic poetry (pp. 120-31), parodic and philosophical literature (pp. 131-44), historiography represented by Polybius (pp. 144-53), and technical prose writing (pp. 154-67). Treatment of the writers consists of a brief biography, details of their reception, discussion of the contents and nature of their works, and an evaluation. Important observations are imparted in this rich and varied account. Gutzwiller firmly argues against the persistent and pervasive view that Hellenistic literature is dry and deliberately obscure, conceived as a revolutionary reaction against and a break with the older Greek literature, and based

solely on the principle of *l'art pour l'art*.² Instead, close analysis of the texts and their contexts reveals a creative engagement with the past at the levels of genre, form, theme and language, a variety of styles and themes and, amid all the fictional *personae*, an individual voice. Awareness of the past is balanced with awareness of the present: poets react to the work of their contemporaries as well as to the patronage, whims and commissions of the ruling Ptolemies. Writers, immersed in the knowledge explosion, create works that demand a reciprocal effort from the reader.

The exponents of didactic poetry, Aratus and Nicander, are presented in the same way as the individual authors in the first half of the chapter. In the case of the large collection of surviving epigrams, the ‘only poetic genre originally written to be read’ (p. 107), Gutzwiller has perforce been highly selective. After briefly relating the origin and development of the literary epigram, the types of epigram and the various anthologies, she focuses on sepulchral epigrams (Callimachus, Posidippus, Anyte of Tanagra, Leonidas of Tarentum, Dioscorides, Meleager), dedicatory epigrams (Callimachus, Leonidas, Nossis of Locris, Posidippus, Antipater of Sidon), erotic epigrams (Asclepiades of Samos, Dioscorides, Rhianus of Crete, Meleager), satiric epigrams (Alcaeus of Messene), and ‘serial’ epigrams with their variations on the same theme (Antipater of Sidon, Aulus Licinius Archias of Antioch—defended by Cicero in 62 BC—and Meleager). Although tragedy, comedy and satyr plays continued to be performed in the Hellenistic age, little has survived. Mime was popular, the main exponents being Theocritus and Herodas (or Herondas). A canon of the seven top playwrights came into being, called the Pleiad after the seven-star constellation: the (six) ‘most likely original members of the group’ were Alexander of Aetolia, Lycophron of Chalcis, Homerus of Byzantium, Sosiphanes of Syracuse, Sositheus of Troadic Alexandria, Philicus of Athens (p. 121). But little more than some titles of their works is known. The same applies to Rhinthon, who is credited with thirty-eight plays; Sciras of Tarentum, of whose output only one title is known; and Sopater of Paphos. Other playwrights were more fortunate. Of the *Exagōgē* (*Exodus*) by Ezechiel, a Hellenized Jew, 269 lines survive; and the *Alexandra*, on Cassandra, by Lycophron runs to 1500 lines.

Next to be examined is parodic literature that emerged in the fifth century, most of it concentrated around the Homeric epics. Among the parodists and comic-satiric writers mentioned are Euboeus of Paros, Archestratus of Gela, Matro of Pitane, Machon of Corinth, and the unknown author of the Homeric parody ‘The Battle of the Frogs and Mice’. The Athenian tradition of *parrhasia* (‘free speech’) exercised in Old Comedy, which often included scurrilous attacks on public figures, was somewhat curtailed under the Ptolemies. Sotades of Maroneia (Thrace) was imprisoned or dumped at sea in a lead jar for casting aspersions on the marriage of Ptolemy II to his sister Arsinoe. Cynic and Sceptic philosophers also made use of improvised and orally delivered witticisms and parody. Such were Crates of Thebes who, with his wife Hipparchia (an early ‘feminist’), lived according to the teachings of Diogenes and

² Cf. also M. Fantuzzi and R. Hunter, *Tradition and Innovation in Hellenistic Poetry* (Cambridge 2004).

challenged the accepted view of the good life. Timon of Phlius, a Sceptic, wrote epic, tragedy, comedy, cinaedic poetry (a kind of mime delivered in the persona of a homosexual) and lampoons (*silloi*), of which sixty-five fragments survive and in which he parodies philosophers for their dogmatism. Phoenix of Colophon and Cercidas of Megalopolis wrote moralizing poetry without the critical and satiric tone. Other philosophical schools (Peripatetics, Academics, Stoics, Epicureans) produced a large corpus of prose works. Important Peripatetic writers were Theophrastus of Eresus (Aristotle's successor), Satyrus of Callatia, Strato of Lampsacus and Praxiphanes (one of the 'Telchines' attacked by Callimachus). Among Stoic philosophers we encounter Zeno of Citium, Chrysippus of Soli, Posidonius of Apamea, and among the Epicureans Epicurus and Philodemus of Gadara, fragments of whose works were recovered from the charred papyri found at the Villa dei Papiri at Herculaneum. Polybius, as the most important prose writer of the Hellenistic age, has a section to himself. Gutzwiller's account ought to be required reading for students of Graeco-Roman historiography. She discusses the events in his life, his works, his conception of historiography, his target audience, his view of historical events, elements of his style (for example, the use of a narrator, 'dryness', repetition), his importance as a source for the events of the second century, and his achievement as a historian.

Although the technical writings of the Hellenistic period are largely unfamiliar to most classicists and unlikely to be read in the original Greek except by researchers in the particular field, Gutzwiller treats them with interest and on a par with the other genres. The fields covered are mathematics (Euclid, Archimedes, Apollonius of Perge), astronomy (Autolycus of Pitane, Aristarchus of Samos, Hipparchus of Nicaea, Theodosius of Bithynia), mechanics (Ctesibius of Alexandria, Biton, Philo of Byzantium), medicine (Hippocrates of Samos, Praxagoras of Cos, Herophilus of Chalcedon, Erasistratus of Ceos, Philinus of Cos, Apollonius of Citium) and geography (Eratosthenes of Cyrene, Agatharchides of Cnidus, Artemidorus of Ephesus). In each case, important discoveries are noted. The chapter ends with a look at paradoxographical works: accounts and descriptions of incredible and marvellous phenomena, creatures and plants.

Chapter 4, 'Topics in Hellenistic Literature' (pp. 168-222), gathers together all the themes or topics treated by the vast array of writers. Gutzwiller restates the positive evaluation of Hellenistic literature and culture in recent research as 'a worthy heir to high classicism but also strongly reminiscent of our own diverse and technically specialized culture' (pp. 168f.; see also p. 178). First come learning and innovation (pp. 169-78), in which Gutzwiller discusses the use of literary allusion, genre innovation (including the well-known mixing of genres) and learned content by Hellenistic poets. Whereas chapter 2 deals with the theoretical basis of Hellenistic literature, the discussion here focuses on the creative practice of individual poets such as Callimachus, Theocritus, Posidippus, Apollonius, and even Archimedes of Syracuse and Eratosthenes, who are credited with epigrams on complex mathematical problems. The second theme to be discussed is the 'writteness' of the text and its

physical communication by means of a papyrus ‘book’ (pp. 178-88). While oral performance persisted, the increasing use of writing and the book came to be reflected as theme. Poets became aware of the advantages of a written poem: the visual impact of words and structure, the separation from a one-off live performance and resultant wider audience, the personification of the poem as a separate *persona*. There were further advantages in gathering several poems together in one collection, either by the same poet or by many poets: variety and variation, the grouping of poems by genre or theme, the creation of fictional contexts and voices. Again, Gutzwiller illustrates her account with specific examples.

The next theme is the social and political background ‘thematized’ in Hellenistic literature (pp. 188-201). Contrary to older perceptions of an ivory tower literature, Gutzwiller argues here (as in *Poetic Garlands*) for interpreting the literature in its context, reflecting actual social conditions and ills, closely involved with Ptolemaic ideology and policy, literary expectations and personal conduct (especially the brother-sister marriages), although frequently disguised in obscure myth or oblique allusion. Women play a more prominent role as patrons, poets and literary subjects. The Ptolemaic queens feature prominently for promoting the arts or being benefactors, or achieving something heroic in their own right (such as the victories in chariot racing by Berenice I, Arsinoe II and a later Berenice in the new Posidippian epigrams), or as ‘fully sexualized beings and powerful rulers’, thus anticipating Cleopatra VII. The myth of the Amazons is revised to become a paradigm of female military prowess. Ordinary Alexandrian wives are depicted (Theoc. *Id.* 15). Female poets such as Erinna, Anyte, Nossis, Moero and Hedyle, freed by the book from the constraints of male-dominated public performance, give a female *persona* and new perspectives to poetic genres. Major male poets themselves begin to write about fictional females. The chapter closes with a discussion of displacement, cultural identity, friendship and romantic relationships.

The theme of ‘the critical impulse in literature and art’ follows (pp. 202-13). This deals with literary theory and criticism and the views and terminology of the new aesthetic: *alētheia* (truth), *enargeia* (vividness); *ekphrasis* (literary treatment of visual art); *psychagōgia* (enthralment); *phantasia* (mental visualization); *charactērēs* (categories of style: grand, elegant, plain, forceful), developed by Theophrastus;³ *poēta-poiēsis-poiēma* (creative individual, form and content, style), formulated by Neoptolemus of Parium, but perhaps also going back to Theophrastus; *eklogē* (choice of words) and *synthesis* (composition), expounded by Philodemus and Dionysius of Halicarnassus; *allegorēsis* (allegory), especially among Stoics such as Crates; and *technopaignia* (riddles, enigmas). Other theorists advocated the grand style and euphony (Andromenides, Pausimachus) and genre-mixing (Heracleodorus). The last section treats ‘Reception in Rome’ (pp. 213-22), the ways in which Hellenistic literature, thought and culture were transferred to Rome. Here the names are more familiar: Ennius, Lucilius, Carneades, Polybius, Parthenius, Cinna, Catullus, Gallus,

³ Gutzwiller discusses Demetrius’ *On Style* and dates it to the early first century BC on the grounds that the contents reflect Hellenistic critical thinking (p. 206).

Vergil, Philodemus and Siro. Generally, Roman writers of the imperial era (for example, Quintilian, ‘Longinus’) devalued Hellenistic literature, preferring instead the works of early and classical Greece for their particular purposes. This legacy has now, through critical and intense study in recent years, been largely dispelled.

This book is likely to dispel more of the inherited prejudice against Hellenistic literature. The guide is rich in detail and succinct comments, yet very readable. The great number of names in the book (reflected in this review) might create the impression of a gallery of museum exhibits. This is not the case at all: Gutzwiller manages to give life (albeit brief in most cases) to the prominent writers of this period, always giving their towns of provenance like surnames and adding known detail, up-to-date information and intelligent comment. This book not only will fit very well into a list of required reading for students in classical civilization and comparative literature courses, but also will not be out of place in the library of advanced students and scholars.⁴

⁴ I noted only a few minor errors: ‘Homeric ending . . . *hualoio*’ (p. 42) should read ‘Homeric genitive ending . . . *hualoio*’; ‘Oh’ should be spelled ‘O’ (as vocative, not exclamation): ‘Oh son’ (p. 3), ‘Oh Menander’ (p. 50), ‘Oh Night’ (p. 55); ‘part of what he had in mind were [should read ‘was’] these geographical, scientific, and technical topics’ (p. 153); ‘through [should read ‘though’] not always with accurate understanding’ (p. 153).