DIDYMUS THE BRAZEN-BOWELLED

C. A. GIBSON: *Interpreting a Classic. Demosthenes and his Ancient Commentators*. Pp. xii + 261. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2002. Cased, $55/£37.95. ISBN: 0-520-22956-8.

Craig A. Gibson draws a sharp distinction between, on the one hand, the ancient commentaries on Demosthenes, of which we have fragments on papyrus and quotations in Harpocration and other lexica, and, on the other hand, the scholia which we find in the margins of some of the medieval manuscripts. The ancient commentaries, to judge from what we have of them, consist mainly of explanations of historical references and glosses on unfamiliar words, whereas the scholia contain few historical explanations and are predominantly concerned with rhetoric. The scholiasts, G. maintains, consulted the lexica but did not otherwise use the ancient commentaries. It is those commentaries, not the scholia, which are the subject of his book.

The largest papyrus fragment is P. Berol. 9780, which contains notes on passages of Demosthenes' Orations 9–11 and 13, the greater part of what survives being on Oration 10, the *Fourth Philippic*. The title subscribed at the end calls it *Διδύμου περὶ Δημοσθένους*, but G. rightly argues that this does not mean that it is a monograph on Demosthenes; it is correct to call it a commentary. By the standards of modern commentators, it is deficient and (to use G.'s word) 'spotty': the notes are few in number, and pass over without comment many of the allusions and problems in Demosthenes' text. Over the years, various explanations for this fact have been proposed. Some scholars, notably S. West in her article 'Chalcenteric Negligence', *CQ* 20 (1970), 288–96, have considered that Didymus (in haste to complete the 3,500 or even 4,000 books attributed to him) was simply careless. But G. adheres to the more usual view that the text we have is not Didymus' full commentary on Demosthenes but excerpts from it. He suggests that a reader in Hermoupolis (where the papyrus was found) copied out for his own use those of Didymus' notes which were of interest to him.

G. also includes in his study the quotations from Didymus which are included in Harpocration's lexicon, and some shorter papyrus fragments not attributed to Didymus: P. Berol. 5008, from a lexicon to Dem. 23; P. Berol. 21188, from a commentary on Dem. 5; P. Stras. 84, from a commentary on Dem. 22 (the famous Anonymus Argentinensis); P. Rain. 7, from a lexicon to Dem. 21; and in an appendix, P. Lond. Lit. 179, from a commentary on Dem. 21, which is the earliest known rhetorical commentary on Demosthenes. He provides a Greek text, reproduced from existing editions, with an English translation and a commentary in each case, except that for the long Didymus fragment he does not give the Greek text but bases his work on the Teubner text edited by Pearson and Stephens, adding a footnote wherever his translation adopts a different reading.

His introductory chapters, occupying about one-third of the book, are excellent. They include a thorough examination of the contents, sources, and intended readership of these ancient commentaries, and especially of the work of Didymus. His translation is useful, though I found a few places where it goes astray; I give examples from the Didymus text.

Col. 1.21: *κατάξοντες* is future; not 'restored the democracy, and . . . ', but 'in order to restore the democracy'. Col. 1.23: *ἐκπεσόντος* is not 'died', but 'was expelled'.

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Col. 1.63: not 'propose that the man . . . declare war', for in Athens one man could not declare war, but 'urge the man . . . to propose war'. Col. 5.69: ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ δεινοτάτῳ is not 'in this most marvelous way', but 'at the very moment of greatest peril'. Col. 9.9–10: συντρίβεται is passive; not 'where does this thing rub?', but 'where is it destroyed?', 'where does our practice break down?' (J. H. Vince's translation of Dem. 10.44).

G.'s commentary concentrates mainly on expounding the general purpose of each of the notes by Didymus and the other ancient commentators, and less on explaining minor details. There is some uncertainty about the level of G.'s readership; for example, a reference to the scholia on Aeschines is followed by the elementary explanation in parenthesis 'Aeschines was an Athenian orator and contemporary of Demosthenes' (p. 102), and yet, when 'the boats at Hieron' are mentioned (pp. 124–5), the reader is assumed to know where Hieron was and why boats might be assembled there. His bibliographical references are not entirely up-to-date: he seems to be unaware that Edmonds is not the latest or best authority on the fragments of comedy (pp. 123–4), nor Haigh on the Athenian theatre (p. 149). Generally, however, he gives full references for different views of each problem; in some places I should have liked him to tell us more confidently which view he considers correct. Despite these cavils, I think G. has made a most important contribution to our understanding of Didymus and other ancient commentators.

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THE *POETICS*

S. Benardete, M. Davis (trans.): *Aristotle on Poetics*. Pp. xxx + 105. South Bend, IN: St Augustine's Press, 2002. Paper, $10. ISBN: 1-58731-026-0.

The twentieth century produced a new English translation of the *Poetics* on average about every four years. The present volume is already the second (at least) of the new century. Benardete and Davis collaborated on the translation before B.'s death in late 2001; D. supplies the introduction; an appendix collects some germane passages from other Aristotelian writings.

The translation is inflexibly literalist, in order, we are told, to preserve 'interesting ambiguities' (p. viii) and despite D.'s odd claim that the work is 'a rather beautiful piece of literature in its own right' (p. vii). We thus get such things as 'putting together', sometimes hyphenated, for *sunthesis*/*sustasis* (producing clumsy wording at 53a30–l), or 'talk' for *lexis* (making the poet bizarrely work out his plots 'together with the talk' at 55a22, or generating 'figures of talk' at 56b9); 'poetics' is maladroitly stuck with for *poiêtikê*, yielding absurdity at e.g. 55a33 ('poetics belongs either to one with a good nature or to a madman'). What is the point of a literalism that renders ordinary Aristotelian phrasing as gauchely as 'Now, among the arts I say [*legô*] the differences in what they make the imitation are these' (47b28–9, with a characteristically pointless Greek insertion)? The answer is not just a fallacious conception of translation, though that rears its head; it is also an attempt to cloak the work in an enigmatic shroud that comports with the hermeticist interpretation of it espoused by D. (and B.).

Alarm bells ring with the very first footnote (p. vii): 'in dealing with what cannot be otherwise, tragedy reflects the necessity of the impossible . . .'. The warning seems stark: abandon all hope of consistent sense, you who enter! After the flickerings of a

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