What do we learn about ourselves, if we choose to follow Persius' example of embarking on a philosophical *katabasis* into ourselves in order to find 'the Nero within us'? Is Persius' Neronian Rome telling us more about Persius than about Nero? Why is Juvenal's rage so extreme, and why has it not manifested itself earlier than this? Why is it revealing to play the loud and aggressive music of Juvenal next to the more understated melodies of Tacitus and Pliny?

The above questions are some of the issues F. raises with refreshing lucidity and respect to the texts of Horace, Persius, and Juvenal and their various intertexts (Pindar, Callimachus, Ennius, Lucilius, Lucretius, and Virgil, to name but a few). F. does not always answer the questions he asks, but this I found to be one of the stimulating aspects of his project. This book requires a lot of patience (I lost mine on a couple of occasions because of some puns: see, for instance, p. 20) and a lot of concentration. Its chatty sentence-construction makes it easy to follow, but beneath the surface the argument is extremely elaborate and sophisticated. The highlight of the book was, for me, the section on Horace's first book of satires: brilliantly precise and detailed, it clearly demonstrates how effectively F. discusses Horace's poems as individual works *and* as part of a larger collection comprising poems linked with each other and situated in a cultural–political context (however, I was sorry that F. did not discuss the implications of the fact that, even though Horace constructs [at least] the final scene of Satire 1.9 as a mime-play, he proceeds—at the beginning of 1.10—to criticize Laberius, the most successful mimographer of Horace's time). Regrettably, this impression of overall analysis is not given in the sections on Persius and Juvenal, where F. had to be much more selective in his choice of material for scrutiny.

But F. has already given us a lot of food for thought. Having finished reading his book, I found myself, alarmingly enough, both considering whether or not I had fallen into one of Horace's subtle traps, and reassuring myself that I had not been fooled by Juvenal's 'revenge-performance'. What does this say about me? At this point, the cover illustration showing a detail from Ferreti's *Harlequin as Painter* became disconcertingly and embarrassingly relevant.

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PERSIUS COMMENTED IN LATIN

H. NIKITINSKI: *A. Persius Flaccus:* Saturae. *Commentario atque indice rerum notabilium instruxit Helgus Nikitinski. Accedunt varia de Persio iudicia saec. XIV–XX* (Sammlung wissenschaftlicher Commentare). Pp. 365. Munich and Leipzig: K. G. Saur, 2002. Cased, €64. ISBN: 3-598-74293-2.

Persius is difficult, and assistance in reading him is always welcome. Nikitinski is a careful Latinist and generally limits himself to matters of Latinity, explaining Persius' strange vocabulary and syntax, often providing intelligible paraphrases for what is by no means clear in Persius. He aims at utility rather than originality, and relies heavily on one dominant source: in the first ten pages of commentary, I found only two notes containing material not in W. Kissel (ed.), *Aules Persius Flaccus: Satiren* (Heidelberg, 1990), one of which is completely irrelevant. Since Kissel's commentary is both

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overblown and unselective, however, it contains most possible interpretations of Persius somewhere; and it is greatly to N.'s credit that his 240 pages make considerably more sense than Kissel's 800. To the text and exegetical commentary, N. has also added a collection of comments on Persius from Dante to Montale in chronological order; in it uninspiring classicists keep uneasy company with poets and men of letters: the collection of *iudicia* has some interest, but was made without *iudicium*.

N. writes in Latin throughout, and his Latin is serviceable if far from elegant. Paraphrasing Latin into Latin, however, is not always helpful: it takes him twelve words to explain *rota* at 3.24 as 'potter's wheel'. He is compelled at times to resort to German words in quotation marks; and a phrase such as *amara ironia* (not attested in classical Latin, or indeed in the *Patrologia*) sounds distinctly odd.

But N.'s ability to produce several hundred pages of prose composition does not make him a good editor of Persius. Measured against the low standard set by Kissel, N. holds up pretty well. He modifies Kissel's text for the better about as often as he does for the worse (better, e.g. *conditur* 2.14, *vulvas* 4.36; worse, e.g. *morituro . . . Catoni / dicere* 3.45–6, *o miseri et* 3.66; *ingenio* 5.158 is presumably a slip), although his punctuation, even worse than Kissel's, frequently makes the text nonsense (e.g. *iure* as a complete sentence, 3.48). In general, while Kissel set the textual criticism of Persius back about a century, N. has not moved it much more in either direction. Suffice it to say that in ignoring almost completely all manuscripts other than PAB, N. produces an apparatus that could probably have been written by Buecheler.

In his preface, N. describes his goals, his ideal audience, and his reasons for choosing Latin: he wants to aid those *litterarum studiosi* who want to read Persius quickly in Latin (a very small group). Laudably, he does not want to lose the author in the explanation, but to lead his reader to the text and let him alone, 'uti vir virum paulo seductior audiret' (no women readers here). He does not try to solve difficult problems, modestly assuming that Persius had ideas that the critic may not understand; and he is grateful that Latin does not provide a tool for undertaking the trendier (*huius temporis*) forms of criticism. Indeed, the closest N. gets to criticism is to point out occasional continuities of imagery, exclaim over 'festivissima ironia' and declare the third *Satire* 'reginam saturarum'.

The commentary, indeed, is largely limited to the simplest forms of exegesis: N. quotes and paraphrases a sentence or so, then offers explanations of the meaning or syntax of individual words and phrases; the secondary works most commonly cited are grammars and lexica. But while his philological explanations are often both succinct and accurate, paraphrase is not an adequate substitute for explanation or criticism, and his one-word-at-a-time reading reduces an extraordinarily complex poet to a sequence of small independent puzzles. As far as interpretation goes, *litterarum studiosi* must fend for themselves.

The interpretation of Persius most frequently cited by N. is not a modern commentary, but the medieval scholia. Much of his information he gets from them—and like Kissel, he unfortunately believes the scholia (e.g. on statues gilded with egg-yolk glue, 2.55–6) when they are at their most nonsensical—and when he does not quote their (still sometimes useful) paraphrases, he writes his own equivalents. The Persius scholia are useful and not unintelligent; the same is true of N.'s commentary. The English-speaking reader, however, is better off with Gildersleeve, Nettleship, or Harvey.

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