'HELLENISTIC POETRY FOR GROWN-UPS'

M. Fantuzzi, R. Hunter: *Muse e modelli. La poesia ellenistica da Alessandro Magno ad Augusto*. Pp. x + 600. Bari: Laterza, 2002. Cased, €48. ISBN: 88-420-6537-4.

If there were a *Mouseion* at Alexandria still today, it would employ men like Marco Fantuzzi (F.) and Richard Hunter (H.). These two formidable *philologoi*, who for more than twenty years have devoted their energy as well as numerous publications to the poetry of the Hellenistic age, have now pooled their resources to produce a *mega biblion* on the period, which, at 600 pages, is quite an intimidating tome. The book is not aimed at the neophyte (in order to follow the authors' often very close readings, one has to have some idea of the texts and issues in question), nor does it present a comprehensive treatment of Hellenistic poetry (as F. and H. themselves avow, even some central texts, such as Callimachus' *Hymns*, are not discussed in great detail, and some readers may be disappointed that their particular topic of interest does not make an appearance). Instead, *Muse e modelli* presents the authors' personal take on a huge array of texts, poets, and genres from a literary epoch with which they are intimately familiar. Hardly anyone will read this book cover to cover, but everyone interested in any of the topics that F. and H. treat will do well to consult what these leading specialists have to say.

The authors are each credited with individual chapters, but the book nevertheless reads like the truly collaborative effort that F. and H. maintain it is (pp. vi–vii). While it is possible to distinguish certain personal predilections—F. goes in for detailed readings and questions of style; H. appears to be interested rather in the larger picture—the two scholars generally project a unified approach (on which see more below). The first of the book's nine chapters, entitled 'Occasioni di performance e generi letterari', explores some of the issues at stake in the criticism of Hellenistic poetry, concentrating especially on the ways in which poets reconfigured and adapted traditional genres; texts discussed prominently include Callimachus' *Iambi*. This is followed by chapters on the three great third-century poets, Callimachus (but solely the *Aetia*), Apollonius, and Theocritus (viewed primarily in his rôle as the 'inventor' of the genre of pastoral). The fifth chapter treats such quasi-epic smaller genres as the epyllion (with discussion of the *Hecale*, Theoc. 24, [Theoc.] 25, and Moschus' *Europa*) and Aratus' didactic poem (but not the works of Nicander), while the sixth examines the style of the hexameter poetry of Callimachus, Theocritus, and Apollonius, with special attention to its relationship to Homeric diction. Chapter 7 is dedicated to the epigram, and Chapter 8 discusses drama, especially New Comedy, but also Hellenistic tragedy and Lycophron's *Alexandra*. The book ends with an 'Epilogo Romano' (just about justifying the work's subtitle, *La poesia ellenistica da Alessandro Magno ad Augusto*), which asks what 'translating' from Greek literature meant to the Romans, before examining in particular Catullus' debt to Hellenistic poetry (somewhat disappointingly, the controversial issue of the so-called Callimachean poetics of many Roman, especially Augustan, poets is hardly discussed).

Muse e modelli is the kind of book that makes a multitude of small observations rather than dealing with a limited number of larger issues. Still, the authors endeavour to get across through the many detailed discussions of poets and works their own vision, as it were, of what Hellenistic poetry is all about. Belittled in traditional accounts of Greek literature, the Hellenistic period has often been regarded as characterized primarily by artificial virtuosity and potentially perverse playfulness. By

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contrast, F. and H. argue that the poetry of this age is shaped in the first place by an awareness of its own historicity, that is, each poet's consciousness of finding himself at a particular point in literary history and of writing in a particular tradition. The Hellenistic poet thus views himself as not only inspired by the Muses, like the poets of old, but also, and equally, influenced by his poetic models (thus the book's title).

This insight is not in itself original, but F. and H. deserve special credit for systematically putting it to work in their interpretations. Taking every author seriously (instead of perpetuating the cliché of the Hellenistic poet as an endearing if annoying *Wunderkind*), they examine in detail each one's particular situation within literary history, the poetic challenges that faced him, and the way he chose to deal with these challenges. Thus, for example, H. in his chapter on Apollonius attempts to determine the relationship of the *Argonautica* not only to Homer (the most obvious model), but to the epic tradition in general, while also considering such non-poetic influences as the accounts of the exploits of Alexander; similarly (to take a genre rather than an author), in treating the predominantly literary epigrams of the Hellenistic period, F. discusses how they are both like and unlike the real inscriptions they imitate. This is Hellenistic poetry for grown-ups, and the reader comes away from *Muse e modelli* with a deeper appreciation of the nature of this first 'modern' (p. v) period of western literature. Finally, the good news for those less than entirely happy to read 600 pages of learned Italian: a revised English edition of the book is in preparation.

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THEOCRITUS CONTEXTUALIZED

H. Bernsdorff: *Hirten in der nicht-bukolischen Dichtung des Hellenismus*. Pp. 222. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2001. Cased, DM 86.05. ISBN: 3-515-07822-3.

In his introduction, Bernsdorff informs us that he 'aims to make a contribution to the understanding of Hellenistic bucolic poetry by asking how the literary contemporaries of the bucolic poets represented the central themes of the genre' (p. 13). But B. has another, to his mind more important, goal as well: to test the validity of the conception that Theocritus is unique in presenting a realistic–ironic parody of the pastoral world in his bucolic poetry. This 'Ironiethese', whose most recent proponent is Bernd Effe, holds that Theocritus' primary aim is the entertainment of a learned audience through a comically derisive depiction of pastoral life. According to Effe, Theocritus achieves this ironic effect most prominently through a 'Destruktion' of the sentimental elements of the bucolic world (and the sympathies they arouse) by combining them with more realistic, coarser, and even obscene aspects of pastoral existence. 'Ironiethese' leads to 'Isolationsthese' with Effe's claim that Theocritus ridicules not only the shepherds he represents, but also his literary contemporaries, who have simplistically glorified the pastoral world in their poetry. Thus is Theocritean bucolic isolated from the rest of Hellenistic pastoral poetry. B. notes that Effe isolates Theocritus from his imitators as well, citing Effe's assertion that in a 'radical difference of intention and reception', Theocritus' followers failed to appreciate the parodic character of their model and consequently reduced the pastoral world to its purely idyllic–erotic aspects.

Chapters 1 and 2, which evaluate the treatment of shepherds in New Comedy and Apollonius' *Argonautica*, respectively, reflect B.'s wider goal of comparing the use of

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