

Graham Zanker, *Herodas: Mimiambes*. Oxford: Aris & Phillips, 2009. Pp. xi, 252. ISBN 9780856688737. \$36.00 (pb).

Reviewed by Floris Overduin, Radboud University Nijmegen (f.overduin@let.ru.nl)

Since the publication of *Realism in Alexandrian Poetry*¹ in 1987, Graham Zanker's name has been closely tied to the study of *enargeia* in the poetry of the third and second century BCE. For those engaged in the study of Hellenistic poetry his work has opened up new ideas about realistic elements in poetry whose contents show a direct relation to everyday life. His survey of the use of 'pictorial realism' in diverse authors as Apollonius Rhodius, Callimachus, and particularly Theocritus, has shown its importance, regardless of genre, in approaching Alexandrian literature. His observations have not only brought to the fore the influence of contemporary science and art on Hellenistic poets, but also the relevance of low subject-matter in Alexandrian *enargeia*, elements that were further developed in his *Modes of Viewing in Hellenistic Poetry and Art*,² which appeared in 2004. His recent commentary on the mimiambes of Herodas does thus not come as a complete surprise, considering Zanker's background in the study of lowly characters.

The Aris & Phillips Classical Texts series, in which Zanker's commentary has appeared, is a bit of an odd one, trying to serve two sorts of audience. On the one hand it aims to serve students who do not read Greek, by providing lucid translations, a broad background, and ample discussion, without losing the succinctness of a handy introductory volume. On the other hand it is aimed at 'those whose Greek is nascent to fairly advanced', as Zanker states in the Acknowledgments of this volume (p. ix), which results in a book that has quite a lot to offer in terms of metrical analysis, elementary textual criticism, linguistic notes on Herodas' literary dialect, but most of all clear and relevant discussion, something which one would not necessarily expect in what initially appears to be a mere aid to the beginning student. Whereas such a double focus necessarily results in notes that seem superfluous to one reader, whereas another would expect to find more, in the case of Zanker's edition, the overall balance is remarkably good: both audiences should be able to read this book without being vexed over either overcomplication or simplicity.

The book generally follows the usual format of the series, with a few differences. Each of the poems consists of the Greek text with facing translation. There is no proper critical apparatus, but where the Greek text has been supplemented because of gaps in the papyrus the conjecturing scholar is mentioned in the apparatus. Text and translation are followed by a commentary which is divided in introductory sections marked location, synopsis, text, setting, date, structure, sources, casting, and purpose, followed by a line-by-line commentary. The presence or absence of one or more such sections for each poem is dictated by the nature of the individual poems, as not all poems need the same elucidation or yield information on all of the parameters. Although this division generally works well, occasionally I felt some sections to overlap, making more or less the same point.

Zanker's eye for the individuality of the mimes, rather than their many similarities, makes his book the more useful. The sections on setting are particularly relevant, as they help us to

picture the stage and props and thus bring the not always rewarding experience of reading closer to what seem to have been the antique practice of the performance of Herodas' mimes. The ensuing line-by-line commentary differs from most of the other volumes in the series in that it is not merely based on the English translation, but for a significant part on the Greek as well. Occasionally Greek words or phrases are included in the bold lemmata, a choice that makes this book substantially more attractive for advanced readers of Greek, an audience that is generally not too happy with commentaries based on translations only, or -- worse -- consisting of notes marked in the translation itself, abandoning the line-by-line principle. Text, translation, and commentary are subsequently followed by a discussion of characters/characterisation, interaction, or (when relevant) the relation to earlier poetry (notably Theocritus and the comic poets), Hellenistic ideas about art, the setting of the poem, or Herodas' objectivity. Central to the discussion is of course how we are to grasp Herodas' humour, which is not always easy to understand. Zanker makes an effort to show us how to appreciate Herodas' innovative portrayal of base, sometimes vulgar, characters, which indeed helps to make this off-beat poet more palatable.

Herodas' text, which has no medieval manuscript tradition and is based on a single papyrus from the second century CE, which was published in 1891 by F.G. Kenyon,³ is quite problematic in two ways: apart from the somewhat lacunose state, which has particularly affected mimiamb 7 and 8, the division of speakers is often unclear. Although *paragraphoi* in the papyrus partly indicate the distribution of speakers, it has become obvious that more changes are necessary to make sense of many of Herodas' dialogues. Moreover, not all of the "*paragraphoi*" given in the papyrus appear to be correct, which should make the editor even more cautious in apportioning certain (parts of) lines to different characters. Overall, however, Zanker explains his choices and reservations well, and in the complex case of the fourth mimiamb (p. 104-105) spells out the interpretations of six earlier editors in addition to his own.

Although the scope of the series is limited in some ways, Zanker's has not failed to include relevant references to the achievements of previous scholarship, a good example of which is the discussion of the fifth mimiamb, where Zanker's brief summary of arguments helps students not too familiar with Herodean scholarship to get some grip on work that has been done so far. Zanker's own research on the realia of Herodas becomes most apparent in his discussion of the fourth mimiamb, where an interesting description of the Asklepieion on Cos, as visited by the characters of the poem, is backed up with archaeological details. This helps the reader to picture the scene, and follow Zanker's eye, keen on *enargeia*, as shown by the careful reconstruction on p. 122-29. Zanker's knowledge of the link between poetry and objects of art is felt best here. In mimiamb where less detail can be gathered from the text, Zanker collects what can be said safely, without stretching his point.

What follows here are really minor quibbles, which should not distract from the overall value of this volume. Titles of plays are generally translated into English, without a transcription of the Greek. This usually works well, but occasionally I did not instantly recognize which play Zanker was referring to, as in e.g. 'The Arbitrators' (Ἐπιτρέποντες) on p. 34. On p. 79, however, Epicharmus' *Agrôstînos* is transcribed, not translated, as are Aeschylus' *Isthmiastai* and/or *Theôroi* (p. 107). This practice apparently allows for transcriptions rather than translations elsewhere: Plautus' *Rudens* is translated as 'rope', whereas *Casina* remains *Casina* in Zanker's edition. Although hardly an issue of grave importance, this is something to keep in mind for students more familiar with the Greek than with translations common in English. A more relevant point is the fact that the commentary is at times somewhat uneven. Some

grammatical notes, e.g. pointing out that σκέψαι is the second person singular aorist middle imperative of σκέπτομαι (p. 30, n. 65), are superfluous to every single reader whose Greek is strong enough to start reading Herodas. The same goes for χαιρέτω (p. 116), which I am sure is easily recognisable as the third-person imperative of χαίρειν and would not require a note. It is unclear why it is explained to the reader what a χλαίνα is (p. 54), whereas *himation*, another piece of clothing, is used on the same page without explanation. Would those who do not read Greek know what a *himation*, a word not used by Herodas, is? On p. 143 ἀπληγίς is rightly explained as some kind of mantle worn on top of a *chiton*, but the latter is used without explanation. The allusion to Homer as explained on p. 34 is nice enough, but would fit better in the commentary part than in the discussion. On p. 73 the translation 'casino' for παίστρα may be a bit anachronistic to the taste of some. On p. 159 χειρέων is translated as 'fists', in a context of punishment, although 'hands' perhaps fits better, picturing Korittô as slapping a slave-girl with her hands, rather than punching her with her fists.

When one considers the limitations of the series, Zanker has done a fine job, succeeding admirably in serving both undergraduate students and those more advanced in Alexandrian poetry. Many details are explained well, and the commentary, brief though it may be, gives a wide range of information. The bibliography appears to be up to date. There are a few typos: p. 30, note 64 should read 's.v.' not 's,v, '; p. 52 'an metaphorical sense' should be 'a metaphorical sense'; p. 53 'concludes' should be 'concludes'; p. 91 'they would need the all the hype' has a 'the' too many; p. 115 'are are' is an erroneous duplication.

Notes:

1. G. Zanker, *Realism in Alexandrian Poetry: A Literature and its Audience*, London (etc.) 1987.
2. G. Zanker, *Modes of Viewing in Hellenistic Poetry and Art*, Madison, WI 2004.
3. F.G. Kenyon, *Classical Texts from Papyri in the British Museum*, London 1891.