

ALEXANDER SENS, *Asclepiades of Samos, Epigrams and Fragments*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. cxiv + 353, ISBN 9780199253197.

Asclepiades of Samos (Asclep.) is a key figure in the early development of Greek literary epigram. Though only a relatively small amount of his poetry survives (33 securely ascribed epigrams, all elegiacs = 156 verses; 13 *dubia* = 70 verses), his importance is amply illustrated by references to him in the works of his younger contemporaries, and by the adaptations, variations, and reminiscences of his work in later literary epigram—both Greek and Latin—down to the Byzantine period.

Amid the general flowering of interest in Greek epigram during the past couple of decades, Asclep. has hardly been neglected: in addition to earlier commentaries in German and the standard works by Gow and Page, the past ten years have seen the publication of commentaries in Spanish and Modern Greek¹. Alexander Sens (hereafter ‘S.’) has now produced the first scholarly commentary on Asclep. in English, including an introductory study, text, and translation; his work thus fills a gap and also constitutes a very valuable addition to the existing scholarly studies.

The study comprises an introduction (pp. i-cix); *testimonia* (pp. cx-cxiv); text, translation, and ample commentary for each epigram (pp. 1-346). This last section includes securely-attested epigrams (pp. 1-226) and, usefully, all the dubiously ascribed epigrams (pp. 226-333)². These are followed by *fragmenta* (pp. 333-45), which are slightly confusingly numbered as separate epigrams.

Each poem is accompanied by an introductory note followed by line-by-line commentary. In the introductory notes, S. focuses on topical connections to earlier poetry, the engagement with and modification of traditional epigraphic forms, and the architecture and rhetoric of the epigrams. In cases of serious textual corruption, or where corruption has been suspected by previous editors, S. provides a reading of the epigram as a whole (e.g. epigram XIV). The line-by-line commentary covers the usual mixture of *Realien*, metrics, diction, textual problems, and so forth. For matters of usage, S. draws his parallels from an impressively wide spectrum of Greek sources; indeed, the broad range of the paral-

¹ The following commentaries have been dedicated solely to Asclep.: O. Peters, *Asklepiades von Samos*, Leipzig, 1923. O. Knauer, *Die Epigramme des Asklepiades von Samos*, Würzburg, 1935. L. A. Guichard, *Asclepiades de Samos: Epigramas y fragmentos. Estudio introductorio, revisión del texto, traducción y comentario*, Bern, 2004. I. S. Nastos, *Ασκληπιάδου του Σαμίου επιγράμματα*, Heraclion, 2006. A. S. F. Gow and D. L. Page (eds.), *The Greek Anthology: Hellenistic Epigrams*, Cambridge, 1965, is still indispensable.

² Opinions will differ about S.’s choice to use the numbering of Gow-Page; I for my part was relieved not to have to deal with yet another numbering-system for epigrams.

lels and the care and discrimination S. exercises in their use is one of the book's major strengths. S. is especially adept at illustrating the way meaning emerges from precise structural features of the poems, the manipulation of syntax, and the play with traditional epigraphic forms. Also particularly strong are the analyses of Asclep.'s style, which includes elements drawn from Homer, Old/Middle/New Comedy, as well as prosaic diction.³ S. shows that this style not some sort of farrago, but rather serves pointed literary purposes. (See, e.g., S.'s fine discussion of the 'Promethean' speaker of epigram XI (pp. 67-76).) The discussion is aimed at specialists in Greek poetry, but many of S.'s analyses would serve as a useful guide for students not yet initiated in the ways of Greek epigram.

S.'s work displays great learning on every page and will be an invaluable aid for A.'s readers, but there are inevitably places where readers will disagree or find his discussion wanting. I will now note a few points where I thought S.'s discussion could have been improved or supplemented:

I.2 ειαρινὸν Στέφανον: S.'s discussion of the "spring Garland" provides the relevant information about the constellation *Corona borealis*, which signified the ivy crown given by Dionysus to Ariadne. But as S. notes *ad loc.*, the word στέφανος and the adjective ειαρινός are also evocative of flowers, and so it is significant that Nossis I features a reflection on what is sweet (ἄδιον οὐδὲν ἔρωτος, 1) followed closely by a reference to flowers (τίνα δ' ἅ Κύπρις οὐκ ἐφίλασεν, | οὐκ οἶδεν τήνας τάνθεα, ποῖα ῥόδα, 3-4).

III.2 πόθοισι βεβαμμένον Though S. tends to defend the paradosis against charges of corruption, he follows Gow-Page in adopting Wilamowitz's conjecture βεβαμμένον for the transmitted βεβλημένον⁴. But though the emendation yields good sense, the arguments in its favor, and against the paradosis, are not particularly strong. S. admits that the metrical oddity of a vowel + -βλ- resulting in a short syllable is insufficient reason to emend, and argues instead on literary grounds⁵. He contends that it would have been inept of Asclep. to anticipate the revelation of the final point contained in ἄστεροπαί (i.e. that it is Nicarete and not Cleophon who is smitten with desire). But, on the contrary, if we do retain the paradosis, then βλέμμα (III.4) creates a neat aural response to -βλη- (III.1) and ἄστεροπαί clarifies the sense in which Nicarete was "smitten with desire". In this way, the final line serves to "cap" the epigram as a whole and create a chiasmic structure (*cf.* the remarks of Ludwig and Cameron *ap.* Guichard, *Asclepiades*, 159)⁶. Compare S.'s argument about III.1 with his argument in favor of his own emendation at VIII.4: here, as S. notes, the final word (Ἰαῖδα, *vel sim.*, according to the paradosis) creates a chiasmic structure, whereas S.'s

³ See S.'s summary at lxxiv-lxxv.

⁴ Guichard, *Asclepiades*, 158, defends the paradosis against attacks on metrical grounds.

⁵ The point of S.'s reference to Nonnus here is not made clear. *Cp.* Gow-Page *ad loc.*

⁶ S. denies the relevance of βληθεῖς at Meleager *AP* 12.72.4 to the text of this epigram. It is possible, however, that Phld. 14 Sider (cited by S. in his note to line 2), if it looks back to Asclep.'s phrasing, provides some support for the paradosis.

emendation, ἡ δὲ θιγόντ' ἔδακεν, would both yield chiasmus and clarify the precise meaning of ἔτροωσε in VIII.1 (p. 50). Since the epigram would thus have a structure precisely analogous to that of III (as transmitted) S.'s argument for the emendation in VIII runs counter to his argument in favor of Wilamowitz's emendation in III.

X.1-3 ἤξειν ... κοῦχ ἦκει S. notes without further comment the connection with IX.2.2 ἤξειν κοῦχ ἦκει. The lover's earnest confusion at the failure of his beloved to live up to her promises finds a parallel at XIII.3 κληθείς, οὐκ ἄκλητος and creates a somewhat consistent voice for the anonymous speakers of these epigrams.

XXII S. argues (p. 143-4) that the epigram is not ecphrastic on account of the absence of overt lexical or syntactic markers in the poem to an artistic representation of Eros. But if we do take the poem to be referring to a statue or figurine, then we have here an instance of a characteristically ecphrastic trope—the contradiction between the representation and the nature of the thing being represented: the inert statue of Eros differs *essentially* from the god, who is by his nature flighty⁷. Moreover, it may be a mistake to identify the referent of the epigram too dogmatically: without being ecphrastic in the strictest sense, the poem may nevertheless pointedly evoke depictions from the visual arts of Eros in chains or a cage (and thus immobilized). On this point, see K. Gutzwiller, *Images poétiques et réminiscences artistiques dans les épigrammes de Méléagre*, in É. Prioux and A. Rouveret (eds.), *Métamorphoses du regard ancien*, Paris, 2010, 67-112, (esp. 72-6), (not available to S. at the time of writing).

The book is not quite as easy to use as one might like. To refer to ancient authors, S. follows “with a few exceptions” the abbreviations of *LSJ*. While these usually provide a convenient standard of reference, they can sometimes be troublesome⁸. There is no bibliography. Instead, S. cites some works using abbreviations (listed at the beginning of the book), others using inline citations. This method may save space, but inevitably costs the reader time and effort⁹.

⁷ The same trope is employed, this time explicitly, in epigram *XLIV, probably to be ascribed to A., where the goddess Μέθη (Drunkenness) is, paradoxically, carved in amethyst.

⁸ E.g. ‘D. C.’ for ‘Cassius Dio’, p. 65, is now antiquated. S. follows Gow-Page in using the name ‘Maccius’ (and the abbreviation ‘Macc.’) for the poet called Μάκκιος or Μαίκιος in the MSS; *LSJ* meanwhile call him ‘Maecius’ and abbreviate ‘Maec.’ Neither abbreviation is particularly helpful in the first place. There are also occasional inconsistencies in the form of the citations: e.g., ‘Polybius’ is now abbreviated as ‘Polyb.’ (p. 39), now (per *LSJ*) as ‘Plb.’ (p. 61). Philodemus is sometimes cited using *GPh*, *AP*, and Sider’s numbers, sometimes only two of the three.

⁹ There are occasional problems with the citations: xxxv: L. Bravi, *Gli epigrammi di Simonide e le vie della tradizione*, Roma, 2006, is incorrectly cited. S. Ihm, *Eros und Distanz: Untersuchungen zu Asklepiades in seinem Kreis*, München, 2004, is twice referenced simply as ‘Ihm’ (58, 146), but so far as I could tell nowhere fully cited.

Guichard, *Asclepiades*, by contrast, includes both full bibliography and—particularly useful given the nature of scholarship on epigram—individual bibliography for each poem.

The two indexes are very brief and were perhaps too hastily compiled—typographical errors abound. I checked ‘Nossis’ as a test and found that the two *loci* in the index did not account for the numerous other mentions of her in the body of the text. An *index locorum* would have been useful. Misprints are not infrequent, but do not hinder the reader’s understanding¹⁰. The text of the epigrams contains only two minor misprints¹¹.

In sum, this book is a great contribution to the study of Asclepiades, and will be very useful to scholars of Greek poetry (especially of the fourth and third centuries) and of ancient Greek and Latin epigram in general.

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¹⁰ The following errors cropped up in the Greek and Latin quoted in the commentary: xxix: ἰπαίξει (παίξει); lxxiii: ὄπλον (ὄπλον); 10: φιλέοντα (φιλέοντα); 30: *me miserum* (*miserum me*); 64: IX.3 (IX.2); 69: καί (καί); 104: οἶνον (οἶνον); 230: ἔπι (ἐπι); 231: *Glyceræ* (*Glyceræ*).

¹¹ Incorrect breathing-marks both times: ᾠ for ᾠ at XI.5; οἶα for οἶα at XIII.1 (again at p. 84; correctly in the lemma, p. 85). The pentameters of IX and XXXIV.4 are not properly indented.