

## BOOK REVIEW

*Lucian's On the Syrian Goddess: An Intermediate Greek Reader.* By EVAN HAYES and STEPHEN NIMIS. Oxford, OH: Faenum Publishing, Ltd., 2012. Pp. xix + 114. \$11.66. ISBN 978-0983222880.

Several writings of the prolific Lucian of Samosata have fallen short of the popular canon of Greek literature. The Lucianic corpus contains a number of texts suitable to students of intermediate Greek, and the recent publications of Stephen Nimis and his student, Edgar Evan Hayes, continue to unearth some of these works. Their newest commentary, *On the Syrian Goddess*, is yet another such example, aimed at budding students in the same vein as the Bryn Mawr Commentaries or the self-published commentaries of Geoffrey Steadman.

The reader is organized in a standard format. It begins with an introduction to the supposed author, Lucian (Hayes and Nimis note the ambiguity), and a discussion of this particular work accompanied by a short bibliography. Hayes and Nimis then explain to the reader how to use the text most advantageously, while providing the disclaimer that the work is unedited in its present state and inviting corrections. Charts follow thereafter. Since *On the Syrian Goddess* mimics Herodotus' *Histories*, the authors' inclusion of tables comparing Ionic and Attic Greek forms will be appreciated by inexperienced students.

The next 95 pages provide the edition's main content, where students will find Lucian's prose, any necessary vocabulary, and the authors' commentary. The Greek text uses M.D. Macleod's 1921 Loeb edition via the Perseus Project, with some minor (yet unspecified) adaptations. These pages are interspersed with seven grammatical charts and appropriate illustrations by Stéphane Beaulieu. An appendix of irregular verbs and a glossary of general Greek terms conclude the book.

The core of the book is designed for easy use. Each page is organized in three registers accordingly: 8-9 lines of Greek text, a running vocabulary of "all but the most common words" (ix) and commentary. The format is intended to facilitate fast reading and to avoid intimidating students with overly aggressive grammar. To this end, the commentary largely foregoes grammatical discussion for transla-

tionese, which the authors suggest, “provide an English version that reproduces the grammatical relationships as much as possible” (xii).

Indeed, this method does hasten the reading process, and even the least experienced of students will find this work tremendously helpful, but instructors will receive it with varied response. Translationese facilitates reading large amounts of text in less time, keeping the classroom from becoming mired in grammatical talk at the expense of covering course material. A keen, inquisitive instructor can check any of the students’ grammar deficiencies that are not discussed in the commentary.

Some instructors, however, will feel that Hayes and Nimis’ translationese often errs too much in the direction of translating and almost disregards grammatical rigor. Providing too much translation help absolves students of critical thinking skills that can ultimately hinder their maturation. Intermediate Greek is a critical time for grammar; it is the students’ first exposure to an authentic Greek text and should reinforce their understanding of the complex grammar acquired during the first year of study. This period of application—the transfer of textbook knowledge to a genuine *opus*—is crucial to building the confidence that will be the students’ foundations for years to come. Some, therefore, may find the authors’ approach unfavorable.

Regardless, the commentary would benefit from more balance between grammar and translationese. As the work progresses, any discussion of grammar becomes sparse. References to the introductory grammatical charts or the irregular verb chart at the end of the book would also be welcome. In its present state, the book contains none. Of the seven charts inserted in the text, three are repeats of earlier ones and some that the reader might expect (such as indirect statements, of which *On the Syrian Goddess* contains a great deal, or a comparison of the Attic and Ionic third person pronouns, which can be confusing) are lacking. In keeping with the effort to avoid grammatical clutter, the authors could offer these in abbreviated format.

Also, grading the vocabulary in the text seems to be in order. For example, the term *neos* (dwelling of a god, temple) is listed 25 times. Such diligent recording renders the final glossary superfluous. Likewise, given the variety of meanings attached to certain prepositions, their inclusion in the running vocabulary or a chart in the text would be a benefit. Currently, these appear only in the final glossary where some definitions (notably *para* and *ana*) are insufficient. Moreover, I found historical and literary comments rather thin. Students often find these to be the most engaging details, and sections of the text merit more discussion (i.e.,

distinguish between an *agalma* and a *xoanon*; discuss mythological characters that are mentioned; explain etiology; discuss Herodotean reminiscences in the opening of the text). The authors do direct the reader to J.L. Lightfoot's commentary (Oxford, 2003) for further information (ix), but many students will not have access to this. Finally, the text's greatest weakness is perhaps the number of dialectical errors, loose punctuation marks, dittographies, etc. throughout. Nonetheless, since the book is print-on-demand, these problems are easily corrected.

With some editing, Hayes and Nimis' *On the Syrian Goddess* will make a handy classroom edition, and its price is affordable for any student or school budget. Their efforts are unveiling a cache of wonderful texts rarely studied, due solely to a dearth of commentaries. It is encouraging not only to see this collaborative effort bridge the divide between professor and student, but also to bring Lucian's several fascinating texts more into academic focus.

ERIC COX

*Brigham Young University, eric\_cox@byu.edu*