

BOOK REVIEW

Lucian's Assembly of the Gods: An Intermediate Greek Reader. By EVAN HAYES AND STEPHEN NIMIS. Oxford, OH: Faenum Publishing, 2015. Pp. xv + 45. Paper, \$8.95. ISBN 978-1-940-99714-8.

Lucian's Judgement of the Goddesses: An Intermediate Greek Reader. By EVAN HAYES AND STEPHEN NIMIS. Oxford, OH: Faenum Publishing, 2015. Pp. xv + 45. Paper, \$8.95. ISBN 978-1-940-99712-4.

Because these two texts are (a) relatively short, (b) produced by the same publisher and written by the same authors, and (c) identical in formatting, both will be treated in a single review here. Unless otherwise noted (by the specification, “*JoG*” or “*AoG*”), comments may be considered equally applicable to both editions.

The formatting is largely identical in both texts: Lucian’s Greek (that of K. Jacobitz, 1896, “digitized by the Perseus Project and made available with a Creative Commons license”) tops each page, followed always by a perhaps unnecessarily complete glossary in a middle section (more on this later), and finally grammatical notes with occasional “boxes” at the bottom. *AoG* begins with a generally much richer/fuller introduction than *JoG*, with short but informative half-page sections on Menippean satire, Antonine reforms of the Areopagus, and Greek *paideia*.

JoG has a single introduction section without division into sub-headings. As is true also in the grammatical “boxes” interspersed throughout the editions, much in the introductions is cut and pasted verbatim into both. Despite the briefer introduction, however, *JoG* seems to have a few minor typographical and editorial issues cleared up (italicization, capitalization, and the like) where the text is otherwise identical.

Probably the most important facet of the front matter is, however, “An Important Disclaimer: This volume is a self-published “Print on Demand” (POD) book, and it has not been vetted or edited in the usual way by publishing professionals. There are sure to be some factual and typographical errors in the text ...” Unfortunately, this couldn’t be more right. Luckily, the authors continue, “...it is a

simple matter to make changes when they come to our attention. For this reason, any corrections or suggestions for improvement are welcome and will be addressed as quickly as possible in future versions of the text.”

This reviewer, having pored over the text with a fine-toothed comb, duly submitted his thorough 16-page list of *errata* and stylistic suggestions to the publisher at the same time he submitted this review to *CJ*. With any luck (and a modicum of attention on the publisher’s side), the vast majority of the factual and typographical errors in evidence at the time of review will already have been dealt with by the time readers actually read this review.¹ Assuming they are, the text will be vastly improved and may be considered a valuable enough resource for the intermediate Greek student. The versions of the editions presented for review, however, contain enough errors to make the reviewer wonder if they may do that same student more harm than good. Indeed, when the reviewer piloted *JoG* with his high-school Greek class, students seemed genuinely excited to delve into such an irreverently funny text— until, that is, the unpolished nature of the edition became abundantly clear within the first few pages. Consider the following examples, which may be considered systemic.

The most overarching problem is lack of a clear editorial policy. While it may seem at first blush that every word from the Greek text makes it into that page’s glossary, one quickly learns that this is not the case. Why should καλός (a word known by anyone having taken any Greek at all) be included repeatedly, but not a nuanced and highly variable preposition like παρά, which can mean a great many things based on both case used and context? Indeed, while the grammatical notes are usually helpful, they are lopsidedly verb-heavy. Idioms and especially the non-textbook uses of prepositions usually receive no comment whatsoever. Simple lexemes are repeated in successive pages over and over, but no preposition is ever defined in the page-by-page glossary. What is more, the definitions included in the glosses seem to be lifted verbatim (or they would be, were they not rife with typos) from a lexicon without any regard for context. The result is often less-than-helpful at best, and downright confusing far too frequently. The aforementioned lack of consistency is most frustrating when a word surfaces in a grammatical note and is translated well (viz. contextually) there, but

¹ In point of fact, the authors replied most gratefully to my missive on the very day I sent it, informing me that all the *errata* would be fixed post haste and an updated version made available within two weeks. Clearly, the POD format, when combined with conscientious authors keen to optimize their product, is a recipe for success.

that good definition is not to be found in the gloss on the same word on the same page. Almost every page of both editions has this problem.

The grammatical “boxes” presented throughout the editions are of uneven quality; some (especially those on participles) are quite good, but others (especially the one on imperatives) contain so many errors—typographical, translational, and factual all—that any student using them to learn forms (or formulas) will memorize seriously erroneous information. The list of principal parts for irregular verbs in back is nice, but many of the definitions presented there do not match those glossed throughout the text. When divergent, those in the glossary are generally less apposite. I will end this review by sharing my first impression of the first of the two editions I picked up, *JoG*. While both spellings are acceptable, it is nevertheless quite jarring that the very title is rendered alternately as “Judgment of the Goddesses” on the front and back covers (as well as the tops of all printed pages), but as “Judgement of the Goddesses” in both the introduction and on page 1 of the main text.

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