

BOOK REVIEW

The Lyric of Ibycus: Introduction, Text and Commentary. By CLAIRE LOUISE WILKINSON. Berlin: Walter DeGruyter, 2013. Pp. x + 318. Hardcover, €119.95. ISBN 978-3-11-029514-6.

The first thing one notices about this edition of Ibycus is its incompleteness. Wilkinson's Preface blames "the constraints of the DPhil word limit" for the necessity of presenting only "those fragments which offer the greatest scope for an analysis of Ibycus as a writer." This is the first clue that the thesis has been little modified to create the book. Since a complete edition would have been a valuable contribution (the last was by Schneidewin in 1833), it is strange that the series editors did not request completion of the project. Nevertheless, there is enough excellent work in this commentary to excuse its omissions and its editorial laxity.

Wilkinson's introduction is invaluable to any student of archaic Greek lyric. It is divided into sections on the poet's Life, Date, Poetry, and its Transmission. The first section considers the internal evidence—wisely deciding that there is nothing conclusive in it—and the external evidence, the most difficult pieces of which receive good, open-minded treatment. There is a discussion of a parallel in the Old Persian fragments of the fragmentary Greek novel *Metiochus and Parthenope* (6–7). Wilkinson builds a compelling picture of Ibycus as an itinerant poet. Unfortunately, she does not mention the story of his death at the hands of highwaymen, outside of the untranslated Suda entry on page 4. She thereby ignores a good parallel to the Arion story in Herodotus 1.23–24: a poet traveling to perform and amass wealth. Instead, we are given parallels in the 5th century poets Pindar and Bacchylides.

This move is a peculiar persistent feature of the commentary—Wilkinson's first frame of reference is usually Pindar, rather than Ibycus's pre-5th century contemporaries and predecessors. This is most disappointing when she discusses the likelihood of the poet's travels: "We presume that Pindar and Bacchylides travelled around to the cities of their patrons, and there would have been no greater difficulty in Ibycus doing so" (7). She sidesteps the question of poetic tours

among the pre-5th century poets, which could upset existing scholarly models that tend to restrict these poets to their own local aristocratic banquets.¹

The section on the poet's date necessarily retraces several discussions from prior sections. The evidence is handled very well here, which was no easy task. The poet's connection to Polycrates of Samos in the *Suda* is full of contradictions and temporal inconsistencies. Ibycus's dates should be too early for an association with the tyrant, so the *Suda* claims that he came to Samos in the time of the rule of the tyrant's father of the same name (ὅτε αὐτῆς ἦρχεν ὁ Πολυκράτης τοῦ τυράννου πατήρ).² But we know from other sources that Polycrates' father did not rule and was named Aeaces, not Polycrates. Wilkinson presents a neat solution to these contradictions: Perhaps Ibycus spent time in Samos under the patronage of this aristocratic family when they did not rule officially, but were among the major power brokers of the island (12).³

The next section, on "Ibycus' Poetry," is divided into brief discussions of Content: Myth, Love, and Praise; Style (artificially separated from Content); Subjects (mostly about natural world imagery, which would have fit nicely into the Content section); Performance; Dialect; Metre; and Transmission.

In the section on Praise, Wilkinson bravely considers the notion that we may see fairly developed epinician poetry in Ibycus. Again, most of her evidence for early (i.e., pre-Simonides) epinician comes from parallels in Pindar, but she also draws support from Tyrtaeus 12, to which she should have added Xenophanes 2. The discussion is excellent, although the distinction Wilkinson maintains between epinician and non-athletic praise seems unnecessary to our understanding of Ibycus, and in fact of all pre-5th-century encomium.

¹ Wilkinson might have mentioned Archilochus in Sparta, Alcaeus in Egypt, the story of the Athenian origin of Tyrtaeus, Solon's travels, as well as those of others listed among the Seven Sages, Xenophanes in Italy, and Sappho's "exile" to Syracuse. Instead, we get only the link to Anacreon in Samos, with a misinterpreted passage of Aristophanes as evidence for Ibycus's travel (*Thesmophoriazusae* 159-163, p. 8).

² In addition to the extensive discussion of the reception of Barron's 1964 emendation (Πολυκράτης ὁ τοῦ τυράννου πατήρ), I would have liked mention of von Gutschmid's emendation (ὁ Πολυκράτους τοῦ τυράννου πατήρ), reported in Flach's 1884 *Geschichte der griechischen Lyrik*.

³ This is hinted at by Hutchinson (Hutchinson, G.O. 2001. *Greek Lyric Poetry: A Commentary on Selected Larger Pieces*. Oxford. p. 232), but not stated explicitly. Wilkinson would have found support for her proposal in Greg Anderson's study of the ambiguities of the term *turanos* in the oligarchies of the archaic period (Anderson, Greg. 2005. "Before *Turanmoi* were Tyrants: Rethinking a Chapter of Early Greek History," *Classical Antiquity* 24.2: 173-222).

The volume's major division is between papyrus fragments and manuscript fragments. Wilkinson is an excellent papyrologist, treating each of the papyri as an unknown and presenting well-measured evidence regarding its authorship and distinctive characteristics. Illustrative of this is her longest piece on S151 (282a *PMG*), the "Polycrates Ode", understood either as a clumsy attempt to write Homeric narrative (Page, Barron), or as a rejection of epic themes in favor of erotic poetry (Bowra, Sisti).⁴ Wilkinson joins the minority in reading the laundry list of Homeric epithets as chosen "carefully to recall a particular context or stress a characteristic" (58), rather than, as Page describes it: "a series of perfunctory phrases . . . Epic formulae, rather pinned on than painted in . . . uprooted, unadapted, substitutes for thought . . . ungainly and inarticulate . . . excessive accumulation of epithets" (Page 1951, 165–166). What neither the poem's critics nor Wilkinson and its apologists appreciate is that this is parody of epic.⁵ Ibycus spends most of this poem mocking epic diction and style by laying it on too thickly,⁶ so that in the end he can point out that his simple lyric verse can bestow a different sort of κλέος ἀφθιτον (line 47).

Nonetheless, Wilkinson's treatment of the elements of this poem and the questions that it raises is exemplary. The strongest aspect of her work throughout the commentary is her refusal to draw conclusions based on the anachronistic categories of Alexandrian and modern scholarship. Ibycus, therefore, is not necessarily writing epinicia, encomia, erotic praise, or any specific category of lyric verse. His use of the *praeteritio* device in the Polycrates Ode creates a metapoetic space within which he expresses his favoring of lyric over epic poetics.

The section on the manuscript fragments is somewhat weaker, most typically in the discussion of fragment 286. As one of the most beautiful relics from the archaic period, this arguably complete poem has attracted a lot of attention. The crux is in the poem's final lines, where the Athenaeus manuscripts read φυλάσσει.

⁴Barron, J.P. 1969. "Ibycus: To Polycrates," *BICS* 16: 119-149.

Bowra, C.M. 1934. "Polycrates of Rhodes," *CJ* 29: 375-380.

Page, Denys. 1951. "Ibycus' Poem in Honour of Polycrates," *Aegyptus* 31: 158-172.

Sisti, Franco. 1966. "Ibico e Policrate," *QUCC* 2: 91-102.

----. 1967. "L'ode a Policrate: Un caso di recusatio in Ibico," *QUCC* 4: 59-79.

⁵ I am not using the term "parody" in Aristotle's technical sense (*Poetics* 2). This fragment does not resemble the parody in Hipponax 128, nor the mock-epic style of Hegemon of Thasos, the *Batrachomyomachia*, or the *Margites*.

⁶ For example, this fragment averages 1.7 adjectives per noun, more than three times Homer's ratio, a style we do not see in any of his other fragments.

I have argued that the metrical scheme is too long by one syllable,⁷ so I was surprised that Wilkinson described my proposal of φλάσει (and Hermann's φλάσεν) as requiring "a re-arrangement of the fragment." The colometry was not preserved when quoted in the prose text of Athenaeus (one can see this in the 1514 Aldine manuscript, p. 254, viewable in the Biblioteca Marciana's online digital collection), so any reconstruction of the poem's lineation is on an equal footing. Hermann, Bergk, and Schneidewin have arranged the line-breaks various ways (Hermann gives at least three different colometries in four editions of his *Epitome Doctrinae Metricae*; Bergk gives two). Wilkinson's conclusion is a symptom of the near-total absence of early 19th century scholarship from the commentary.

Wilkinson defends West's reading, λαφύσσει, ignoring his heavy-handed transposition of words and his positing of two lacunae; but this verb (used of consuming fire at *Anth. Pal.* 5.239) would certainly fit the seasonal imagery of the poem described so well by Cyrino⁸ (not in Wilkinson's bibliography). For the same sense, we should consider a better metrical fit, φθίνει, φθίσει, or φθίσειν, as autumnal withering would complete the catalogue of seasons we see in the spring, winter, and summer terminology (ἤρι, Βορέας, and ἀζαλαίαις).

Wilkinson's laudable work in much of this monograph is an excellent beginning to an edition of Ibycus, but print editions of ancient works are now somewhat anachronistic. A digital edition, preferably open-access and deeply annotated using the tools of TEI XML and EpiDoc, could accommodate all the conjectures that did not make it into this volume. Additionally, such a dynamic platform would adapt over time and would enable numerous types of inquiry,⁹ without the problems inherent to a system in which bodies of academic work are legally entailed to publishers. I hope that Wilkinson will contribute to such a project. In the meantime, I would suggest that librarians save their funds, passing over this soon-to-be-obsolete volume. The book's hefty price might have been justified with better editorial oversight.

⁷ Tortorelli, William. 2004. "A Proposed Colometry of Ibycus 286," *Classical Philology* 99.4: 370-376.

⁸ Cyrino, Monica. 1995. In *Pandora's Jar: Lovesickness in Early Greek Poetry*, 100-107.

⁹ For a full discussion of the value of digital editions, see Crane, Gregory. 2010. "Give us editors! Re-inventing the edition and re-thinking the humanities," in *Online Humanities Scholarship: The Shape of Things to Come*, University of Virginia: Mellon Foundation. For the potential pedagogical value of such work, see the projects of the Holy Cross Manuscripts, Inscriptions and Documents Club: <http://hcmid.github.io/>

The following list of errata is far from complete.

errata maiora

pp.38-39 – a bit confused about where 286 ends. Calls it “a complete metrical structure”, but is leaving out the last two words.

p.40 – confuses 288.2 with 288.1 and thus presents a metrical structure inappropriate to either line

p. 55 – confuses Alcaeus fr. 38A with fr. 338

p. 217 – line 5 of fragment 286 is missing, leaving only 12 lines in Wilkinson’s 13-line edition (the commentary does not omit the line)

errata minora

p. 5 – one paragraph in which every sigma has become a psi – also in chart on p. 28

p. 6 – aspiration has become an acute accent

p. 10 – missing apostrophe, Σάμου not capitalized

p. 15 – uses *SLG* numbering for Alcaeus, rather than Voigt

p. 25 – Archilochus fragment 312 for fragment 324

p. 38 – 2-4 for 4-6

p. 39 – the metrical scheme for line 10 loses one syllable (Wilkinson may have intended to argue for synizesis)

p. 217 – φλασει for φλάσει, 2002 for 2004

p. 220 – οἰνανθίδες is here glossed as “vine-flowers”, while on p. 227 Wilkinson argues that the word should mean “the whole vine plant”

p. 221 – note 84 is repeated in the text on p. 225

p. 231 – λαφύCCCEI for λαφύCCCI

p. 233 – Horace *Carm.* 1.13 for *Carm.* 1.23

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