

Herodotus, *Histories*: Translated with Notes by George Rawlinson; With an Introduction by Tom Griffith. Ware: Wordsworth Classics of World Literature, 1996. ISBN 1 25326 466 0. £2.50.

Wordsworth have now added Herodotus to the authors of whom they provide the cheapest version. Rawlinson's translation (hereafter R) has also been reissued, with an Introduction by H. Bowden, in the relaunched Everyman's Library (1992: £7.99); the Penguin translation of A. de Sélin-court (hereafter S) has been revised with a new Introduction and Notes by J. Marincola (1996: £7.99: hereafter M); and there is another recent translation, with a smiliar quantity of short notes, by D. Grene (University of Chicago Press, 1987: paperback edition £11.25; hereafter G).¹

Both Wordsworth and Everyman reproduce Rawlinson's 1858 translation, with little change apart from the restoration of the Greek names of gods and goddesses where R had given the Roman equivalents. Both follow the original Everyman edition of 1910 in giving E. H. Blakeney's selection from R's extensive notes, but Wordsworth includes in brackets the notes added by Blakeney while the new Everyman does not. The new Everyman has a slightly longer and a more learned Introduction than Wordsworth, but otherwise if one wants R's translation the only consideration that might make one pay Everyman's higher price is that the Everyman version has an index (as do the other translations discussed here) but the Wordsworth does not. Should one, however, want R at all, or is it better to pay more for S as revised by M or for G?

Rawlinson's English is sometimes a little old-fashioned, but (to this reader in his upper fifties) not so seriously or so often as to be a serious impediment. S (as was expected of early Penguin translators) produced fluent narrative English designed not to puzzle non-specialist readers, while M in revising him has not been drastic, but has used such words as 'barbarian' and 'tyrant' which S avoided (on 'tyrant' see below) and has tried to change the tone where he thought S did not do enough to 'underline the seriousness of Herodotus' purpose'. G found R 'dull and prolix' and S like 'a twentieth-century journalist', and set as his own aim a style which was 'direct, powerful and clear but also ... a little odd': when reviewing his translation I thought that the oddity was only slight but he seemed 'to waver a little uneasily between informality and an old-fashioned formality'.²

¹ I note in passing that Crawley's Thucydides is likewise available both in the new Everyman and in Wordsworth; there is of course a Penguin Thucydides; Grene has not translated Thucydides himself but has edited Hobbes's translation; and Jowett's translation is to be revised by S. Hornblower.

² G&R xxxv 1988, 96.

Literary scholars will want a translation which keeps as closely to the Greek as is compatible with readability; historians will want one which is consistent and reliable in its treatment of technical terms. For a general check I have compared the different translators' versions of the Corinthians' warning to Sparta against tyrants and account of their own tyranny in V. 92. M changed only the occasional word in S's version, and almost all the time R is much closer to the Greek (but R places after the Delphic oracle to Cypselus part of the material which in the Greek and in the other translations precedes the oracle). G is about level with R in his closeness to the Greek, but a good deal more awkward in his English. R is the only translator who tries to include in his translation an explanation of the pun on the name Cypselus, offering 'a 'cypsel' or corn-bin'. The beginning of the chapter provides a fair sample of how the different translators render Herodotus.

(R) Such was the address of the Spartans. The greater number of the allies listened without being persuaded. None however broke silence, but Sosicles the Corinthian, who exclaimed -- 'Surely the heaven will soon be below, and the earth above, and men will henceforth live in the sea, and fish take their place upon the dry land, since you, Lacedaemonians, propose to put down free governments in the cities of Greece, and to set up tyrannies in their room.'

(M) Most of the allied representatives disapproved of the substance of this speech, but the only one to raise his voice in protest was Sosicles of Corinth. 'Upon my word, gentlemen,' he exclaimed, 'this is like turning the universe upside-down. Earth and sky will soon be changing places -- men will be living in the sea and fish on land, now that you Spartans are proposing to abolish popular [changed by M from S's 'democratic': the Greek is *isokratiai*] government and restore despotism in the cities.'

(G) That was what they said. But the majority of the allies did not accept their proposals. Though the rest of them kept silent, the Corinthian, Sosicles, spoke up: 'Truly shall the heaven be beneath the earth, truly, earth above the sky! Truly shall men have their living in the sea, and fish have what men had formerly, when you, the Lacedaemonians, abolishing the rule of equality in the cities, make ready to return to them their absolute princes!'

R was often (as in that passage) willing to write of a 'tyrant' and of 'tyranny', but he did not always use these words to render *tyrannos* and *tyrannis*. S regularly avoided the technical words, and M sometimes but not always (and not in that passage) reinstates them; G again regularly avoids them. I give a few

other examples. In I. 6. i Croesus (who is called *tyrannos* by Herodotus, and technically is a *tyrannos* as a descendant of Gyges, who overthrew the previous dynasty) is lord of the peoples west of the Halys (R), king (S, M), ruler (G). In I. 59. i Pisistratus is tyrant of Athens (R); dictator (S), changed to tyrant (M); sovereign lord (G). In a cluster of passages in book VI R has tyranny in Athens (123), but calls Cleisthenes king of Sicyon (126. i) and Pheidon king of Argos (127. iii). M retains S's absolute government for Athens in 123, but changes master to tyrant for Cleisthenes and ruler to tyrant for Pheidon; G writes of a despot in Athens, and makes Cleisthenes and Pheidon princes.

The *prytanies* of the *naukraroi* in Athens in V. 71. ii are a notorious problem, and not only for the translator. R avoids interpreting, and gives us the straightforward 'Heads of the Naucraries'. S paraphrased as 'the officers in charge of the administrative districts', and M leaves that unchanged; G has 'the presiding committee of the naval boards'. I do still prefer the derivation of *naukraros* from *naus* = ship, but in view of the alternative derivations which have been canvassed recently R's is undoubtedly the best version to set in front of students.

S had originally presented some of Herodotus' material in footnotes, to improve the flow of the narrative; A. R. Burn in the 1972 revision restored this material to the text and produced a book with a very small number of explanatory footnotes; M in the latest revision of the Penguin has supplied new notes, more often historical but sometimes literary, some giving basic explanatory material but many drawing on and giving references to a variety of recent discussions. G's notes are disappointing: those which are not simply explanatory are based on the commentary of How and Wells, and they are often out of date and sometimes actually wrong. R's notes, with those added by Blakeney for the 1910 Everyman edition, do not of course pretend to be up to date, but they are sensible and often still useful, and were well informed at the time of writing. We might profitably have been given a discreet modernisation of such terms as 'the Gulf of Dantzic' (spelled *sic*), which survives unaltered in both versions of R (book III n. 123 in the Wordsworth edition). In book VII I notice that n. 19 refers to Darius' Behistun Inscription (as does M's n. 9); n. 29 refers to the surviving traces of Xerxes' Athos canal (as does M's n. 13); n. 111 invokes the fact that Artemisia was from Herodotus' home town of Halicarnassus to explain her prominence in the narrative (as does M's n. 28); n. 231 remarks that Amphictyon is likely to have been invented as an eponym to provide the origin of the term amphictyony (a point which M does not make). None of those four points is covered in G's notes.

To accompany the best notes, M's revision of the Penguin has the best bibliography. S's Penguin had maps and M has provided new maps; G has

elderly maps reproduced from the Loeb Herodotus; neither version of R is supplied with maps.

How will one's money best be spent? For readers who are not looking simply for 'a good read' but who want to study Herodotus, particularly for the increasing number of readers who are wholly dependent on a translation and are not using the translation to help them with the Greek text, R's seems to me to offer the best combination of readability and close reflection of the Greek original; but M's new Penguin has by far the best explanatory material. Wordsworth Classics are so cheap that an enthusiastic student may feel able to buy both; in any case the extension of Wordsworth's interest into the Greek and Latin classics, with the reissue of good out-of-copyright translations, is very much to be welcomed.

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