

interspersed with detailed discussions of important epigraphical evidence such as the Molpoi Decree. The concluding Chapter 6 ('The Fifth Century', 215-42) is also based mainly on a fresh discussion and re-interpretation of well-known (and much treated) inscriptions — such as the Athenian regulations for the city and the so-called Banishment Decree. G.'s reading of these documents results in a revised chronology and a new view of the relations between Miletos, the Delian League and its hegemonial power and the disastrous *staseis* of the 5th century.¹² Once again, G.'s observations are well worth serious consideration, although her conceptualization of 'oligarchy' and versus 'democracy' has an old-fashioned pseudo-Aristotelian ring and would have benefited from critical reflection.¹³

In sum, the book (which contains a fairly comprehensive and therefore valuable bibliography, 259-79), has quite a lot to offer, not only detailed expositions of the present state of research, but also and above all original, carefully argued and often interesting interpretations of individual pieces of evidence — it is certainly here that G. is at her best. However, I have serious doubts whether reading myths as a sort of 'mauvaises chroniques' or 'broken mirror' reflecting 'bad history'¹⁴ of early history or even events is permissible, and I remain sceptical about the feasibility of the overall plan of a fully fledged 'history' of any Greek city — even if the 'hero' is the 'ornament of Ionia'. This brings me back to the beginning of my review. A Tale of One City is just not enough.

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Nina L. Collins, *The Library in Alexandria and the Bible in Greek*, Leiden — Boston — Köln: Brill (Supplements to *Vetus Testamentum*, vol. LXXXII), 2000. 214 pp. ISSN: 0083 5889 ISBN: 90 04 11866 7.

Well, now we know: the translation of the Septuagint took place between approximately 10 Ellul in the year 281 BCE (earlier if the translators did not work during the nine (sic) days between Rosh ha-Shanah and the Day of Atonement) and 8 Tevet, some 116 days later, or around New Year 280 BCE. They were religious Jews, so they can not be supposed to have worked on sabbaths or holy days, nor on days of New Moon, which is why we have to allow roughly 116 days for their task, not the traditional 72.

Dr Collins arrives at her very exact date for this enterprise by an analysis of the material on the date provided by a variety of ancient sources. She tells us that of eleven sources which she studies here in some detail, nine depend on just two, but she uses the material of all eleven nonetheless somewhat indifferently. Indifferently in more than one way: she tells us (28) that Epiphanius states that the translation was completed 'in his (=Ptolemy II's) seventh [regnal] year,

archaic' period (with a few rather short and cautious historical excursuses): A.M. Greaves, *Miletos. A History*, London etc. 2002.

¹² Cf. H.-J. Gehrke, *Stasis. Untersuchungen zu den inneren Kriegen in den griechischen Staaten des 5. und 4. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.*, Munich 1985, 114ff., 221ff. with the best comparative analysis of the Banishment Decree (not mentioned by G.); his systematic study of internal and external causes, conditions and patterns of civic discord and 'internal war' (201ff.) remains fundamental for the understanding of the nature of politics, 'parties' and political controversy in Greek *poleis* in general.

¹³ Cf. K.-W. Welwei, "'Demos" and "Plethos" in athenischen Volksbeschlüssen um 450 v. Chr.', in *Historia* 35, 1986, 177-91 (= *idem, Polis und Arche*, Stuttgart 2000, 197-211), not cited by G.

¹⁴ I. Morris, *Archaeology as Cultural History. Words and Things in Iron Age Greece* (Oxford, 2000) 190-1, who uses a remark by M. Bloch on poetry mistakenly viewed as a 'miroir brouillé': 'Critique historique et critique du témoignage', in *Annales ESC* 5, 1950, 1-8, at p. 8.

more or less'. She is struck by the expression 'more or less', and notes that, for Justin, in the life of Jesus, the phrase seems to mean that Jesus was 'not yet' thirty, which must therefore mean he was 29. The argument develops, and leads to the conclusion (29) that 'Epiphanius thus states that the translation was made in the sixth regnal year of Ptolemy II'. The logical conclusion seems to be that 'more or less' means (one) less.

Dr Collins's thesis is that the event of the translation can be dated exactly, that it was due to the initiative of Demetrius and enjoyed the active patronage of Ptolemy II, and that it was carried out despite Jewish opposition. The Jews were very strongly opposed to the whole idea of translation of their holy book, so they asked Ptolemy to free over 100,000 Jewish captives in an attempt to put him off. Unexpectedly, he granted their request, and as a result the Jews had to go along with his demands. But they did not have to like the result: so, when Ps.-Aristeas tells us, §310, that 'after the reading of the rolls the priests and the elders of the translators and some members of the (Jewish) community [scil. of Alexandria]' approved of the result, we have to understand that 'some' is a hint that some others didn't.

In building her case, Dr Collins ignores any notions of genre, of fictionality, or of historical context. Shakespeare's historical plays and the Bible could be (and are) analysed in exactly the same way, and produce similar results. Archbishop Ussher, in the seventeenth century, famously made an attempt to date the moment of Creation in this way. His was a serious attempt at biblical chronology, and is rightly praised still today, but Collins adopts an almost wholly uncritical approach to the central text here, the *Letter* of Ps.-Aristeas, and assumes that it represents an almost completely true account of an authentic event. Almost, but not quite, for, tucked away in a footnote on p. 142, over a hundred pages later than the calculation of the date and time of the translation that we have just noted, we find that the 'possible working days of the translators ... may have no relation to historical fact'. Quite so.

Ancient accounts tell of the dismissal of Demetrius of Phalerum by Ptolemy II and his subsequent death (? murder) by the bite of an asp, after he had advised Ptolemy I against leaving the throne to Ptolemy II. These testimonies are re-interpreted here: Demetrius' advice was eminently sensible, so Ptolemy II had no reason to be hostile to him and indeed employed him in the Library of Alexandria and for the translation of the Pentateuch. The role of Demetrius both in the Library and in the translation is blown up, based on the account in the *Letter*, to vast proportions, and the translation itself is presented as an event of political significance for Ptolemy, who we are told, without any support from evidence, wanted the translation as a boost to his regime at the time of his accession — though curiously little is made of this potentially interesting point in the book.

This sort of approach characterises the book as a whole. It is marred by slovenly English, frequent repetition, mis-representation of Greek (e.g., 123, where a phrase important for Dr Collins' argument is simply added to the text without any indication that its author is not Ps.-Aristeas but Dr Collins herself), and quite unusually bad proof-reading, which leaves mistakes in English, French, Latin, Greek, and German, as well as in dates and page numbers. Dr Collins manages to mangle the title of Hody's great work (assumed here, wrongly, to have been written when he was Regius professor of Greek in Oxford), to have Alexander found Alexandria after he was dead, to tell us that Michael the Syrian, in the twelfth century, used an Armenian version of Eusebius (c.260-c.340) which was made approximately one thousand years after him (i.e., roughly in the period 1260-1340 — 'more or less?'). Looseness of categorisation is present too: at p. 70, Demetrius' advice against the succession of Ptolemy II is described as possibly 'treasonable'. Lots of things, but treasonable? There are inexactnesses in critical elements of her case, based either in misunderstanding or in ignorance of Greek and Latin (or English translations from those languages), e.g., at p. 2, where we are told that Ptolemy made it a condition that the translation be made in Alexandria; at p. 72 we are told explicitly that Cicero says that Demetrius was murdered 'by the ruler of Egypt', when the author has just cited the relevant passage from Cicero, to the effect that he was killed by the asp 'in ... the kingdom of Egypt'. On p. 78 we are told that

Hermippus and Heraclides, two sources of Diogenes Laertius, did not transmit a certain fact; the alleged 'fact' may or may not be true, but what Diogenes Laertius, as cited by the author, actually shows is that they did transmit it. We are told, p. 66, n. 21, that 'after declaring himself and his son [Demetrius] king ... Antigonos recalled Demetrius from Cyprus ... This means that after declaring Demetrius as king, the latter went to Cyprus'. Despite the English, it seems fairly clear what the author is trying to say here; but there seems to be nothing to justify saying it. Names appear in two, once even three, different forms (e.g. Daisios, Daisos; Kassander, Cassander, Casander); there are carelessnesses about dates, such that we are told, p. 19, that Thoth 1 (the Egyptian New Year) occurred on 2 November in the years 285-282 BCE, while in the years 281-278 BCE it fell on 2 November. Problems with logic too: on p. 31 we have two alternative dates in our sources, and Collins tells us 'one of these facts [sic] must be correct', without considering the possibility that neither of these supposed 'facts' might be correct. The accuracy of two dates, one in Epiphanius and one in Eusebius, is 'confirmed by the fact that they ultimately agree' (56). The phrase 'it is reasonable to assume' occurs with worrying frequency. And we hear numerous times in the long last chapter that the translation is 'divine' (not, apparently, in the sense of 'splendid').

Even simple arithmetic here leaves the reader gasping for air: on pp. 82-3, 304 minus 283 is said to equal 23; and on p. 54, the 'time between summer 278 and 272 BCE' is described as 'this group of four [years]'. Of course it might be argued that arithmetic is not what a book about the translation of the Bible is actually about. Unfortunately, it is, for Dr Collins wishes to prove her thesis about the date of the translation by means of an exacting set of calculations of correspondences between Egyptian regnal years, Macedonian regnal years, Athenian archontal years, and the more normal BCE years which we (unlike most of those involved in her story) are so used to. Arithmetic is centrally important to such a task, if one is going to attempt it at all.

Archbishop Ussher makes for better, and more convincing, reading.

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Myth, History and Culture in Republican Rome; Studies in Honour of T.P. Wiseman, Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2003. x + 358 pp., 30 illustrations. ISBN 0 85989 662 5.

With the passage of the centuries, academic honours change little — honorary degrees, collected essays, *Festschriften* — and for all that Peter Wiseman has done so much to upset conventional ideas about Roman myth, literature and popular culture, the laurels he quite rightly accumulates are perfectly traditional.

I do not offer detailed epitomes of the nine papers I read with sharp interest and much profit; the editors themselves offer ample 'digests', as seems to be — increasingly and perplexingly — current usage. In summary, though, note:

Nicholas Purcell (12-40) offers 'Becoming historical: the Roman case', while we wait for the published text of his engrossing Jerome lectures on the Rome 'of the Tarquins', and after. A fascinating case is advanced for the development of synchronic thought far earlier than hitherto suspected and P.'s argument for an intellectual development in central Italy not significantly slower or less exciting than in Greece (*pace* views conventional in antiquity and more recently) is advanced with abundance of learning and ingenuity. If some of his hypotheses should turn out less credible upon a second reading, we shall still be grateful for having been hauled so vigorously out of our conventional ideas.

In 'Land and people in Roman Italy' (56-72), Michael Crawford tries to reconstruct a pattern of archaic settlement in mountainous areas with a new emphasis upon high mountain sanctuaries and hill-forts upon watersheds that are not boundaries; an autobiographical vein of travel in these