1983

Review of Daitz's The Pronunciation of Ancient Greek

Deborah H. Roberts
Haverford College, droberts@haverford.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarship.haverford.edu/classics_facpubs

Repository Citation
editor herself claims, it is difficult to represent Tatian's language and style ade-
quately in a translation: his style is stilted and harsh, and his language very of-
ten obscure. The introduction to the work provides a summary of Tatian's life,
education, literary style and general theological views, as well as a list of biblical
quotations and allusions found in the Oratio. There is also a list of classical quo-
tations found in the work, and indices of mythological, legendary and other mis-
cellaneous names.

Rutgers University
CW 77.2 (1983)

Stephen Daitz. The Pronunciation of Ancient Greek: A Practical Guide. New

This guide consists of two tape cassettes accompanied by a pamphlet with
exercises and demonstration texts. Daitz gives a brief history of the Greek lan-
guage, followed by an account of the evidence for Attic pronunciation in the
fifth and fourth centuries, and argues for the importance of reading Greek aloud
as accurately as possible. He then takes up in turn the pronunciation of vowels
and consonants, pitch accent, and quantity. Daitz usefully spends most time on
those sounds hardest for English speakers to pronounce. In the pronunciation he
recommends: omicron and epsilon are relatively closed vowels, omega and eta
relatively open, and long vowels with iota subscript are pronounced as
diphthongs; zeta is zd, gamma is pronounced as ng before mu as well as before
palatals, and theta, phi, and chi are aspirated stops rather than fricatives. Daitz
gives a judicious account of what we know about Greek pitch accent; he dis-
cusses quantity (focusing on the dactylic hexameter) and gives basic rules for dis-
tinguishing long and short syllables. He suggests that the student add gradually
the elements of proper pronunciation, accent, quantity, and expression, and
demonstrates his approach by reading aloud the opening line of the Odyssey.

Daitz's method should work well; he reads Greek with clarity and explains
many of his choices. Since this is a practical guide, however, he gives little atten-
tion to theoretical complexities; interested students should make use of the works
cited in the brief bibliography, particularly Allen's Vox Graeca.

Teachers will continue to differ on the validity and pedagogical usefulness of
the pronunciation recommended here. Some may believe that pitch accent is too
little understood or too difficult for English speakers, and that in reading we can
more easily combine a sense of meaning with attention to pronunciation and
quantity than with attention to pitch. Daitz himself, noting that to use a later At-
tic pronunciation in reading Homer is like reading Shakespeare with a modern
pronunciation, recognizes considerations other than contemporaneity of author
and pronunciation in our choice of pronunciation.

My experience is that students find Daitz's recitals tremendously exciting and
feel that they are hearing Greek read as a living language. The encounter is worth
while, and, if we support Daitz's enterprise but disagree at points with his views,
surely critical discussion of these views will also be of interest.

Haverford College
CW 77.2 (1983)