

Classical Review – Thomas J. Nelson Notice of Sider 2017. In: *CR* 68.1 (2018): 287.
Author Manuscript. DOI of published version: [10.1017/S0009840X1700186X](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009840X1700186X)

A NEW HELLENISTIC POETRY ANTHOLOGY

Sider (D.) (ed.) *Hellenistic Poetry. A Selection*. Pp. xx + 579, ills. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017. Paper, US\$49.50 (Cased, US\$90). ISBN: 978-0-472-05313-1 (978-0-472-07313-9 hbk).

David Sider has marshalled many prominent scholars of Hellenistic poetry to produce a volume that will be an excellent resource for researchers and students alike: a commentary on over 40 Hellenistic authors and texts, ranging from the relatively well-known to the obscure and the anonymous.

The editor's avowed goal was to produce something between a Bryn Mawr commentary and a Cambridge 'Green and Yellow', and in this he is successful. Each entry (occasionally and somewhat confusingly called a 'chapter') is equipped with the usual commentary trappings (introduction, text, select app.crit., lemmatic notes, bibliography). The lemmata are largely linguistic and exegetical, designed to help a student's basic understanding of each text, but the individual introductions, bibliographies and notes provide enough pointers for deeper literary appreciation. Unsurprisingly, approach and degree of detail differ between contributors, but I personally found most rewarding those that went a little beyond their remit to include more literary discussion throughout, better conveying the excitement and fascination that these poems can elicit (e.g. Hunter on Callimachus' *Aetia*; Rawles on the Tattoo Elegy; Sens on Lycophron's *Alexandra*).

The volume's greatest strength lies in the range of texts it treats, which significantly expands the corpus of readily accessible Hellenistic poems. Sider was sensibly liberal when deciding on the boundaries of the 'Hellenistic' and so includes underexplored authors outside the traditional date range of 'Alexander to Actium' (e.g. Philoxenus, Melinno). As a whole, the selection gives a good flavour of the rich diversity of poetry and traditions encompassed by the term 'Hellenistic', even if each reader will note their own regretted absences. The editor himself would have liked more Theocritus and some Antimachus (p.ix); I would have preferred more early Hellenistic poets (e.g. Philetas, Simias) and a few more epicists (especially some Philo or Theodotus to complement Ezekiel's similar retelling of biblical stories). But there is no denying that this collection as it stands presents a great advance in the accessibility of Hellenistic poetry for both appreciation and study; it will form the cornerstone of many future curricula.

Managing twenty-eight different contributors cannot have been an easy task, and Sider should be commended for the general consistency of style and presentation throughout. Nevertheless, the volume could have benefitted from a little more proof-reading to avoid occasional typos: especially notable are the dating of Pseudo-Scymnus to the second century 'CE' rather than 'BCE' (p.524), inconsistencies of spelling ('Theodamas', p.87, or 'Theiodamas', p.88? 'Hermias' or 'Hermeias', p.168?), and moments of unidiomatic English (e.g. 'it is not sure that' for 'it is unclear whether', p.62). Yet despite such slips, the volume is a welcome supplement to pre-existing commentaries in this area, especially Neil Hopkinson's 1988 *Hellenistic Anthology* (Cambridge). In the twenty-nine years between these two books, the field of Hellenistic poetry has evolved a great deal, and authors who were once deemed obscure are now almost considered 'mainstream'. The range of texts on offer here attests to this expanding interest, and with this commentary as a tool for future study and research, that interest shows no sign of abating any time soon.