Herodas

Complete Works

DELPHI CLASSICS

Ancient Classics Series

The Complete Works of

HERODAS

(fl. 3rd century BC)

Contents

The Translations

M. S. Buck Translation, 1921
A. D. Knox Translation, 1922

The Greek Text

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The Biography

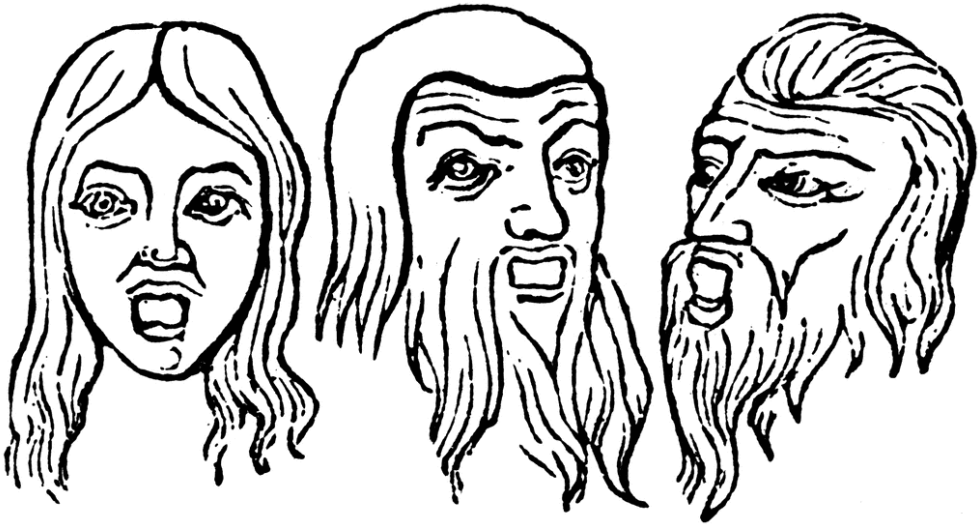
Introduction to Herodas by A. D. Knox

The Delphi Classics Catalogue

Version 1

The Complete Works of

HERODAS



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The Translations

Alexandria, the capital of Roman Egypt — Herodas' likely birthplace

Roman ruins at Alexandria

M. S. Buck Translation, 1921

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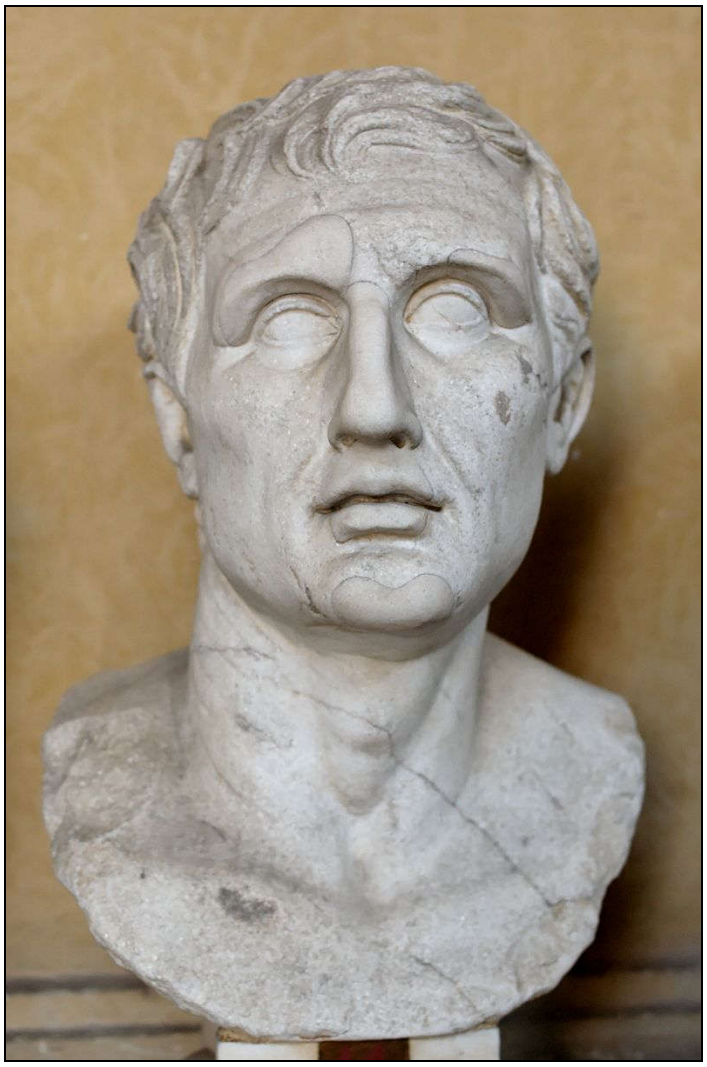
The first column of the Herodas papyrus, showing Mime 1. 1–15.



Bust of the Greek playwright Menander; Roman copy of the Imperial era, after a Greek original (c. 343–291 BC) – Menander's plays, now mostly lost, were likely a great source of influence for Herodas' Mimes.

INTRODUCTION

The Mimes of Herondas — or Herodas — have been known to us only since the discovery and publication of the "Kenyon" MS. by the British Museum in 1891. Previous to that time, this Author was known only by a few quotations in Athenæus and a comment in a letter from Pliny the Younger to Autonius.

As nearly as can be determined, the Mimes were written about the middle of the third century B. C. and, very possibly, at Kos, a small Greek island near the coast of Asia Minor about midway between the Samos and Rhodes. The island was noted for its precinct of Asklepios — the scene of the fourth Mime — which contained several temples and buildings, with groves and porticoes; and was also the seat of a considerable culture.

While the Author used a poetic form, employing the scazon or "lame" iambic, he was essentially a Realist. His scenes deal with popular life and are written in a naturalistic language, without flights of imagination, straining with poetic images or studied description or comment. For an extra touch, they give us a popular proverb rather than a mythological reference. It is thus, as a bald and undistorted picture of the intimate life of the period, that the Mimes are of the utmost importance, not only to students but also to more general readers who have, however, a certain leaning toward antiquity and appreciate the opportunity of seeing, intimately, these interesting phases of Greek life. The women with their gossip and scandal, the voluble cobble, the shiftless slaves, the brothel-keeper whose pompous court speech is almost a burlesque, drawn vividly with a few brief touches, are almost as human to us, to-day, as they must have been, to other readers, over two thousand years ago.

The Kenyon MS. of Herondas — from the Fayum — the only one known — is much damaged from worms and breaks, especially toward the end and, in other places, has been rubbed until it is almost impossible to decipher. A rather uncertain dialect and frequent proverbial passages, not always clear, present additional difficulties. Therefore, an accurate, word for word translation is impossible. It has not even been definitely settled just which characters speak, in some parts of the Mimes, as the original does not always indicate the different speakers and the divisions that are given are simply by marks and not by names. The seventh Mime is seriously broken up; the eighth is hardly more than a fragment. And a few additional fragments, including some for the eighth Mime, discovered in 1900, are not of much value for restorations of general literary interest. As given here, the eight Mimes include all that we have, at this time, of Herondas, coherent enough for mention, except a fragment with the Author's rather epigrammatic remark addressed to Gryllos:

When you have passed the bounds of three-score years, O Gryllos, Gryllos, die and turn to dust. For life beyond that point is dark and the glory of life is obscured.

It has been the aim of the present Translator to present a popular, readable version only, ignoring disputed points of interest only to critical students and using his own conjectural readings where necessary but including all passages where any sort of an intelligent reading is at all possible. Some of the subjects handled are certainly informal; but the situations are portrayed convincingly and in language to which, certainly, no objection can be taken.

Acknowledgment is made to the literal French prose rendering of Pierre Quillard, second edition, Paris 1900, which has, in the main, been followed in connection with the text and exhaustive commentary prepared by J. Arbuthnot Nairn, M.A., and published in 1904. The tentative, partial translation of the first six Mimes by the late

John Addington Symonds in his “Studies of the Greek Poets,” third edition, 1893, has also been consulted. But this rendering, which bristles with the most startling interpretations, in addition to being abridged, cannot, today, be taken very seriously.

The large part given to women in the Mimes leads us into reflection over the standing of antique, as compared with present-day, women. And, if we may believe that the position of women in the world always has, and no doubt always will depend to a greater extent than is, perhaps, realized on the women themselves, our inevitable conclusion is flattering to those with whom Herondas was acquainted. Certainly, the women of the antique world, although occupying what is ordinarily considered a subjective position, kept more truly a real and passionate standard of womanhood. Whether simply courtesans like Myrtale, moderately corrupt dilettantes like Koritto or no more than average housewives like Phile, they touched more easily the greatest heights of happiness or sounded the deepest abysses of woe — in either case, however, realizing their sex to the fullest. And the most erudite and persistent modern advocate of woman’s “rights” can never prove convincingly that this realization — through submission, not assertion — possible now with the with the additional glory of complete consciousness — and its conventional fruition, has not always been, and will not always be, the real intention of Nature; nor that, in wilfully departing from it, the present-day woman does not seek to barter her heritage for a mess of pottage of very uncertain quality. For how many women, to-day, are such poems as this of Meleager written?

I will twine the white violet and I will twine the delicate narcissus with myrtle. I will twine laughing lilies, sweet crocus and the purple hyacinth. And I will twine the roses-dear-to-love that, upon Heliodora’s fragrant brows, the garland may color with its flowers the sweet locks of her hair.

May we believe this required, and received, inspiration? But the better educated woman of to-day immerses herself in politics, problems outside her natural province, a peculiarly grotesque “education” or other trivialities — seldom in the mystery of feminine sex realization; the woman of a lower class knows no poets; the traditions of Phryne and Thais rest in the hands of shop-girls.

Haed hactenus.

I. THE GO-BETWEEN

METRICHE
GYLLIS
THRESSA

M. Thressa, someone knocks at the door; go and see if someone has come from the country.

* * * * *

T. Who is there?

G. It is I.

T. Who are you? Are you afraid to come nearer?

G. Well, see: I am close, now.

T. Who are you?

G. Gyllis, the mother of Philænion. Tell Metriche I am here.

* * * * *

T. A caller for you.

M. Who is it?

T. Gyllis.

N. Old mother Gyllis!

Turn your back, slave.

What Fate has brought you to our house? You, like a god in the houses of men! For it has been five months, I am certain, Gyllis, since you, even in a dream — by the Mœraæ![1] — have been seen at this door.

G. I live far away, my daughter; and in the streets the mud comes up to one's thighs. And, as for me, I am weak as a fly; for old age pulls us toward the earth, and the shadow draws near me.

M. Hush now, and don't accuse Time: you will have strength to throttle many others, Gyllis!

G. It is the way of young women to banter; but I don't see how you yourself can do it. For how long, now, my child, have you been widowed, wearing out your empty bed alone? Ten months have passed since Mandris departed for Egypt and he has not sent you a single line. The house of the Goddess is there; everything, everything there is and which can be, is in Egypt: riches, palæstrae, power, happiness, glory, spectacles,

philosophers, young boys, temples of twin gods, an excellent King, a museum, wine, all the good things one could desire, women without number — by the Virgin, Mistress of Hades, the sky is not so glorified by bearing so many stars! — and lovely as in the time when the goddesses came for Paris to judge their beauty — (may they not hear me saying this!) [2] — while you, unhappy one: how must you feel as you sit warming your chair? Thus, without your suspecting it, age approaches and your bright youth wastes itself in ashes. Look elsewhere and change your thoughts; for a few days, be joyous with some other who is also joyous. A ship on a single anchor has no sure mooring. . . . [3]

* * * * *

Often a savage tempest bursts upon us even in the midst of pleasant days; and no one knows our future, for life is uncertain.

M. What do you want to say?

G. There is no one who can hear us?

M. No one.

G. Then listen to what I came here to tell you. The son of Matakine, Patækhos' wife, Gryllos: he who has conquered five times — although still a boy — at Pytho, and twice at Korinth against those with the first down on their cheeks, and who has twice, at Pisa, beaten matured pugilists — rich as one could wish, without stirring a chip from the ground[4] — a virgin jewel for Kitheræa! — saw you in the procession of Misa. His bowels throbbed with love, his heart was pierced with a dart and neither night nor day, my daughter, will he leave my dwelling, but runs after me, importunes me, and kills himself with desire.

Now my child, Metriche, grant me this one favor; let yourself be motivated by desire; do not let yourself be surprised by the old age which is always watching you. There will be a double advantage; you will pass an agreeable moment and you will receive more than you might think. Consider; hear me; for I love you, yes, by the Mœræ!

M. Gyllis, your white hair has blunted your sense. Yes, by the return of Mandris and the benevolence of Demeter, I would not have listened this calmly to any other woman: with her crooked song, I would have taught her a crooked walk and to hate the very threshold of my door. But, for you, another time, my dear, I would not advise you to bring me any of these stories which old women have a way of bringing to young ones. Let Metriche, daughter of Pythias, warm her chair in peace; no one shall laugh at Mandris.

But such words as these, as they say, are not what Gyllis needs to hear.

Thressa, rub up the black bowl, pour in three pints of pure wine, then some water, and give it to us generously.

T. Here, Gyllis, drink.

G. Very well. But, by the wine, I did not come here simply to give you advice, but to give you pleasure as well.

M. It is for pleasure that I have this, Gyllis. Profit by it: it is agreeable.

G. You are fortunate, my daughter, in having so much in reserve. Yes, it is agreeable, by Demeter. Gyllis has never had wine more agreeable than this of Metriche's. May good fortune, my daughter, attend your solitary cautions.

M. And I hope that Myrtale and Sima will remain young, so long as Gyllis breathes.

τὸ μὴν ἄεθλον ὡς δόκευν ἔχ[ει]ν μοῦνος

πολλῶν τὸν ἄπνουν κώρυκον πατησάντων,

κἠ τῶι γέροντι ξύν' ἔπρηξα ὀρινθέντι,

..] κλέος, ναὶ Μοῦσαν, ἤ μ' ἔπεα κ[

.]εγ' ἐξ ἰάμβων, ἤ με δευτέρη γν[

.]... μετ' Ἰππώνακτα τὸν παλαι[

τ]ὰ κύλλ' ἀείδειν Ξουθίδηις επιουσι.

MIME IX

.]ζεσθε πᾶσαι. κοῦ τὸ παιδίον; δεξ[

.]αιπ[.]ος Εὐέτειραν καὶ Γλύκην .[

.]ιτ[....]αιδρη τὴν ἐτοῖμον ου[

.....].ισμησε[..]ισματων[

5.....].ινατ[.....]νηνυτω[

.....].η[.....]αχηπεπο[

.....]..[.....]φερεσκο.[

.ρ[..]οδ.[.....]α δειλαίοις βλε[

φερω...[.....].ακαιτανυ[

10 αυτησυ.[.....].εται νο[

ουπροσθα[.....]νισηξ[

τίθεσθ’ α.[..... ἄ]εθλον ἐξοι[

γληχ[.....]κεῦσί σ’ ἤειρα

MIME X

ἐπὴν τὸν ἐξηκοστὸν ἅλιον κάμψῃις,

ὦ Γρύλλε, Γρύλλε, θνῆισκε καὶ τέφρη γίνευ·

ὡς τυφλὸς οὐπέκεινα τοῦ βίου καμπτήρ·

ἤδη γὰρ αὐγὴ τῆς ζοῆς ἀπήμβλυνται.

MIME XI

προσφὺς ὅκως τις χοιράδων ἀνηρίτης

MIME XII

ἢ χαλκέην μοι μυῖαν ἢ κύθρην παίζει

ἢ τῆισι μηλάνθηισιν ἄμματ’ ἐξάπτων

τοῦ κεσκίου μοι τὸν γέροντα λωβᾶται.

MIME XIII

ὡς οἰκίην οὐκ ἔστιν εὐμαρέως εὑρεῖν

ἄνευ κακῶν ζώουσαν· ὃς δ’ ἔχει μεῖον,

τοῦτόν τι μέζον τοῦ ἑτέρου δόκει πρήσσειν.

The Biography

Ancient Ephesus, modern-day Turkey — the setting of several of Herodas' mimes

End of Sample