

Joseph Braddock, *Sappho's Island. A Paean for Lesbos*. London: Constable, 1970. Pp. VIII + 199.

This is described by the publishers as the first comprehensive book on Lesbos by an author "who is a poet, scholar and philhellene." To what extent can these claims all be justified?

Here obviously is a mature writer who like so many others has fallen desperately in love with Greece and whose paean for it, and for Lesbos, rings neither forced nor false. He is indeed a philhellene with a very shrewd eye for Greece the unique—the crystal-clear Grecian light (pp. 145, 189), the eternal *philotimo* (pp. 157-58), the "hierarchy of supernaturals" where the highest rank is held by Panagia-Theotokos (p. 161).

Of his earlier writings four volumes prove his professional competence in poetry and as a example of his success as a lyric poet in this one we may take his six quatrains (pp. 110-11) on visiting the Theophilos Museum. But why does he not sometimes give us his own verse translations of Greek poems? He frankly admits his "insufficient knowledge of modern Greek" (p. 142). But the reviewer would have been glad to see at least some attempt at direct translations of the seven Lesbian folk songs (pp. 149-53) instead of work at second-hand through the medium of Pineau's French. Even more disturbing, however, is Braddock's reliance on other poets when he is reproducing Sappho. After all, his *paean* is uttered precisely for her sake and he writes, it is emphasized, as a scholar. The famous Ode to Aphrodite is given (p. 193) in a version by Paul Roche. The Aeolic loveliness and the formal precision of the original seven stanzas (eloquently conveyed into English by Sir William Marris, *OBGV* 140) are sadly missing in this clumsy rendering, where the style is surely not 'polished' and where the non-aquatic *strouthoi* of the great poetess have gone afloat on a swim as *swans*.

Confidence in the author's metrical skill is undermined at the very outset. Here we are offered the author's tribute "To Sappho" in six ostensibly Sapphic quatrains. But how to make a Sapphic hendecasyllabic line out of "Now, as when the kingliest one in Babylon"? Better to turn at once to see how the thing can be done (p. 108) by Swinburne.

Certainly scholarship meets us — sometimes, however, in somewhat pedantic guise. For instance (p. 23) the start of "a brief history of Lesbos" is peppered with names of sources and authorities: Leaf's *Troy*, an article by Mortimer Wheeler in the *Observer*, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*,

to say nothing of Schliemann, Dörpfeld and Sir John Squire. We may wonder about the relevance of Dr. Johnson's remarks (pp. 65-66). Again the citation from Housman's *Shropshire Lad*, even if "it is impossible not to recall" (p. 37) seems grotesquely far-fetched.

Others before Braddock have written about Lesbos: Georgeakis and Pineau, M.M. Patrick and B. Roland. His book certainly fills a gap, for it covers much ground, provides a useful bibliography, and unmistakably conveys the enthusiasm of one who loves it especially because of Sappho. All the digressions and the scissors and paste technique help to make the study respectably comprehensive although disconcertingly rambling.

Queen Mary College,  
University of London

REX WITT

Jane Aiken Hodge, *Greek Wedding*. London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1970. Pp. 251.

This is confessedly a novel which "has for its background the blood-stained muddle that came to be known as the "Greek War of Independence." Fiction and history are woven together with the result that the hero Brett Renshaw, presented as one who "despises the Greeks almost as much as he does women," and the American heroine Phyllida Vannick, witness the Battle of Navarino, interview Ibrahim Pasha and go as envoys to Codrington. Clearly success in writing such historical fiction demands close research. The author frankly acknowledges her debt to C.M. Woodhouse whose studies have helped her to steer her course "through the remarkable number of conflicting contemporary records of this war." Here, even the unscholarly reader may feel, is an exciting and convincing romance. Whatever we may think about the characterization of the Greek Alexandros, wooer of Phyllida, or the style of the dialogue here and there, or the Orthodox wedding in the cave (p. 212), Mrs. Hodge has been able to produce yet another adventure story "blending the historic and the private drama." With her experience she knows how to keep us waiting. We reach Navarino Bay, and the battle "which accidentally ensured Greek freedom," only in the last chapter of the book.

"The Greeks" we are told in the Historical Note which forms the