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Review. Ralph Marcellino, The Greek Anthology, Selected Epigrams

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Ralph Marcellino has hidden, for all but classicists, a long series of meticulously polished rhymed verse in the *Classical Bulletin* and the *Classical Outlook*. Bobbs Merrill published his *Martial: Selected Epigrams* (a *ne plus ultra*, in my judgment) in 1968. This winter, he has, on his own, published a chapbook of some sixty-five poems from the *Greek Anthology*. Now in recent times, the more successful English renderings have been prosy versions of *epitaphs* which generally have let the pathos of the story shoulder the burden of making the translation seem a poem: somebody died, and the translation is supposed to be a poem too, even if on the cheap. But taking the epigrammatic poems of the Anthology is another matter. It is tough to turn one into English and make it work: it doesn't work if the translation is not itself a poem; further, the translator must be a very patient wordsmith, rather than someone looking for a way to crank out "another poem." Alistair Elliot, Dudley Fitts, Anthony Holden, Peter Jay, Richmond Lattimore, Alan Marshfield, Andrew Miller, Ezra Pound, and Kenneth Rexroth have all tried their hand at parts of the *Greek Anthology*. I have sampled their efforts. Marcellino frankly profits from the comparison. In the main, his are not simply translations that just sit there, but poems that work. Viz:

Stranger, passing by this tomb,
Pause and rest yourself a bit And
pour a little wine for one
Who was, and is, still fond of it.

T.N.W.