

PIRONTI (G.) and BONNET (C.) (eds) **Les dieux d'Homère: polythéisme et poésie en Grèce ancienne** (Kernos Supplément 31). Liège: Presses Universitaires de Liège, 2017. Pp. 257. €25. 9782875621306.

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This book derives from a conference held in Rome in 2015, and is translated into French from the Italian original published in 2016. It is a 'polyphonic enquiry' by nine authors aimed at shedding light on various aspects of polytheism and representation of the divine in the Homeric poems.

The book falls into three sections of three chapters each. The first section on divine nature and powers opens with chapter 1, 'Visibilité, invisibilité et identité des dieux' (Maurizio Bettini), which examines in detail various modes in which the gods manifest themselves to human beings and concludes that their varying forms all represent their 'true' divine identity, their ability to appear in multiple modes being part of their nature and privilege. Chapter 2, 'Des couleurs et des sens: percevoir la présence divine' (Adeline Grand-Clément) is a very innovative chapter examining how the gods are perceived by different human senses (i.e. by sight, hearing, smell and touch). It also discusses the colours associated with the gods, particularly those implied in divine epithets such as *glaukōpis* and *leukōlenos*. Chapter 3, 'De l'éros au récit: Zeus et son épouse' (Gabriella Pironti), analyses the relationship between Zeus and Hera, particularly through the episode of *Dios apatē* in *Iliad* 14, where the interaction and tension between Zeus, Hera and Aphrodite, and their powers and functions illuminate how Homeric polytheism works. In Pironti's reading, Hera emerges not merely as a jealous wife, but as the last and the most important of Zeus' spouses, through interaction with whom 'Zeus' strategy is clarified, perfected and revealed' (83).

The second section concerns the connection between Olympus and the earth. Chapter 4, 'Les dieux en assemblée' (Corinne Bonnet), examines the functions of divine assemblies, particularly how they debate the fates of human beings. At the divine assembly, Zeus has supreme authority, but the Fates (*Moirai*) also briefly feature along with him in the context of decisions concerning human fate (104). Further exploration of the relationship between the Fates and Zeus (and other gods) would have added value to this chapter. Chapter 5,

'Iris et Hermès, médiateurs en action' (Carmine Pisano), reveals subtle differences between the functions of the two messenger gods. Hermes tends to be deployed when a mission requires persuasion and mediation, while Iris tends to be summoned for more straightforward deliveries of Zeus' messages. This chapter provides a good example of Homeric polytheism in action, in which some gods have similar and overlapping functions. Chapter 6, 'Le rituel: communiquer avec les dieux' (Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge), discusses prayers, sacrifices and offerings to the gods in the *Iliad*, including Chryses' prayer to Apollo in book 1, Agamemnon's sacrifice for Zeus in book 7 and the offering of a *peplos* to Athena by the Trojan women in book 6. The latter in particular highlights the tension within Homeric polytheism when the goddess does not support the city that has built a temple in her honour.

The last section ('De la guerre au salut') contains two chapters on war and one on salvation. In chapter 7, 'Conflits des dieux, guerre des héros' (Pascal Payen), the focus is firmly on war. The most striking observation of this chapter is that war is seen as a human construct, not a natural phenomenon, as one of the activities of the city, along with other social, political, judicial and agricultural activities, as seen on Achilles' shield. Chapter 8, 'Le choix d'Aphrodite et les causes de la guerre' (David Bouvier), is by far the most ambitious chapter in the volume. It engages with the question of religious war (and its absence from Homer) and Arnaldo Momigliano's thesis of war as a natural event (*Storia e storiografia antica*, Bologna 1987), and culminates in the observation of different meanings of the term *philotēs* (love/friendship) in operation in book 3 of the *Iliad*, such as in terms of the truce made between the Greeks and the Trojans and the love-making of Paris and Helen arranged by Aphrodite following the aborted duel, which became the cause of the renewal of war. Chapter 9, 'Quand un dieu sauve' (Miguel Herrero de Jáuregui), offers a thrilling word-by-word analysis of *Odyssey* 3.231 ('A god, if he wishes, can easily save a man, even from afar'). This is a *gnōmē* that highlights the difference between the concepts of 'salvation' in Homeric poetry and Christianity.

This book is an exciting collection of innovative essays, and will richly reward any reader interested in Homer and his gods.

NAOKO YAMAGATA
The Open University
n.yamagata@open.ac.uk