F. ROSCALLA: *Presenze simboliche dell'ape nella Grecia antica.* (Pubblicazioni della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell'Università di Pavia 86.) Pp. 148, 16 ills. Pavia: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1998. Paper, L. 50,000. ISBN: 88-221-2825-7.

Bees have had a remarkable history from very ancient times. In Egypt they provided a determinative sign for royalty; they appear on the coins of Ephesus as symbols of the Mother-goddess worshipped there; in both pagan and Christian symbolism they were associated with death and immortality—'O death, where is thy sting?', as St Paul famously exclaimed—and with chastity since, as Virgil said, 'they do not indulge in sexual intercourse or slothfully relax their bodies into the act of love' (*Georgics* 4.198–9). The bee represents facility of speech, too, for both Plato and Plutarch became naturally eloquent after bees had touched their lips, and Deborah, the prophetess of the Old Testament, was likened to a bee. The beehive represents a paradigm at once of a farming community, an army, and a kingdom in miniature under the beneficent rule of a 'king'. Not surprisingly, therefore, both the Carolingian monarchs and Napoleon Bonaparte made the bee an emblem of sovereignty; and perhaps no wonder the Jesuit Vanière concluded his poem on bees with the exhortation: 'fortunata nimis gens, in commune beatos / si pergant agitare dies; apibusque magistris, commoda magna sibi pariant, dum publica quaerunt'.

Roscalla begins by examining the symbolism of the bee as it made its way culturally from Anatolia into the orbit of the Greek world, beginning with Çatal Hüyük, where it played a rôle in the cult of the Great Goddess, via the Hittite myth of Telipinu and the cult of Minos in Crete, to Delphi, where, as we learn from Pindar's *Fourth Pythian Ode* (60–1), Apollo's priestess, there endowed with the ritual title of 'Melissa' in addition to 'Pythia', gave voice to the oracles of the god. In this transcultural journey, then, the bee acquired attributes relating on the one hand to the rhythm of nature as vegetation sprang afresh into life from a period of apparent death, and on the other to prophecy.

Secondly, R. devotes a good deal of attention to the Sirens, introducing his discussion quite unexpectedly (and, it must be said, somewhat irrelevantly with a quotation from Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit*). Homer's sirens, he maintains, are known to us principally as voices; it is only later that literature gives them form, as in the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Historia Animalium* (623b.10–12), which defines *seiren* as a type of solitary bee. Taking this as a starting-point, R. asks whether Homer's sirens could originally have been bees, and in pursuit of his argument extends his researches into the symbolic relationship between bees, flowering meadows, honey (the great preservative), and the reappearance of life from death, bearing in mind that bees were believed to emerge regenerated from the carcasses of dead animals. R. buttresses what might otherwise seem to be a somewhat tenuous concatenation of suggestions by referring the reader to the etymology of various words describing sounds (especially *trizein* and *hadinos*), and of *seiren* itself, which he aligns, tentatively, with Sanskrit *sará-t*. An attempt to extend this discussion to the animal origins of music and dance, however, is less successful. R. then completes his survey by returning to the development of the figure of the bee in myth, particularly as it has been discussed by nineteenth- and twentieth-century mythographers and anthropologists.

On the whole, the book is a mixture of the useful and the provocative. It contains photographs and line-drawings, many of which are unfamiliar, and an extensive bibliography. The absence of an index is perhaps a little unfortunate.

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H. W. PLEKET, R. S. STROUD, A. CHANIOTIS, J. H. M. STRUBBE (edd.): *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum XLVI.* Pp. xxvii + 844. Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, 1999. Cased, Nlg 290. ISBN: 90-5063-178-9.

This edition of the indispensable annual compendium of Greek inscriptions published in 1996 is characterized by variety, although the growth of onomastic studies is marked (e.g. nos. 537,

https://doi.org/10.1093/cr/51.2.417 Published online by Cambridge University Press