

L. BRISSON: *Einführung in die Philosophie des Mythos. Vol. 1: Antike, Mittelalter und Renaissance* (Translated by A. Russer) (Die Philosophie). Pp. x + 242. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1996. Paper, DM 45/Sw. frs. 45/öS 351. ISBN: 3-534-10112-X.

B. leads his reader through 2000 years of Greek myth in the reception of philosophers and philosophically minded scholars. His analytical table of contents and indexes (loci; names; concepts) permit one to use this book for reference. B.'s *aperçus* of periods and persons are most convenient, and his quotations of some late antique and Byzantine writers bring many of us as close to them as we shall ever come. He does not provide a bibliography, but his notes, of discreet quantity and length, indicate the state of opinion, with a preference for French authorities.

The twentieth-century American Joseph Campbell was not the first, it turns out, to propound a univocal world mythology as a means to self-fulfillment. Numenius of Apamea (second century C.E.), a forerunner of Plotinus, taught that a single, unalterable truth had been revealed in Homer, Pythagoras, and Plato, and also to the Egyptians, Persians, and Jews. This truth, however, was hidden, and like the mysteries, accessible only to a select few. It only remained for his successors to work in the Chaldaean Oracles and the Orphica. Allegorizing already in the fifth century B.C.E. a way to interpret myth persisted in the School of Athens, which was so successful that Justinian shut its pagan doors in 529. Then the scene shifted to Byzantium, and, with the immigration of Byzantine scholars, to Italy. The rest is Western history. B. has a long chapter on the Renaissance. What of the Christian Middle Ages in the West? They receive only a skimpy chapter, probably because they cannot show much but Euhemerism (most conspicuously in the *Origines* of Isidore of Seville) to put under the heading of philosophy.

This heading indeed leaves the reader with large questions. Was there ever really any philosophy of myth, or was there only critique, on the one hand, and allegorizing accommodation on the other? Even when those whom we would consent to call philosophers are referring to myth, are they talking about myth or about something else? Robert Lamberton, under the title *Homer the Theologian*, covers much of the same material as B. (Chapters 5–6). Myth as narrative, myth as a form of thought, myth as difference in sameness as it deploys itself in various works in various times—these are not problems that anyone in B.'s large cast of characters felt compelled to face. For them, myth was theology, and also cosmogony, cosmography, and psychology, in short, whatever their philosophic systems could use.

Perhaps it is unfair to raise these questions. B. was contributing to a series of introductions (*Die Philosophie: Einführungen in Gegenstand, Methoden und Ergebnisse ihrer Disziplinen*), and he has written a handy one. He has spared himself no, us much, labour. (The work is also published in French as *Introduction à la philosophie du mythe* [Paris, 1996]; ISSN: 0249-7913.)

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LOWELL EDMUNDS

I. M. RUUD: *Minoan Religion: a Bibliography*. (Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology and Literature, Pocket-book 141.) Pp. vi + 124. Jonsered: Paul Åstrom, 1996. Paper. ISBN: 91-7081-162-8.

Given the current level of interest in Minoan religion, it is appropriate that R. should have revised *Minoan Religion: A Bibliography*, which was originally published in 1980. This is not a supplement but a complete revision and covers monographs, journal articles, chapters of monographs, essays and articles from collections, and doctoral dissertations published between 1900 and 1995. Whereas the previous version of the bibliography was simply arranged alphabetically by author, this edition is subdivided into fourteen sections, namely bibliographies, general works and introductory sources, cult places, cult practices, cult symbols and equipment, deities, epigraphic evidence, iconography/seals and sealings, priesthood and sacral kingship, relation to Greek and Mycenaean religion, relation to other religions, relation to Thera, sacral animals and demons, and tombs and burial customs.

Since there are 950 entries, 520 more than in the 1980 edition, this thematic arrangement is sensible. Of course some of the entries could, and possibly should, have been listed in other sections, and more use might have been made of cross-references. It helps that there is a subject as

well as an author index. R. admits that the bibliography is not comprehensive and it is inevitable that there should be some omissions, particularly when the focus moves from Crete. Nevertheless, specialists and students will find that this is an extremely useful source of references. The preface anticipates some of the developments which have already occurred in the production of electronic versions of bibliographic databases, and this is surely the format which should be adopted for future editions in view of the rate at which publications on Minoan religion appear.

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W. SPEYER: *Religionsgeschichtliche Studien*. (Collectanea 15.) Pp. xix + 221. Hildesheim, Zurich, and New York: Georg Olms, 1995. DM 98. ISBN: 3-487-09993-4 (ISSN: 0175-8594).

'Die geistige Mitte, um die alle Religionen der Ursprungs- und der Hochkulturen kreisen, ist die heilige Macht', the first sentence of the first essay reprinted in this collection declares. To which one is tempted rudely to respond 'Who says?'. (The answer turns out to be 'E. Fascher, Art. Dynamis: *RAC* 4 [1959], 415–58'.) The ancients themselves do not say this, nor anything very like it. The claim must rather be that the ancients must have believed in such 'sacred power' in order to behave, in many areas of life, in the ways in which they did. But this sounds like an argument of the type stigmatized by Evans-Pritchard as 'if I were a horse': nothing could have induced me, reasonable creature that I am, to behave in such and such an odd way except such and such an odd belief (*Theories of Primitive Religion* [Oxford, 1965], Chapter 2).

The point is not an incidental one for S.; for a concept of 'sacred power' is central to most of the longest essays in the collection. There are studies here of powers that both wound and heal; of secret religious traditions; of 'the book as a vehicle of magico-religious power'; of the Eleusinian Mysteries; of sacred voices as a form of revelation in early Rome; of 'numinous' individuals; of heroes, divine men and saints. For S., all these phenomena are vehicles of a double-sided sacred power, or have access to it; and religion is simply the human endeavour to deal with this power.

S. has contributed extensively to the *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, and most of the essays range over both Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian materials with enviable ease. But as for analysis, his interpretative concepts constantly recall those of the nineteenth-century pioneers whom Evans-Pritchard criticizes so effectively. Concepts such as that of sacred power could perhaps receive a systematic defence, but certainly stand in need of one. Too many alternative approaches to the problem of interpreting religious behaviour are here simply ignored.

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G. CLOKE: *This Female Man of God: Women and Spiritual Power in the Patristic Age, AD 350–450*. Pp. xi + 243. London: Routledge, 1995. ISBN: 0-415-09469-0.

This is a book that will please undergraduates. As an overview of a subject that has attracted a lot of attention in the past decade it provides a useful introduction to the subject of women and the ascetic movement in the fourth and fifth centuries. It both does, and does not, live up to its title: C. claims to be giving an overview (p. 7) and in this she succeeds, but as with broad sweeps, it often leaves the tantalized reader asking for more. A prime example of this is the promise of a discussion of the *imago dei* debate, which is set up in Chapter 3, but it is short, superficial on the theological ramifications, and equally not followed through in the conclusion. On the other hand, the book ranges over a huge amount of source material, from Seneca and Plutarch to the Church Fathers, with stops in between. It is in this sense that this is a great undergraduate book; it provides both information and ways of thinking about a subject. In the introduction and first chapter the problems of talking about women and using patristic evidence are engaged with, though I would take issue with the claim that '... the fathers' thought-processes were the product of a female environment ...' (p. 6). It seems that by her conclusion, by far the most interesting part of the book, C. had disagreed with herself and is arguing that despite women's