MONUMENTAL MYTHOGRAPHY

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Whenever an attempt at offering a comprehensive picture of a complex phenomenon is undertaken, the result inevitably merges the usefulness of a synthetic definition with the vulnerability of generalisation. In this case, F. provides us with the first collection of pre-Hellenistic prose texts dealing with Greek myth. At first sight, the task sounds straightforward, but the traps lying on the way to a reconstruction of the earliest phases of a genre are many. Nevertheless, this has not restrained him from facing the challenge and producing a work of thematic originality and outstanding erudition. Due to the current pressures on academic 'productivity', such monumentally learned works are becoming more and more rare, especially when they are not the product of a collective effort, but of years of tireless study by one single scholar. This work successfully combines a traditional philological reading of the primary sources – the foundation of any serious scientific contribution – with a contemporary perspective on the analysed material, and it arouses a feeling of genuine admiration towards its author.

F. was aware from the beginning of his enterprise that he would be editing a not-yet-established genre. Mythography as learned prose writing on myths takes shape in the early Hellenistic age. F. pinpoints the shift in Greek culture which fostered the development of prose collections of mythical material. When heroic sagas ceased to be regarded as a section of Greek history and started being viewed as a collection of tales, similar to divine genealogies, divine and heroic myths merged into a new genre and separated from the narration of human events. The dichotomy of mythography vs historiography had thus been ratified (2: p. xiv). As F. previously showed in an illuminating paper ('How To Tell a Myth', *Kernos* 19 [2006], 35–46), the common trait guaranteeing continuity to this literature is the linguistic register. Authors such as Pherecydes and Apollodorus share several features that set their style apart, namely the 'summary-like' narrative rhythm, the lack of mimesis, replaced by the predominance of indirect speech and third-person narration, and the linear presentation of events within a genealogical line, imposed by the material itself. Seeds of other features that matured later in Hellenistic mythography can be spotted in the early texts, above all an incipient critical attitude towards multiple versions of a myth and the parameters of inherent plausibility and logical consistency in reporting a tale (2: pp. xv–xvi).

F.'s collection could have been entitled *Early Greek Historiographers* / *Logographers*,[1] since, as acknowledged in the introduction, if those authors had been asked to name their work, they would have resorted to ἱστορίη or λόγοι, not to the rather disparaging μῦθος or μυθολογεῖν (1: p. xxviii). Their chronology is in fact prior to the aforementioned cultural shift, to which intellectuals like Herodotus and the Sophists largely contributed. Yet, since F.'s chief interest is not in reconstructing the works of the fragments or the authors'

[1]D. Felton labels vol. 1 a collection of writers of 'myth as history' (*BMCR* 2002.06.02). A. Bernabé talks of 'a thematic anthology' (*Gnomon* 75.8 [2003], 728).

profiles, but rather in tracing back the earliest evidence for mythical episodes in prose, the choice of title and subject arrangement respects the purpose in full.

The bipartite structure of volume 2 follows the plan anticipated in volume 1 (1: p. xxxvii). A first and preponderant section, arranged by chapters on single sagas ('Mythological Commentary'), is followed by a more concise section, devoted to brief portraits of the authors ('Philological Commentary'). Volume 2 is completed by two addenda to volume 1 (one on the chronology of Hippys of Rhegion in connection with an article by Giangiulio[2] and one on the sixteenth-century *Mythologiae* by Natale Conti); a list of corrigenda to volume 1 and a commendably rich bibliography. Four useful indexes complete the work: of the *EGM* 1 fragments, of other ancient literary sources quoted in the commentary, of Greek keywords and a general index of names and subjects. The first index is essential, since the thematic organisation of Part A of volume 2 does not correspond to the alphabetic arrangement by author of the fragments in volume 1.

A comparative reading of the introductions to each volume is the best way to check to what extent the original concept has been fulfilled. In 2001 F. announced that the first part 'will proceed by topics, such as arise naturally out of the genealogies themselves: for instance, theogony, Deukalion and all his progeny, Argonautika, Troika, and Nostoi, Attic legends, etc.' (1: p. xxxvii). Indeed, the chapters of this section are each centred on a saga and their order follows the mythical chronology, with some inevitable arbitrary placements, such as the 'Local Histories' (§17) between the 'Attic Legend' and 'The Trojan Cycle'. The last chapter gathers all fragments that cannot be linked to any specific myth due to the lack of proper names or other clues ('Other Fragments', §20). The conformity of the 'Mythological Commentary' to its original plan is confirmed by the conciseness with which it is presented in the introduction to volume 2. There, F. simply adds some apologetic remarks concerning the discrepancy between the arrangement of the fragments and that of the commentary. The principal scope of providing a careful and synoptic reconstruction of the earliest literary evidence about a certain myth or character is once more stressed (2: p. xix). The broader expression *earliest literary evidence* is not chosen accidentally, since the commentary is not restricted to the texts of volume 1, but draws widely on other archaic and classical sources, both in verse and in prose (above all Hesiod's *Theogony* and *Ehoiai*), and it often notes the myth's *Nachleben* in later mythographic accounts. The literature of the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.E. is so imbued with mythical matter, that a study having myth at its core can hardly limit itself to one genre.[3]

Hence, this is much more than a 'canonical' commentary; it is a wide and very learned treatment of the earliest sources about a certain saga (cf. 2: p. 651). It includes a detailed presentation of all variants, a faithful report of previous scholarly reconstructions and interpretations of a myth, useful genealogical trees and summaries of complicated genealogies or myth variants, synthesised in a few clear words at the end of each chapter. F. is right in foreseeing that the main readership of his work will be people wishing to find all available information on the earliest prose sources around a specific

[2]M. Giangiulio, 'Ippi di Regio, la Suda e l'erudizione pinacografica antica (*FGrHist* 554 T 1 = *Suda*, ι591 Adler)', in S. Alessandri (ed.), *Ἱστορίη: studi offerti dagli allievi a Giuseppe Nenci in occasione del suo settantesimo compleanno* (1994), pp. 225–43.

[3]There is no risk of the mythological commentary being criticised by any sensible reader, whereas there is a feeling of unease, which also emerges from the reviews to volume 1, regarding the alphabetical arrangement in the edition of the fragments. Would not a tentative chronological arrangement have better matched the asserted aim of showing the evolution of the genre, especially given F.'s criticism of Jacoby on this very issue (1: pp. xxix–xxx)?

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myth gathered in one place, rather than to learn something more about Acusilaus or Hecataeus.[4]

In the 2001 foreword we read: 'Whether, when, and in what sense the Greeks "invented" mythology is a large subject best left for the commentary' (1: pp. xxvii–xviii). Regardless of what is meant by 'mythology' (a synonym for the whole mythical tradition or the rational debate on it?), this kind of large-scale reflection does not turn up very often. F. is generally not keen to engage in anthropological interpretations, although he sometimes proposes insightful hypotheses on the development of a given myth, like for instance on the Pelasgians.[5] Other broad and thought-provoking observations can be noted in the body of the commentary. For example, in noting the genealogical link between Asclepius and Hippocrates, F. stresses the scarcity of such attempts to anchor the mythical times to the historical times in the mythographic accounts, in contrast to its frequency within historiography (2: p. 77). Later on, F. engages in a fascinating discussion on the mutual influences between myth and ritual in the context of the mythography about the Proitides. In highlighting the ease with which the Greeks took local myths out of their original ritual settings and reworked them for pan-Hellenic purposes, F. warns about the risks of grounding the hermeneutics of a myth on the anthropology of ritual practices and thereby falling into superficial generalisations. He recalls the paradigm of fertility, dominating in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and that of initiation, prevailing in recent decades, as alleged keys to understanding the genesis of many myths (2: p. 174).

As for the origins of a detached and rational attitude towards myth in antiquity, F. does not address this issue directly. He rather argues about the cultural change within Greek society, whose witness was the mythographic genre. In several places in both volumes, the early mythographers appear almost like Humanists ahead of their time, who helped 'create a sense of myth as a cultural capital, an independent body of material that educated people needed to acquire for many purposes' (2: p. xviii).[6] If these assumptions are embraced without hesitation with regards to the activity of later mythographers of the Hellenistic and Roman ages, some hesitations arise in bringing forward this cultural shift so early in time. Are we sure that already in the fifth century B.C.E. such a widespread phenomenon of parting from the mythical past was underway? Were the early mythographers already tracing a line between the historical and the mythical age and looking at myth as something remote and analysable from a detached perspective? Was the mythical heritage already regarded as a matter for the learned and no more as a constitutive element of folk culture? At the time of poets such as Pindar, Bacchylides and Stesichorus, and dramatists like Aeschylus and Sophocles, myth was a chief ingredient of so many private and public events, that it may sound too early to extend a feeling of unfamiliarity with it to such a large portion of Greek society.

Moreover, one wonders whether F. may have yielded to the justifiable enthusiasm for the subject of decades of research, when he comes to label the mythographers as 'indispensable' authorities for 'every kind of literary and artistic endeavour' and 'first and

[4]The book is not geared for this task, not least because the fragments edited in volume 1 are a selection of those transmitted from the 29 authors, limited to the ones with a mythical subject. Thus, the portrayals of the mythographers cannot (and do not aim to) be complete.

[5]The jarring data on these people induce F. to interpret them as the embodiment of the ancestral, pre-Greek people par excellence in the imagination of the Greeks and to reject the search for their localisation (2: pp. 84–96).

[6]F. continues: '"Myths" were becoming "myth", no longer organically linked with other things, but a kind of discourse in its own right'. Whatever F. intends by 'other things', myth still permeated many moments in the life of a fifth-century Greek citizen.

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abiding targets of philosophical criticism' (2: p. xviii). That these writers dealt with matters of great cultural significance is undisputable, but to ascribe to them a crucial influence in politics, religion and any other field of public life, may be an overestimation.

By calling Part A 'the bulk of this work' (2: p. xix), F. implicitly confesses that the second section has suffered some reshaping when compared with his original intentions. Perhaps for this reason, F. feels compelled to give more details on the features of this part in the introduction to volume 2. Looking back at the introductory announcement of 2001, we read that the philological commentary should 'proceed author by author, fragment by fragment, discussing mainly non-mythological questions but also attempting to reconstruct the lost works, to raise questions about the author's attitude to myth in general, and finally to assess the genre of mythography as a whole' (1: p. xxxvii). The more recent introduction reassesses the outline of this section as follows: 'I provide discussions of each author's character as a mythographer, and comments on non-mythological matters such as the contents of individual books, problems of text and attribution, dates, and so on' (2: p. xix). As a matter of fact, the short paragraphs on the authors contain the available biographical information (parents' names, place of birth, chronology, etc.), a synthetic overview of the preserved work (especially linguistic and stylistic comments) and specific notes on philological issues regarding some fragments. The thematic breadth of the latter section of the book has thus been narrowed and the authors' profiles range from a few lines to a couple of pages, depending on the size of the preserved material.

The chapters dedicated to Pseudo-Eumenides and Eumelos in volume 2 tackle the critical issues raised by Bernabé and Liapis in their reviews of volume 1.[7] As for the doubts concerning the feasibility of a distinction between verse fragments of the sixth-century semi-legendary Cretan poet Epimenides and fragments from prose works circulating under the same name, F. replies with two arguments, the second being particularly strong: (1) the reported *testimonia* attest the existence of prose pseudepigrapha of Epimenides, thus the need to include him somehow in the collection; (2) in the quoting contexts of several fragments, Epimenides is mentioned alongside other early mythographers like Acousilaos and Pherecydes, and not in connection to other poets. In short, F.'s guiding principle has been to leave out only the undoubtedly poetic fragments[8] and to edit all the rest, including fragments of an uncertain nature. The same method is applied for Eumelos: all fragments clearly not belonging to the poem *Korinthiaka* appear in volume 1, in the consciousness that some of them may come from another poem rather than from the epitome. F.'s brave choice not to overlook these problematic authors, but to guarantee them their deserved place in the group of the early mythographers in spite of possible scholarly perplexities, can only be praised.

There is no doubt that this work will constitute a reference tool for future research on a wide range of subjects – for example early Greek prose writing, mythology and early Greek historiography – for a long time. When the third volume including the English translation of the edited fragments is published, the readership will broaden, since the edited texts will be also available to historians and scholars not trained in Greek.

Otto-von-Guericke University, Magdeburg SARA CHIARINI
chiarinisara@hotmail.com

[7]A. Bernabé, op. cit., 728–31; V. Liapis, *CR* 52.2 (2002), 236–8. Another minor objection by Bernabé concerns Chreophylus' fr. 3 (1: p. 66), which may be alternatively assigned to the homonymous epic poet from Samos. F. replies to this point and defends his attribution to the Ephesian prose writer (2: p. 232 n. 102).

[8]These are taken into account within the mythological commentary which, as said, does not rely only on early mythographic sources.

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