

and endings takes on an increased significance since both the narrative and the life of one of the two individuals on whom it has recently focused come to an end at the same time.’ (Needless to say the footnote to this passage gives references to the deaths of Creusa, Dido, Palinurus, Marcellus, Cleopatra, Mezentius, Camilla and Arruns.)

Given its comparative nature, this book may prove a challenging ‘introduction’ to those readers who know nothing about any of the three epic poems discussed, but those with some knowledge of any of the texts who are curious to learn more about Greek and Roman epic are sure to enjoy this highly readable book. I imagine it will make an ideal textbook for introductory courses on Greek and Roman epic. Although it lacks the rigour of references to the very latest of research publications, R.’s sensitive reading of significant passages from the three poems and the often surprisingly illuminating results of comparison will also richly reward those who approach the book with more specialist research interests.

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THE COMPARISON OF HOMER AND VIRGIL

WEIß (P.) *Homer und Vergil im Vergleich. Ein Paradigma antiker Literaturkritik und seine Ästhetik.* (Classica Monacensia 52.) Pp. 392. Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto, 2017. Paper, €88. ISBN: 978-3-8233-8110-5.

doi:10.1017/S0009840X18000446

In this very useful and timely monograph, W. surveys the beginnings of a complex phenomenon, the ancient habit of comparing Virgil and Homer. Many of the connections between the two figures are so obvious, so often repeated and so fundamental to the way we still read Virgil today that it is good to have someone go back to basics, in an attempt to trace the beginnings of the habit of seeing Virgil as almost inseparable from Homer and to discuss the various angles of approach and particular interests of those who made key contributions to a fascinating story. W. shows convincingly how the *Kanonisierung* of Virgil is inextricably related to his perceived status as a very Homeric poet. In doing so, he sheds light in passing on the reception of both Homer and Virgil individually, but the focus throughout is strictly on Virgil and Homer as an almost inseparable couple. When the *Aeneid* first appeared, it was immediately read as a fundamentally imitative poem, and this feature had a strong impact on early critics. And so, like all great works of literature, the very nature of the poem led to changes in the way critics read. Appreciation of Virgil’s virtuoso *imitatio* obviously went hand in hand from the very beginning with interpretation of his imitation of Homer before all else. But where some readers immediately saw highly successful *aemulatio* and *variatio* based on absolute mastery of well-known techniques of composition, others saw only shameless plagiarism.

Building on the standard study of E. Stemplinger (1912, but rather confusingly dated by W. in footnotes to 1990, which is merely the date of the reprint) and the more recent work of S. McGill (2012), W. devotes a whole chapter to Virgil’s first *obtrectatores* and to the connections between them and earlier writing about plagiarism in the ancient world.

Particularly useful here (pp. 62–70) is the way in which he also relates the charges of *furtum* brought against Virgil to wider debates about the nature of literary *imitatio*. Strikingly, of course, while work on Virgil often follows the paths laid down by traditions of Homeric criticism, it is in the field of plagiarism that there is no Homeric precedent.

W.'s monograph is based on a doctoral dissertation defended at the University of Munich on 28 January 2016. The relatively rapid appearance of the thesis as a published book (the preface is dated to April 2017) suggests that not too much has been done in the way of rewriting of the original, and the end product does indeed display many of the merits of the Ph.D. genre. It is carefully organised, clearly written, impressively and helpfully footnoted, bibliographically up to date. Some of the less meritorious features of the genre also remain: page 23, for example, has two lines of main text for forty-six lines of sprawling footnote. But overall, W. leads his readers carefully and competently from chapter to chapter, section to section and sub-section to sub-section. He begins with four late-antique epigrams that set the scene by showing how ingrained the tendency to read Virgil as a new Homer had already become. When someone turning out an epigram in the fourth century CE could pretend to be Virgil (the first poem in question, *Anth. Lat.* 674a Riese, uses the first person singular) and claim that Romans who did not know Homer (*Maeonium quisquis Romanus nescit Homerum*) should read Virgil (*me legat*) and in doing so consider that they had read both poets at the same time (*lectum credat utrumque sibi*), it seems obvious that the standard comparative technique of *synkrisis* has been doing its job well for some time already.

W. is well aware that the Virgil–Homer comparison is just one example of a standard way of looking at literary relationships; the point is that the cultural prestige of both authors gives their kinship a special force and that study of the development of the ways in which critics read Virgil in light of Homer helps to outline important moments in the history of the criticism of Latin literature as it evolves from the Augustan period to Late Antiquity. The bulk of the book consists of three main chapters, devoted in turn to Seneca the Elder, Aulus Gellius and Macrobius. W. neatly illustrates how each of these authors is involved in contemporary literary critical debates and that each thus contributes in different ways to the development of the Virgil–Homer story. Most of the individual passages discussed are, of course, already well known, particularly those of Aulus Gellius and Macrobius. Many of them have already been frequently exploited in discussions of imitation in Latin poetry. Like almost everyone else who has tried to come up with a brief survey of the study of Latin poetic intertextuality, W. (p. 21 n. 23) cites first G. Pasquali on *arte allusiva* and then G.B. Conte on *memoria dei poeti*, before going back to their ancient forerunners to look for precedents.

But W. is not interested primarily in Virgil's imitation of Homer; his topic rather is the critical practice of comparing Virgil to Homer, and to that end he has fixed his eye on an important topic and brought together a great deal of relevant material in a persuasively coherent manner in order to shed welcome light upon it. He has perhaps missed a trick by not thinking harder about what the practices of the allusive poets could have told him about his chosen topic. Ovid, Lucan, Valerius Flaccus, Statius and Silius Italicus are all excellent readers of the Homeric in Virgil, as numerous examples of double allusion to both models demonstrate. P. Hardie's excellent paper of 1989, 'Flavian Epicists on Virgil's Epic Technique' (*Ramus* 18, 3–20) says many things that are relevant to W.'s concerns. How much, then, did the post-Virgilian epic poets contribute to the history of Virgil as Homer in comparison to Seneca the Elder, Aulus Gellius and Macrobius? Another question that comes to mind when one considers the mass of material that W. has assembled and that so clearly demonstrates the force, persistence and influence of the comparison between Virgil and Homer is this: what are we to make of all the evidence that tends

towards the view that in actual fact many ancient readers did not juxtapose Virgil and Homer in isolation? There is abundant evidence to show just how aware readers of Virgil were of the fact that the Virgil–Homer story is inextricably woven into the matter of the influence of Homer on Sophocles, Callimachus, Apollonius Rhodius, Ennius and so on. W. knows all this very well, of course. By drawing attention so lucidly to important parts of the evidence and bringing it all together so neatly in the telling of a fascinating story, W. has made a fine contribution that should stimulate further thinking about the large questions surrounding the reception of Homer in Augustan Rome, the different strategies employed by critics in thinking of him as a Homeric poet, the impact of Virgil on Latin literary criticism, and the ancient practice of *synkrisis* as applied to one of literary history's most brilliant and influential twosomes.

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THE GODS IN HOMER

PIRONTI (G.), BONNET (C.) (edd.) *Les dieux d'Homère. Polythéisme et poésie en Grèce ancienne*. (Kernos Supplément 31.) Pp. 257, ill. Liège: Presses Universitaires de Liège, 2017. Paper, €25. ISBN: 978-2-87562-130-6.

doi:10.1017/S0009840X18001531

Long past are the days when Homer's gods were collectively dismissed as 'Götterapparat', an expedient literary device frequently employed in the epics without at the same time endowing them with a religious dimension worthy of consideration. Once unthinkable, expressions such as 'Homer's religion' or 'Homer's theology' have risen to scholarly respectability, and Homeric gods have come to occupy a place of honour in discussions of ancient Greek polytheism (see e.g. J.N. Bremmer and A. Erskine [edd.], *The Gods of Ancient Greece. Identities and Transformations* [2010], or E. Eidinow, J. Kindt and R. Osborne [edd.], *Theologies of Ancient Greek Religion*. [2016]). Still, it is rare even today to dedicate a collection of essays exclusively to the subject of Homer's gods as a religious phenomenon. It is precisely what this volume does.

This is the first of the two planned volumes (the second instalment will also appear as a *Kernos* supplement) based on conferences held in 2015 and 2016 in Rome and Madrid, respectively. 'L'ambition de ce livre, comme nous l'avons dit', the editors write in the programmatic introduction, 'est d'inaugurer une lecture "polythéiste" de récits homériques, capable de faire émerger les interactions profondes entre la dynamique narrative et le réseau dense de puissances divines qui sont appelées à y intervenir' (p. 13). What a polytheistic reading of Homer amounts to can be boiled down to the following four points:

- (a) The Homeric poems are incomprehensible without the gods.
- (b) Homer's main concerns are theological; the heroes and their fates are of secondary importance.