

English: ‘in Homer ἐπεύχομαι means “boast” or “threaten”, but in the next note ‘in Homer, *aidê* indicates the action of a performing bard’ (p. 65).

The volume contains, in isolation, some interesting ideas. Parts of the introduction, such as that on the tradition of animal-fable, are useful despite their brevity. The translation is solid, with only a few errors, although it captures little of the poem’s mock-epic register (an epic hero who describes his father as *μιχθεῖς ἐν φιλότητι* with his mother is *not* saying that he ‘had sex’ with her). Future scholars on the *BM* will need to take some of the commentary’s interpretations into account. But it is almost impossible to imagine this book being used in the way its authors wanted it to be used, and that is a terrible shame. The *BM* is a short, clever poem; its Greek is not particularly thorny, and its subject matter is entertaining. It seems to have been popular as a school text during the Byzantine period, and a good intermediate-level edition with concise and helpful notes would be a tremendous asset to modern students as well. This book could have been that edition. But the haste with which it seems to have been written and published, combined with the incomprehensible and uncharted chaos of its text, has resulted in a work which will only reinforce the popular impression of the *BM* as an obscure and haunted ruin best left to the textual critics.

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THE GREEK EPIC CYCLE

SAMMONS (B.) *Device and Composition in the Greek Epic Cycle*. Pp. viii + 263. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. Cased, £55, US\$85. ISBN: 978-0-19-061484-3.

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Any book on the Greek Epic Cycle, despite the author’s skills and acuteness of analysis, suffers from a lack of evidence, which makes speculation an unwelcome but necessary guest to its argument. The critic inevitably needs to rely on Proclus’ *Summaries*, which are as much a blessing as they are a curse. On the one hand, as S. points out, they allow one to place the scarce and often unconnected surviving fragments of the Cycle within a broad narrative context. On the other they ignore poetic subtleties and nuances and have been traditionally thought to deprive the critic from valuable evidence regarding the poetic wealth of the cyclic poems. This lack of information in conjunction with the, often harsh, ancient criticism of the Cycle has led to a persistent understanding in modern scholarship of the poems as a poor imitation of the grandiose Homeric tradition. S.’s book aims to challenge this preconception by proposing that, despite the elliptic nature of Proclus’ account, the careful critic can identify underlying narrative structures, shared by the Homeric epics and the Cyclic poems. If such common structures can be shown to exist, S. argues, then the compositional technique of the poems will be revealed, helping us to understand and appreciate their poetic value. The book comprises six chapters and two useful appendices that discuss the nature and general context of Proclus’ *Summaries* and offer a translation for each of them.

S. begins by showing in his introduction that the Epic Cycle is an artificial term, coined in antiquity in an attempt to group under a common theme poems that were ‘individualised products of a shared, but highly volatile tradition’ (p. 17). In this sense, S. argues that the

cyclic poems should be examined within their own context, as separate poetic units with their own poetic techniques and aims. Chapter 1 demonstrates the merit of S.'s approach by examining the evidence for inset narratives in the Cycle. Problems of content such as the story of Achilles' transvestitism which, although the scholiast places it firmly within the Cycle, has left no trace either in Proclus or in the fragments, are resolved if we suppose that the story was related in an inset narrative. The use of such narratives is common in Homer, and there is no reason why the Cyclic poets would not have taken advantage of the device. S. further argues that an extensive use of inset narratives could be what hides behind some of the more serious structural problems encountered in the opening of the *Cypria* or the parallel narratives of the *Nostoi*, often seen as patchworks without a coherent underlying structure. Again, if several of these stories were relegated to analeptic or proleptic stories, the main narrative thread would have remained unaffected.

In Chapter 2 S. moves on to a discussion of catalogues within the Cycle. Much of this chapter builds on S.'s previous work on epic catalogues, but nonetheless new insights are offered such as the suggestion for a possible catalogue of the heroes in the Trojan horse embedded in *Iliou Persis* (pp. 72–5). In some cases, S.'s argument leaves room for controversy – for instance his discussion of fr. 21 of the *Little Iliad* as part of a catalogic narrative: although intelligent, it hardly removes the problems of the fragment's coherence, the two parts of which still appear rather artificially stitched together. Furthermore, S. deals in just a few lines with the problematic appearance of Aeneas in the fragment as the *geras* of Neoptolemus, by arguing that the poet places Aeneas there as a juxtaposition to the death of Astyanax, implying a new beginning for the Trojans. This argument however does little to resolve the technical problems posed by the fact that in the *Iliou Persis* and in the wider tradition Aeneas slipped away from Troy before its fall. S. is going a little too far here trying to defend a very problematic fragment.

Chapter 3 is perhaps where S.'s argument is at its best. His search for narrative doublets in the Cycle leads to a better understanding of its structure, while it defends against accusations of careless composition. A case in point is S.'s analysis of the convoluted narrative of the *Nostoi* (pp. 117–21), where he demonstrates that through the use of doublets for the overland travel of Calchas and Neoptolemus, and the sea journey of Menelaus and Agamemnon, the poet harmonises the Achaeans' return without unnecessary overlapping. S.'s analysis proves beyond doubt that doublet narratives held an important place in the Cyclic poets' armoury.

In Chapter 4 S. applies Woloch's theory of character space to the Cycle in order to better map out the contents of each poem. He further offers a reconstruction of the main narrative threads of the Cyclic poems based on the prominence of their protagonists in Proclus' summary. In so doing, he reaches some intriguing conclusions, like the fact that Achilles' narrative thread unites the otherwise diverse narrative of the *Cypria*, leading to a better understanding of the poem's structure. However, the necessity of speculation inevitably obscures the argument: the reconstruction of the *Nostoi* character space proves problematic due to the frequent changes of protagonists (Menelaus, Agamemnon, Neoptolemus etc.), leading S. to argue for a 'careful arrangement and free development' (p. 148) of the poem's character system. Free development however seems to contradict careful arrangement in this instance, thus placing the *Nostoi* in a position that is unique and problematic at the same time. Such difficulties arise not from S.'s approach but rather from the scarceness of evidence, with which S. has to battle at every turn.

Chapter 5 discusses the important concept of heroic *aristeia* and its role within the plot. S. argues that the many structural similarities between the Cyclic *aristeiai* suggest that they employed a conventional device, suited for a shorter epic. In this regard, S. argues, the Cyclic epics are closer to a traditional form of *aristeia* than the *Iliad*, which appears to elaborate upon the norm in order to suit the purposes of a monumental epic.

In the final Chapter (6), S. takes on an analysis of the gods' role in the Cycle. Understandably, this is the part of the book that suffers the most from lack of evidence, as neither Proclus' summary nor the surviving fragments provide enough information for concrete conclusions. S.'s analysis is yet again insightful and leads to thought-provoking points as when he highlights the important function of prophecy in the *Nostoi*, not as part of the action but as programmatic announcement to the audience, similar to Zeus's forecasting of events in the *Iliad* (pp. 205–7). Other points, however, appear controversial since inevitably S.'s argument turns speculative. For instance, S. sees a direct connection between the strange rendezvous of Achilles with Helen in the *Cypria*, and the hero's restraining of the fleeing Achaeans that follows it. However, there is nothing to suggest that Achilles' actions are the result of his romantic meeting with Helen and not simply his expected heroic behaviour or even the effect of divine interference, as happens with Odysseus in *Iliad* 2. All three solutions are possible, and it is hard to see why one should be favoured over the other two.

S.'s study, even when dealing with problematic issues, proves to be an invaluable tool for students and scholars alike. Despite the problems posed by the fragmentary nature of his material, S. succeeds in doing justice to the cyclic poets by identifying and bringing to the surface the narrative and structural devices employed in their composition, while steering away from speculative reconstructions of the poems. S.'s innovative study has opened the way for a positive reevaluation of the Greek Epic Cycle, and no further study of the subject can afford not to take his contribution into account.

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ASPECTS OF LOVE IN ARCHAIC GREEK LITERATURE

CACIAGLI (S.) (ed.) *Eros e genere in Grecia arcaica. (Eikasmos. Studi 28.)* Pp. x + 228, map. Bologna: Pàtron Editore, 2017. Paper, €26. ISBN: 978-88-555-3379-9.

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This collected volume is the product of a symposium convened by C. in Bologna on 30 October 2015. All the original speakers (C., S. Boehringer, C. Calame, F. Ferrari, G. Liberman) contributed to the volume. Additional contributions were made by A. Chabod, C. Neri and R. Tosi. The aim of the book, as stated by Tosi in the preface, is to combine philological analysis and anthropological comparison in order to study the evolution of the concept of ἔρως in Archaic Greece.

The first contribution, by C., 'Amore fra ἔρως e φιλότης', serves as an introduction to the volume. C. contends that 'love' is a modern notion employed inadequately as a translation for various Greek terms like ἔρως, φιλότης, πόθος or ἕμερος, all of which convey specific connotations. His aim is to pursue the connotations for the term φιλότης, for which he observes two distinct contexts. In erotic contexts, φιλότης denotes forms of consensual sexual intercourse or those aspiring to it. In non-erotic contexts, it denotes reciprocal alliances between individuals or groups. C. then examines whether these two usages might have a common origin and locates this origin in the wedding, where the legitimisa-