

BOOK REVIEW

Ovid's Homer: Authority, Repetition, and Reception. By BARBARA WEIDEN BOYD. Oxford. Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. xviii + 302. Hardcover, \$85. ISBN 978-0-19-068004-6.

Why was this book not written years ago? The topic of Ovid's debt to Homer should long since have been systematically addressed. *Ovid's Homer* makes good this lack.

Granted, Boyd acknowledges five earlier papers of her own (xiii) on aspects of Ovid's literary debt which have been incorporated into the present volume, most notably her chapter on the intrigues of Ares/Mars and Aphrodite/Venus in Fulkerson and Stover's *Repeat Performances* (Madison 2016).

Ovid's reception of Homer is apparent on various levels: reprisal of stories, such as the notorious Mars-Venus intrigue, repetition of themes, such as a son's search for an unfamiliar father (Phaethon's search for his identity as son of Sol *versus* Telemachus' quest for Odysseus), but also stylistic emulation and, sometimes, parody or redirection. Homeric narrative strategies are sometimes emulated and sometimes consciously surpassed.

Boyd distinguishes three main aspects of Homeric "repetition" in Ovid's works: verbal and conceptual intertextuality, re-use of both basic plots and actual stories, and the meta-textual concept of Ovid as "Homer's literary son," on which more below. These aspects recur throughout to a greater or lesser degree rather than being treated consecutively. The limitations of a short review such as this preclude detailed discussion of each chapter to show how these aspects are intertwined in the author's detailed analyses.

Briefly: Boyd's Introduction (1-10) and first chapter (11-40) set the analytical scene, after which follow chapters dealing with Ovid's presentation of Diomedes (41-74), two chapters on fathers and sons (75-106 and 107-46), then one focusing on all aspects of paternity (147-66), followed by a discussion of "poetic daughters," both literal and figurative (both the text as a poet's "child" and female characters

portrayed as “written women,” 167-80); next follows Ovid’s use of Homer in his elegiacs (181-212), then a chapter titled “Homeric desires” (213-36) and, finally and inevitably, Ovid’s treatment of Homer’s gods. With him, it seems, they are not so much characters as facilitators of action and setters of a particular scene (237-60). The book closes with a memorably aphoristic remark: Ovid’s gods call to mind their Homeric counterparts and the situations within which they performed, and the author says that “the one feature they share is a repetitious predictability. Both the repetitious desire of Venus and Mars and the repetitious craft of Vulcan work their way through numerous marvelous stories, all different, yet all the same, as Ovid combines poetic desire and poetic craft in an unceasing renewal of Homeric poetry” (260).

For this reviewer, the most interesting of Boyd’s three main aspects of Ovidian repetition is the idea of the Roman poet as the “son” of his Greek predecessor and their poetry as their “offspring.” This concept permeates the author’s text. Such a short review allows for only brief, consecutive references to some of her comments: a father, biological or otherwise, can stifle his offspring (7-8); Ovid’s stories both challenge and indicate affection for his “poetic ancestor” (23-0); Ovid as *novus auctor* (both “author” and “father”) recasts Homer’s tale of Diomedes in *Met.* 14:58 (65); the “poetics of paternity” shows the father-son relationship as “meta-poesis” (75); the author aims to explore, with the “language of paternity” and “its implications of obedience,” the extent to which Ovid as an “Archilochus figure” takes his poet-father’s advice (85) and does so throughout; the “highly-fraught dynamic of competition and strife in a father-son relationship” gives a “Homeric dimension” to Ovid’s comic, multi-generic version of the Calydonian boar hunt in *Met.* 8: Ovid imitates but simultaneously undercuts and strives to outdo his epic predecessor (89-96); in several cases Ovid’s versions of Homeric stories serve as “prequels” to Homer’s narrative: Ovid’s Phoenix *experiences* what Homer’s Phoenix recalls as a *distant memory* (93-4) and Ovid “pre-dates” his story of Icarus’ flight and fall to before Homer’s reference to the Icarian sea in *Iliad* 2:145 (112); Phaethon’s rejection of Sol’s advice “can be seen on the meta-poetic level as Ovid’s “rejection” of Homer as model,” but elsewhere a more subtle interaction of our poet with his predecessor serves “to open up the Homeric poems to the possibility of interaction and cross-

fertilization" (124); the "epic catalogue" of sons surpassing their fathers, leading to praise of Augustus in *Met.* 15:848-60 is followed by Ovid's own claim to poetic survival, which "serves the aggressively positive purpose of drawing attention to the survival of Homeric poetics in contemporary Rome, most particularly in the work of Ovid himself" (131); in *Tristia* 1.1 Ovid suggests that Homer is his peer, and, with his poems as stand-ins for their author, "Ovid writes himself into a literary tradition that begins with Homer" (158). Throughout, Ovid's manipulation of this tradition sends stories and themes in new directions, but always "Ovid relies on his ideal reader's ability to appreciate his mastery of Homeric tradition and his daring innovativeness" (213).

The above snippets serve only to whet readers' appetites: the subtlety and complexity of Boyd's arguments must be read in their entirety for complete appreciation of this important work.

The monograph is erudite, yet eminently readable. A copious bibliography (261-88) features not only English titles but an admirable admix of French, Italian and, to a slightly lesser extent, German (and even one or two Spanish) works. Two double columned indices, *Locorum* (289-94, of passages cited) and General (295-301, of both names and topics, including individual Latin words such as *ars* or *corrigere*) between them facilitate rapid access to aspects of Boyd's argument a reader may wish to explore separately.

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