

CJ-ONLINE BOOK REVIEW

Apollodorus' Library and Hyginus' Fabulae: Two Handbooks of Greek Mythology. Translated, with Introductions, by R. SCOTT SMITH and STEPHEN M. TRZASKOMA. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2007. Pp. lxxvi + 247. Paper, \$12.95. ISBN 0-87220-820-6.

Smith and Trzaskoma present, for the first time in the same volume, complete English translations of Apollodorus' *Library* and Hyginus' *Fabulae*—the two most important surviving “handbooks” of Greek mythography—enabling readers to compare the ancient authors' versions of the most important Greek and Roman myths. A General Introduction puts the *Library* and *Fabulae* into the broader context of ancient mythography, and Introductions to each text discuss at greater length issues of authorship, aim and influence. A General Index, an Index of People and Geographic Locations and an Index of Authors and Works Cited by the Mythographers complete the work.

The authors, with Stephen Brunet, already published translations of the bulk of Apollodorus and Hyginus in *Anthology of Classical Myth: Primary Sources in Translation* (Hackett, 2004). The footnotes of their new book are designed to facilitate immediate clarification on matters of content, and full indexes for the names, places and authors cited have been provided to reduce the clutter of footnotes and cross-references. Technical and textual matters of interest to a more limited audience are relegated to endnotes (marked in the text by asterisks).

Among the many salient features of this volume is the generous and useful General Introduction, which focuses on the wider context and development of mythography. This is not an easy task, since evidence for the Greek myths comes from a complex literary and artistic tradition spanning nearly two millennia. Organizing the myths and evaluating the sources pose further problems. The many sides of the Oedipus myth, for example, demonstrate the nature of mythography and what ancient mythographers were aiming at: *re-telling or paraphrasing* myths to capture their essential features, or at least their essential plots, and providing a reliable version without embellishment (pp. x–xv). Another kind of mythography deals with *interpreting or analyzing* myths to explain their origin, function, inner logic and hidden meanings (p. xv). Further complicating matters is the fact that the surviving mythographic writings of Apollodorus and Hyginus, which contribute most to our understanding of Greek myth, are relatively late reflections of the corpus.

Herodotus, the 5th-century BC historian of the Persian Wars, is one of the first mythographers to attempt to rationalize myth. Even Thucydides, widely considered the first objective historian, engaged in mythography at the beginning of his history (pp. xviii–xix). For the Greeks, the past was mythical; fact and fiction had to be differen-

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tiated before the myths could be completely understood. Hellenistic mythographers like Palaephatus inconsistently rationalized early myths by stripping them of miraculous and supernatural elements, often leaving them threadbare and improbable. Medea's convincing Pelias' daughters to boil him, for example, is presented as nothing more than a spa treatment gone terribly wrong (p. xxiii). Then there is the rationalizing of Euhemerus (whence the term Euhemerism), who argued that the gods of myth were deified human beings who accomplished great deeds (p. xxiv). Of the small number of Latin mythographers, the Christian writer Fulgentius should be mentioned for his *Myths (Mitologiae)*, allegorical interpretations of pagan material, along with the three Vatican Mythographers whose medieval collections contain numerous entries (pp. xxvi–xxvii).

Smith and Trzaskoma also provide thorough introductions to both Apollodorus' *Library* and Hyginus' *Fabulae* (pp. xxix–lv). Apollodorus' work, treating the bulk of mainstream Greek myth, moves from his theogony to the Wanderings of Odysseus, though the author himself is otherwise completely unknown to us. Apollodorus relied on an earlier source or sources for his work but painstakingly created his own mythographic narrative; the work is organized seamlessly and economically using relatively few main genealogies.

As for the *Fabulae*, we know next to nothing about its author and date of composition. The work falls into three sections: (1) a short theogony; (2) narrative accounts of myths; and (3) lists compiled from different myths under an individual category. Though written in Latin and to some degree adapted for a Latin audience, the *Fabulae* almost exclusively treats Greek myth and is based mainly on Greek sources. It must therefore be read with care and caution, especially since Hyginus provides genuine but otherwise unknown variants of stories, and the dubious reliability of the text presents serious problems of interpretation. It nonetheless remains an invaluable source for Greek myth.

The text of Apollodorus' *Library* is comprised of three Books and an Epitome (pp. 1–93). Book 1 treats the Gods and the Lineage of Deucalion; Book 2, the Lineage of Inachus; Book 3, the Lineage of Agenor; and the Epitome, Events and Genealogies from Theseus to the End of the Trojan War. An entry from the Epitome is cited here as an example of Apollodorus' mythography (p. 80):

Protesilaos and Laodameia 3.30 Protesilaos was the first of the Greeks to leave his ship. After killing quite a few barbarians he was killed by Hector. His wife, Laodameia, continuing to love him even after his death, made a statue in the image of Protesilaos and interacted with it.⁵ The gods took pity on her, and Hermes brought Protesilaos up from the house of Hades. When she saw him, Laodameia thought that he was back from Troy, so she was momentarily happy. But then when he was taken back to the house of Ha-

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des, she killed herself. [n. 5 The verb translated here, “interact with,” can carry connotations of socializing from mere conversation to sexual intercourse. Compare Hyginus 104.]

Apollodorus offers a standard account of the story Protesilaos and Laodameia, and Smith and Trzaskoma provide a straightforward but not overly literal English translation of his Greek, as well as a brief but important footnote.

Hyginus’ *Fabulae* (pp. 95–182) opens with a brief theogony, followed by narrative accounts of Greek myths and lists compiled from different myths under individual categories. The following entry from the narrative exemplifies Hyginus’ mythographic style (p. 118):

66 Laius Laius son of Labdacus received a prophecy from Apollo warning him to beware death at the hands of his own son. So, when his wife Jocasta, Menoeceus’ daughter, gave birth, he ordered the child to be exposed. It just so happened that Periboea, King Polybus’ wife, was at the shore washing clothes, found the exposed child, and took it in. When Polybus found out, because they had no children, they raised him as their own, naming him Oedipus because his feet had been pierced.¹⁶ [n. 16 Hyginus relies on a Greek etymology that he does not explain; see Apollodorus 3.49.]

Hyginus provides a standard narrative about Laius, while Smith and Trzaskoma offer a sensible English translation of his Latin, along with a short and pertinent footnote.

The Endnotes for both Apollodorus’ *Library* and Hyginus’ *Fabulae* are more critical and analytical, and offer alternative readings of Apollodorus’ Greek and Hyginus’ Latin texts (pp. 183–95). The General Index (pp. 196–238) presents minimal but relevant information for each entry; the Index of Peoples and Geographic Locations (pp. 239–45) is concise but adequate; and the Index of Authors and Works Cited by Apollodorus and Hyginus (pp. 246–7) adds some new names to the list of ancient mythographers.

Every student and scholar of Greek mythology and the mythographic tradition will want to own this book, and every library should have it on the shelf. Smith and Trzaskoma have produced an indispensable volume that is easy to use and understand. They have invested a tremendous amount of time and scholarship to make this a valuable resource for traditionalists and non-traditionalists alike. Even the general reader can benefit from their judicious essays, thoughtful translations and concise textual notes. Teachers of mythology will welcome this handbook for its readability and applicability to general mythology books currently in use. Everything about this work will make it the standard handbook for years to come.

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