

BOOK REVIEW

The Gods of Greek Hexameter Poetry: From the Archaic Age to Late Antiquity and Beyond. Edited by JAMES J. CLAUSS, MARTINE CUYPERS and AHUVIA KAHANE. Stuttgart, DE.: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2016. Pp. viii + 458. Paper, €69. ISBN 978-3-515-11523-0.

James Clauss, Martine Cuypers, and Ahuvia Kahane collect twenty-five essays on the presentation of the gods in Greek hexameter poetry, taking up Feeney's challenge to expand the scope of his *The Gods in Epic*. The selection of topics is catholic, including heroic epic (Homer, Apollonius, Quintus of Smyrna), but also hexameter hymns, "epyllia", didactic, and Christian paraphrases. After an introductory chapter, essays appear in four sections: Archaic Poetry, Hellenistic Poetry, Imperial and Late Antique Poetry, and Beyond the Greeks, the last comprising two chapters on Roman receptions of the gods of Greek epic, and two on modern receptions. The essays similarly present a diversity of approaches: most concentrate on literary or philological approaches, but others incorporate perspectives from material culture, philosophy, and theology. Many individual authors are leading scholars, and the essays are consistently high quality and provocative. I have selected four chapters, one from each section, to discuss in detail.

In chapter two, "The Justice of Zeus in the *Theogony*?" Jenny Strauss Clay examines the usage of *dike* ("justice") in Hesiod's epic, identifying the problem that, while Zeus appears as the guarantor of justice in the *Works and Days*, this is difficult to reconcile with his actions in the *Theogony*, particularly in the Succession Myth and the story of Prometheus. Strauss Clay notes that *dike* appears only four times in the poem, twice explicitly of human judgments, and arguably so in the other occurrences, concluding that Hesiod does not associate *dike* with relationships between the gods, only between mortals. Why should this be so? If justice is framed in terms of scarcity, it naturally obtains for humans who must work (so *dike* proliferates in the *Works and Days*), but is not relevant for the gods, whose only good is *time* ("honor"), of which there is no scarcity. For Hesiod, Strauss Clay argues, *dike* is an inescapably human condition. Despite the provocative thesis that Zeus is not just, the chapter is compellingly argued, arising from the author's abiding engagement with Hesiod's language and thought.

In “Gods in Callimachus’ *Hymns*,” chapter eleven, Ivana Petrovich examines Callimachus’ presentation of the gods, especially his development of the image of the Olympian family from the *Homeric Hymns* to reflect realities of the Ptolemaic court. Petrovich develops Cameron’s position on performance, arguing that performance at festivals and/or (re-)performance at royal symposia fits with our understanding of Ptolemaic self-promotion and the hymns’ mimetic elements. Comparing the family dynamics of Callimachus’ gods with those of the *Homeric Hymns*, Petrovich notes his emphasis on familial harmony under Zeus’ paternal leadership. Petrovich connects this theme with the hymns’ typically Alexandrian domestic scenes (Artemis on Zeus’ lap, Zeus nursed by Neda), suggesting Zeus’ harmonious management of his family figures the Hellenistic kings and their divine aspirations. She argues similarly about social order: limiting the gods’ epiphanies to certain classes in the *Hymns* (nobles, female attendants, initiates) reflects limited access to the monarchs in Hellenistic courts. The thesis that the realities of the Hellenistic courts inform Callimachus’ gods is cogent, though Petrovich seems to defer more detailed treatments of individual themes.

In the third section, chapter eighteen, “Jesus’ Late Antique Epiphanies: Healing the Blind in the Christian Epics of Eudocia and Nonnus,” Anna Lefteratou compares the treatment of the healing of the man born blind in Nonnus’ *Paraphrase of the Gospel of John* and Eudocia’s *Homeric Centos*, how the authors draw on both Christian interpretive practices and Classical literary strategies. Eudocia selects for her cento verses conveying additional themes from their original contexts. For example, her blind man’s speech to Jesus alludes to Odysseus’ return, suggesting that the man is escaping danger. This thematic material serves Christian exegesis: Odysseus’ return conveys the image of Jesus as the Safe Harbor, reading healing as a figure for spiritual salvation. Lefteratou contrasts Nonnus’ practice: he connects the paradox central to Sophocles’ Oedipus—sighted Oedipus was inwardly blind—to the Pharisees, emphasizing the interpretation that the man born blind and the Pharisees figure the Gentiles and Jews respectively, the former turning to the light of salvation, the latter wandering in spiritual blindness. The chapter conveys the complex ways Classical and Christian practices of reading and writing could interact in late antiquity.

Fritz Graf, in chapter twenty-three in the final section, “The Gods in Ovid’s *Fasti*,” examines Ovid’s literary references to the gods of Greek epic alongside his antiquarianism and realities of Roman ritual. Thus, a god may recall epiphanies in the *Homeric Hymns*, or serve as an informant as in Hesiod’s *Theogony* or Callimachus’ *Aetia*. Unlike the *Aetia*’s Muses, the *Fasti*’s informative gods appear not in a

dream, but in waking locations around Rome, and enlighten the poet about their own festivals. Ovid's antiquarianism, relating competing traditions about the origin of a festival or name of a month without accepting one as preferred, contrasts with Greek-style epiphanies or authoritative Callimachean informants. Graf highlights episodes such as the unresolved differences in Urania, Polymnia, and Calliope's explanations for the name of the month of May as producing this disconcerting combination of effects.

The volume fulfills its promise to expand Feeney's more focused discussion of the gods: central authors such as Homer and Apollonius, and the Homeric and Callimachean *Hymns* are joined by fragmentary and less well-known works from the Archaic and Hellenistic periods, considerable attention is given to later Greek hexameter poetry, and the section on reception suggests the topic's historic and enduring relevance. Despite the overall diversity, chapters within each section tend to reinforce central themes, for example, that Archaic poetry consistently imagines different mythological periods, as age of the demigods is presented consistently across diverse works, that Hellenistic poetry emphasizes the harmony and distance of the gods relative to its Archaic models, or that there is a sometimes uneasy rapprochement of the literary gods and the theologies of late antiquity. Similarly, cross-references between the essays in individual sections frequently highlight such connections and provide continuity. Connections between the different sections are more sparse, so that an overarching direction of the work as a whole is less easy to establish, for example, that the essays on the Hellenistic poets focus more on the (attenuated) relevance of the gods (through etiology or figuration of the Hellenistic monarchs), and the essays on the late antique poets focus more on strategies of reading. This level of discontinuity is not unexpected when dealing with the temporal scope of the volume and with critical discourses that have developed distinct lines of inquiry. The editors have maintained a good balance in the level of the essays; while the tone is scholarly and general knowledge of the poems and mythologies are assumed, the essays address readily recognizable themes with well-established methods, so that they are approachable to a relatively wide audience.

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