

BOOK REVIEW

Homer and the Good Ruler in Antiquity and Beyond. Edited by JACQUELINE KLOOSTER and BAUKJE VAN DEN BERG. Mnemosyne Supplements 413. Leiden, NE and Boston, MA: Brill, 2018. Pp. x + 293. Hardback, \$119. ISBN: 978-90-04-36581-0.

This fine collection of papers examines the Homeric poems as Mirrors for Princes. Although other works have studied pedagogical aspects of the Homeric poems, there has been no full-scale examination of Homer as an educator for rulers. The present study presents many facets of the topic, ranging from Homer's original pedagogical intent, to classical, medieval and modern views of Homer as a guide for those in positions of authority.

In their Introduction, the editors note the emphasis the ancients placed on Homer as an educator. While observing that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* have a greater scope than serving simply as Mirrors for Princes, Klooster and van den Berg show that many passages in the poems have clear educational intent. Homer's applicability for kingly education is the focus of the first article, in which Irene de Jong shows that the Homeric poems are replete with advice given to the young by a father or a father-figure. De Jong interestingly notes that the paternal (or quasi-paternal) advice often has negative consequences. The piety of Homeric kings is the subject of the following essay by Will Desmond, who focuses on the king's numinous status. Desmond contends that Homer is most interested in extraordinary figures like Achilles and Odysseus, who "begin to take on aspects of the separate numinous types, and become alternately warrior, bard, prophet, and priest" (53).

The book next turns to Homeric reception in antiquity. Jacqueline Klooster surveys interpretations of Phoenix' ideal of the hero as a "speaker of words and a doer of deeds" (*Iliad* 9. 443). Examining several sources, she notes that ancient authors interpreted Phoenix' words positively but often misapplied them in debates over the value of rhetoric and the nature of virtue. Patrick Lake next looks at Plato's ambivalent attitudes towards Homer. Lake examines several Platonic quotations of Homer and notes that Plato does not dismiss the value of the poet.

Instead Plato frequently “misappropriated and misinterpreted” (102) Homer’s words in making his philosophical points. Misinterpreting Homer is also the subject of Elsa Bouchard’s essay on how ancient scholars viewed the apparent failures of Agamemnon as a leader. In their enthusiasm for authority, exegetes including Aristotle and Porphyry would go to extraordinary lengths to rehabilitate Agamemnon’s actions.

Next, Maria Gerolemou examines how the wandering Odysseus is treated as an ideal for the ruler in Polybius’ *Histories*. Polybius saw Odysseus as a model for traveling rulers and generals, particularly in times of war. Like Odysseus, who was adaptable and observant, leaders such as Hannibal and Scipio are cognizant of the topography of areas where they will do battle. Jeffrey Fish’s following article on Philodemus’ *On the Good King According to Homer* is especially rewarding, since it examines new texts of Philodemus that Fish is editing. In Philodemus the Homeric king is a model of the Epicurean ruler, who cultivates friendship, peace and sobriety. The theme of virtuous simplicity as depicted by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Virgil and others is the subject of the next essay by Casper de Jonge. De Jonge links Dionysius’ praise of the simple life as depicted in the *Odyssey* with the Augustan emphasis on simplicity. David Driscoll follows with a chapter on how intellectuals use Homer to engage in repartee with rulers in Plutarch’s *Quaestiones Convivales*. Driscoll claims that these scholars are ultimately depicted as petty in trying to make capital of their erudition. Elina Pyy’s article on the heroic ideal as seen in Silius Italicus’ *Punica* contends that Silius values most aspects of the Homeric heroic code but rejects the primacy given to earning glory. The heroes depicted in the *Punica* fill the heroic ideal only partially. Pyy sees the *Punica* as reflecting “Lucanian cynicism” and “the inevitable yet deplorable decline towards tyranny and autocracy” (200).

With Baukje van den Berg’s article on Homer and the good ruler in Eustathios of Thessalonike, the volume leaves the ancient world for the Byzantine. Writing in the 12th century, known as the “Age of Rhetoric,” Eustathios in his *Commentary on the Iliad* consistently emphasizes oratory. He advises speakers to follow Homer in his tasteful style, novel expression and dense, yet clear, thought (221). Next, Filippomaria Pontani examines an unpublished manuscript of the 16th-century author Christophoros Kondoleon. The initial work of the manuscript, known as the *Tractatio moralis ex Homeri locis*, focuses especially on the supposed humility of Homeric figures in doing manual labor. In the *Ekloge*, which follows in the manuscript, Kondoleon praises Homer’s didacticism and traditional kingly virtues. Turning to the 20th century, the book closes with Laura

McKenzie's article on Robert Graves' 1959 translation of the *Iliad*. After witnessing firsthand the horrors of World War I, Graves could not recognize Homer's appreciation for the Iliadic heroes, and so he concluded that Homer meant to caricature the lords and warriors in the *Iliad*. McKenzie sees Graves as trying to achieve a purgation that is only partially successful, since he himself regrets having taken part, however unwillingly, in the sacrifice of his own men in the war (277).

Moving from the Homeric to the modern period, this book offers a broad look at Homer's influence on educating the ruler and on pedagogy in general. Perhaps because the book grew from conference papers, the chapters are often relatively short, and some readers may wish for more. But each chapter makes a worthy contribution to the topic, and the book opens many further avenues for study.

SCOTT GOINS

McNeese State University, sgoins@mcneese.edu