



Revermann also examines his syncretic use of choruses and claims that Euripides is ‘the most kindred spirit among the ancient playwrights’ in their shared, bleak view of divine–mortal relations (368). These are just a few out of many claims made about differing tragic traditions and their influences on Brecht at every level of his oeuvre.

This study is a challenging read for those new to Brecht’s oeuvre or to the study of twentieth-century theatre. However, Revermann’s erudite oscillation between Brecht, eastern Asian, ancient Greek, and nineteenth-century European theatrical traditions is a stimulating model for those interested in taking a comparatist and globally minded approach to reception studies. Revermann is a champion for his subject, even mounting an apology of sorts for what is sometimes considered to be a coldness in Brecht’s work, arguing that the so-called ‘alienation’ or *Verfremdung* that audiences were supposed to experience is an incorrect translation of the German. Instead, the term denotes a kind of emotional moderation of a ‘relaxed’ and ‘alert’ audience, who are not being asked to emotionally identify with the characters onstage, but rather experience ‘fun’ and ‘learning’, which Revermann considers to be closer to Aristotle’s conception of catharsis than Brecht realized (436–8). Revermann’s somewhat personal and effusive style contributes to the picture of a man deeply engaged with and invested in a number of disparate theatrical and theoretical traditions and in developing both his own and his audiences’ understanding.

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### *General*

Two splendid Oxford Handbooks deserve the opening slot of my review. *The Handbook of Greek and Roman Mythography*<sup>1</sup> contains forty chapters, each of which closes with a helpful section on recommended further reading. The editors have organized the material in five very well-conceived parts. The first section, ‘Mythography from Archaic Greece to the Empire’, naturally wrestles with the question: When does mythography start? Two initial chapters provide their answers, and the rest of the contributions in this section offer an overview of mythography in Greek (Hellenistic and Imperial period) and Latin. The second section aims to provide an overview of individual mythographers: the stars of this section are Apollodorus, Antoninus Liberalis, Parthenius, Conon, and Hyginus. The eighteen chapters provide informative and concise introductions to authors who specialized in mythography, but also to the mythographic tendencies in authors such as Pausanias or Ovid, as well as in the scholia and even mythographical papyri. The third section is on the typical genres or interpretative models with which mythography tends to intersect: rationalizing

<sup>1</sup> *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Mythography*. Edited by R. Scott Smith and Stephen M. Trzaskoma. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2022. Pp. xviii + 624. Cased £97, ISBN: 978-0-19-06483-12.

historical approaches, philosophical allegoresis, etymologizing, catasterism, local historiography, paradoxography, creative approaches to mythography in ancient education, the role of mythography in political discourse, geography, and, finally, an investigation of the ancient terms used to designate the activity and the writings of a mythographer. The fourth section, 'Mythography and the visual arts', is a provocative and highly interesting experiment in viewing visual representations of myth as a mythography of sorts: can vases, frescoes, and sarcophagi be seen as visual pendants to literary mythography? These three contributions are all highly rewarding and thought-provoking. The closing, fifth, section offers richly rewarding discussions of the role of mythography in the age of Christianity, starting with the way early Christian writers draw on Greek and Latin mythographers, followed by chapters on mythography in the Byzantine Empire, the Latin West, and in the Renaissance.

This splendidly conceived and marvellously executed volume will be a rewarding and enlightening read to a seasoned scholar and an enthusiastic novice. The editors should be applauded for gathering such a great team of experts and for shepherding this ambitious project to completion.

With equal enthusiasm and delight I delved into *The Oxford Handbook of Heracles*, an impressive and extensive exploration of the mythological figure of Heracles and his enduring importance in Greek and Roman culture.<sup>2</sup> This handbook, divided into five parts, provides a comprehensive analysis of myths about Heracles' life, labours, side-deeds, and his portrayal in various genres and media in Antiquity and beyond. This is the first large-scale general treatment of this fundamental figure of Greek myth. Daniel Ogden's thoughtful arrangement allows for a comprehensive exploration of the subject matter, covering various aspects of Heracles' myth and influence. The first three sections follow Heracles' career from birth to death and apotheosis.

Part I, 'Before the Labors', explores Heracles' birth and childhood, and the role and significance of madness for the labours he undertook. Part II, 'The Labors (*Athloi*)', presents in-depth examinations of each of the twelve labours. Part III, 'The Side-Deeds (*Parerga*)', sheds light on the well-known exploits of Heracles that are not counted among the twelve canonical labours.

The remaining two sections of the book are organized by genres and themes. Part IV, 'Genres and Media', explores Heracles' portrayal in epic, tragedy, comedy, philosophy, and art. In Part V, 'Themes', contributors delve into the broader themes surrounding Heracles: Heracles the quest hero, his relationship with Hera and Athena, rationalizing and allegorizing approaches to Heracles myths, the role of geography in myths about him, his role in the ancestor worship, the appropriation of Heracles as a model and ancestor by various Greek and Roman rulers, and the cult of Heracles.

With a total of thirty-eight insightful chapters, this volume fulfills its goal of serving as a comprehensive reference tool for scholars and an accessible starting point for students. Heracles enthusiasts and scholars alike owe a debt of gratitude to Ogden for producing a truly valuable and accessible resource on this quintessential Greek hero.

<sup>2</sup> *The Oxford Handbook of Heracles*. Edited by Daniel Ogden. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2021. Pp. xxxii + 571. Illustrations. Cased £97, US\$150, ISBN: 978-0-19-065098-8.

Another two books, one a monograph and the other an edited volume, are about the role of music in Antiquity. Cosgrove's book provides an overview of the role of music at social meals, starting with the Greek aristocratic symposium and ending with music at Christian social meals.<sup>3</sup> He charts the transformation of music from elite practice in the archaic era, over its democratization in the Classical period to its professionalization in the Hellenistic era. On the Roman side, Cosgrove delves into the peculiar and uneasy relationship of elites with music and dancing, which were seen as markers of the lowest classes and shameful activities. The most innovative aspect of this book are its chapters on music and the lower classes and the role of music in ancient Judaism and early Christianity. Cosgrove mines association regulations, various reports about working songs, and testimonies about music in taverns and at the public festivals in order to reconstruct the way music permeated every aspect of social life in Ancient Greece and Rome. He provides a vivid exploration of music at Israelite banquets and festivals and at Christian social meals, where, apparently, plentiful improvised singing, and even singing in tongues, took place (the latter was discouraged, I Cor 14:13–17). In the first three centuries of early Christianity, individual singing was prevalent, with some diners inventing their own songs, while others sang from scripture. It was only in the fourth century AD that a corpus of standard hymns was selected, and psalms started to be performed by one singer with group responses from the audience. What makes Cosgrove's account remarkable is his ability to infuse the narrative with intricate details and illuminating descriptions of specific performance practices. Throughout the book, we encounter a wide range of perspectives, from the musings of Homer's Odysseus to the insights of Clement of Alexandria, illuminating the enduring importance of music in the context of social meals.

*Music and Memory in the Ancient Greek and Roman Worlds* poses some difficult questions: how is music remembered in the Ancient world and how does it trigger and manipulate memories?<sup>4</sup> This edited volume originated in a conference, and the eleven contributions range from a very broad discussion of theorizing about musical memory to in-depth cases studies. Much of this is necessarily speculative, but also thought-provoking, if one is willing to follow the authors down the path of imagining what might have happened.

Imagining what will happen is the general theme of an edited volume about ancient divination – this topic is so popular, rarely a review goes by without at least one new volume.<sup>5</sup> Roger Woodard's aim as the editor was to provide 'fresh perspectives and interpretations of key aspects of [prophecy and divination] practices' (back cover) and the resulting volume fulfils this promise. Even though the ten chapters adopt different perspectives, and at times propose different solutions to the same problem, they are clearly in dialogue with each other. Woodard provides an afterword with a commentary of individual papers, whereas John Peradotto summarizes them in his General

<sup>3</sup> *Music at Social Meals in Greek and Roman Antiquity. From the Archaic Period to the Age of Augustine*. By Charles H. Cosgrove. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp. xvi + 442. Black and white and colour illustrations. Cased £105, ISBN: 978-1-009-16104-6.

<sup>4</sup> *Music and Memory in the Ancient Greek and Roman Worlds*. Edited by Lauren Curtis and Naomi Weiss. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2021. Pp. xvi + 363. Black and white and colour illustrations. Cased £75, US\$99.99, ISBN: 978-1-108-83166-6.

<sup>5</sup> *Divination and Prophecy in the Ancient Greek World*. Edited by Roger D. Woodard. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp. x + 319. Cased £75, ISBN: 987-1-00922161-0.

Introduction. Woodard's opening chapter investigates the Indo-European origins of interpreting divination as a cognitive practice, and Claude Calame's proposition that divination is essentially a semiotic craft (*techne*) presents a complementary argument. Robert Parker delves into the relationship between oracles and their clientele in an attempt to see whether or not oracles made a conscious attempt to please their clients. Esther Eidinow's chapter is complementary insofar as it delves into the psychology of the clients by exploring the intriguing subject of oracular failure in ancient Greek culture. Eidinow analyses instances where oracular pronouncements did not align with reality, and proposes that the theory of cognitive dissonance might explain the reason why, instead of weakening the communities' trust in oracles, the opposite actually happened.

Gregory Nagy's contribution focuses on the pronouncements of the Delphic Oracle. Nagy utilizes the concept of 'mouvance' to demonstrate the oracles' fluid and transformative nature.

Maurizio Giangulio also focuses on Delphi and revisits an old question of the origin and credibility of many hexametric oracles that Herodotus and other authors report as part of specific local histories. He postulates an existence of local oral traditions that included oracles which were at some point attributed to Delphi. These oral histories then found their way into the written work of Herodotus and his colleagues. Similarly, Nino Luraghi examines the influence of oral tradition containing oracular narratives on Herodotus. In his view, the concept of cognitive dissonance is helpful for the understanding of the way ambiguous poetic oracles in these oral histories differ from historical oracular responses. Michael A. Flower attempts to understand the psychology underlying our ability to identify events as omens and portents. His insightful analysis employs the common human trait of 'hyperactive agency detection', namely our tendency to identify agents even where there are none, and draws on the studies of cultural specificity as represented by the 'ontological turn' in anthropology. To simplify things rather crudely, whereas classic anthropology sees different cultures as interpretations of reality that is the same for everyone, the ontological turn sees different cultures as parallel, alternate realities. His set of case studies, the 371 BC Battle of Leuctra and the 1876 battle of the Little Bighorn, each with its own attendant signs, sheds light on the culturally specific models of perceiving signs.

Fred S. Naiden discusses the modes of divination used by Macedonian kings, and demonstrates that the scholarly view according to which divination became rare in the Hellenistic period is patently false. He then delves into the fascinating problem of divinized kings' use of divination. Shouldn't they be able to issue their own prophecies without resort to intermediaries? In the view of Athenians, Demetrius Poliorcetes was an oracular divinity, but his example did not take. Apparently, even cognitive dissonance has its limits.

Dana Fields explores the theme of false prophets and fake prophecies in Lucian's works and the way Lucian reflects on the rise of charismatic 'holy men' during his lifetime. This edited volume presents a truly valuable and insightful set of chapters, providing some genuinely new approaches to different aspects of divination.

The two-volume *History of Ancient Greek literature*<sup>6</sup> is a revised English translation of an Italian reference work for university-level students and scholars whose first edition

<sup>6</sup> *History of Ancient Greek Literature. Volume 1: The Archaic and Classical Ages. Volume 2: The Hellenistic Age and the Roman Imperial Period.* By Franco Montanari with the collaboration of

was published in 1998. As the author stresses at the outset, ‘the fundamental line adopted in the exposition in this manual of ancient Greek literature is historical: I believe that the historical development is the indispensable starting point’ (V). This is amply evident not only from the chronological organization of chapters, but also from the thorough contextual introduction provided for each period. Montanari’s chapter on Homer starts at page 47. Prior to Homer, we encounter a historical exposition on the Bronze Age in the Aegean, Doric invasion, Greek dialects, the traditional periodization of Greek literature, the Greek writing system, and a short history of textual transmission. ‘The Archaic Age’ commences with a historical introduction into the birth of the *polis*, colonization of the Mediterranean, conflicts within the *poleis*, and the sixth century and the Persian wars, pinnacing in the detailed chronological table of principal historical events on three pages; in sum, fourteen pages of historical introduction. Homer takes up more than eighty pages, five of which are on Homeric archaeology, fourteen on the Mycenaean society as reflected in Homeric poetry, including the question about the historicity of the Trojan war. Detailed attention is paid to Homeric language and meter (six pages), as well as orality and Homeric question (twenty-eight pages). I found it odd that, instead of discussing the structure of the *Iliad* with at least as much interest as Homeric archaeology, this section starts with a short paragraph on the wrath of Achilles as unifying topic, followed by a detailed retelling of the entire epic stretching over two and a half fine-print pages. The conclusion of this summary is bound to confuse an undergraduate student: ‘The *Iliad* is both the poem of Achilles and a polycentric and choral poem’ (56). This might be due to the infelicitous translation from Italian, since what is meant by ‘choral’ here is that the poem has a multitude of protagonists. Those wishing to learn more about the archaeological and historical context of Homer will be richly rewarded, as well as those interested in ancient and modern discussions of the Homeric question. In general, Montanari is masterful on the context, with one curious omission: there is no discussion of Ancient Near Eastern epic. In the chapter on Hesiod, Montanari does mention Ancient Near Eastern cosmogonic traditions in a fairly broad and rather brief excursus (157). Admittedly, any writer of an introduction to Homer and Hesiod necessarily encounters multiple problems and faces difficult choices. Once we are on firmer ground, with lyric poetry, Montanari adopts a system that works well: he first sketches out the performative occasions and contexts, individual lyric genres and musical instruments, meters, language, themes of lyric poetry, and the shaping of the poet’s persona and then presents each poet starting with biographical information, forms and themes of their poetry, and peculiarities of their language and style. Montanari covers epic and lyric poetry, philosophy, historiography, fable, philosophy, drama, medicine, and rhetoric in great detail and with admirable erudition in the first volume. The second volume, at about half the size, covering the Hellenistic and the Roman Imperial Period, only partly follows the pattern of generic classifications, for good reasons: whereas Menander can neatly be classified under ‘New Comedy’, Callimachus or Plutarch defy such classificatory

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Fausto Montanari. Translated by Rachel Barritt Costa with revision by Orla Mulholland. Berlin and Boston, Walter de Gruyter, 2022. Pp. xxii, xvi + 1174. Cased £234, ISBN: 978-3-11-041992-4.

attempts. Montanari charts a middle path, classifying authors under the subheading of specific genres when possible, and treating them as a separate entry when such classification proves difficult. There are chapters on sciences and Judaeo-Hellenistic literature in the second volume, as well as periegetic literature, Jewish and Christian literature, the Second Sophistic and Lucian, grammar, scholarship, compilation and the final chapter on Christian literature in Greek, ending with Cyril of Alexandria and Synesius of Cyrene.

Considering the fact that this book of some 1150 pages is the work of two scholars (Fausto Montana is credited as collaborator in the preface), one is naturally awed by its scope and ambition, but the shortcoming of taking on such a vast project is that the authors naturally gravitate towards the genres and topics of interest to them, while covering others more summarily. Despite revisions, the book shows its age: Posidippus gets a mere paragraph under ‘The Ionian-Alexandrian school’ of epigram (799) and, while the new papyrus is mentioned, its ramifications for our understanding of poetic books and epigrammatic variation are not. Montanari and Montana often limit themselves to presenting the facts with little indication of current scholarly discussions and methodological approaches to individual authors and genres. There is no ‘further reading’ section, no essential bibliography, and instead of a register of recommended text editions which might have been very useful, readers are given a list of recommended English translations at the end (most of them are Loeb). The only available index is that of the authors.

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