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DUSTING THE MYTHOLOGICAL COBWEBS

A Survey of Companions, Textbooks and Handbooks on Greek Mythology with special reference to:

The Cambridge Companion to Greek Mythology. The Cambridge Companions to Literature Series. Edited by ROGER D. WOODARD. Cambridge University Press, New York 2007. ISBN 978-0-521-84520-5 (hb), 978-0-521-60726-1 (pb). XVI, 536 pp, 25 ill. GBP 50, USD 94.99 (hb), GBP 18.99, USD 29.99 (pb).

"For we are Coleridge's children: we do, even the Deconstructionists among us, tend to assume organic unity in the things we read."

David Brumble,
Cambridge Companion to Greek Mythology, 418

1. Introduction

In 1972 G. S. Kirk could write that "myth has been left in its old and rather cobwebby pigeon-hole" despite fresh insights into society, literacy, the pre-Homeric world and relations with the Near East (*JHS* vol. 94, 74). Nobody would concur to that today. There has been a plethora of handbooks and companions on mythology, starting with Fritz Graf's *Greek Mythology: an Introduction* (1993), Barry Powell's *Classical Myth* (1994) and Richard Buxton's *Imaginary Greece: The Context of Mythology* (1994) all of which many authors in the *Cambridge Companion* refer to for further reading. About the time same were published Carl Ruck and Danny Staples' *The World of Classical Myth: Gods and Goddesses, Heroines and Heroes* (1994), Randy Stewart's *HyperMyth 4.1* with a link to Perseus (1994). To add to these: Timothy Gantz, *Early Greek Myth: a Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources* (1996), Gudrun Ahlberg-Cornell, *Myth and Epos in Early Greek Art: Representation and Interpretation* (1992) and Suzanne Saïd, *Approches de la mythologie grecque* (1993) which is recommended for use with

Graf. Richard Buxton then had *The Complete World of Greek Mythology* published in 2004. In 2005 appeared *The Penguin Dictionary of Classical Mythology* by A. Maxwell-Hyslop, Pierre Grimal and Stephen Kershaw and *Manuel de mythologie grecque* by Charles Delattre. The following year the 8th edition of *Classical Mythology* by Mark Morford and Robert Lenardon saw the light. Then in 2008 appeared Robin Hard's *The Routledge Handbook of Greek Mythology* as well as his *Library of Greek Mythology (Oxford World's Classics)*, based on Apollodorus. Roger Woodard's *The Penguin Anthology of Classical Mythology* will be printed in March 2010.

Post-structuralist books began to appear in 1981 with Marcel Detienne's *L'Invention de la mythologie* and Paul Veyne's *Les Grecs ont-ils cru à leurs mythes?* (1983). Claude Calame has brought out *Métamorphoses du mythe en Grèce antique* (1988) and *Poétique des mythes dans la Grèce antique* (2000). In 1999 Bruce Lincoln wrote his seminal work on mythic theory, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship*. An oral wing is represented by Richard Martin's *The Language of Heroes* (1989) and William Hansen's *Classical Mythology: A Guide to the Mythical World of the Greeks and Romans* (2006). The internet world resembles Calypso's island teeming with seductive sites, but the canny googler can find references to a wealth of mythological literature from Wikipedia and www.theoi.com.

The Cambridge Companion to Greek Mythology (hereafter *CC*) edited by Richard Woodard, which is under review here, appeared in 2007. It will have to take on a new competitor in January 2010, that is the *Companion to Greek Mythology* in the series *Blackwell Guides to the Ancient World*, edited by Ken Dowden and Niall Livingstone.

CC must survive in an extremely tough and competitive market where handbooks, textbooks and companions are churned out in fair quantities every year. As such it will not be "a unique resource" for amateur or professional scholars and readers.

2. Definition of myth

The Achilles' heel of the *CC* is that it lacks a concentrated and extended discussion of the significance of words such as myth or even myth-kitty (444), myth-type, myth and ritual, *muthos* (2, 4, 5, 9, 11, 50, 54, 57–61, 107, 137, 150, 186, 198, 259, 260, 356, 389), *mythos* (5, 210–14, 216, 224, 230, 332), aetiological myth (62, 215, 261–2, 265, 267, 269–72, 274, 278–81, 363, 366, 368), mythic

tradition, succession myth (88–90, 92, 95, 204), classical mythology, mythological narrative, mythography (5, 6, 238–41, 243, 245–7, 252, 259, 271, 358, 402, 421), mythic imagination (in relation to misogyny that continues to contribute to the inequity of the world, 390) or of similar concepts such as *ainos* (63–8, 78–9, 107, 211), account, anecdote, saga, fable, *fabula* (cf. 398 fabulation), legend, *logos* (5, 50, 59, 106, 114, 115, 123–4, 134, 142, 149, 210–14, 216–7, 222, 224, 230, 389), *Märchen*, narrative (e.g. 388), story, tale, or theme.

As a result, the book is not entirely "comprehensive" nor is it "integrated". Admittedly no universally accepted definition of myth exists but Burkert's statement that "myth is a traditional tale with secondary, partial reference to something of collective importance" gives a good idea of the main characteristics of myth. Even the word "mythology" can confusingly mean either "the field of scholarship dealing with myth" but also "a particular body of myths". We should however bear in mind a *caveat* from Morford and Lenardon: "the impossibility of establishing a satisfactory definition of myth has not deterred scholars from developing comprehensive theories on the meaning and interpretation of myth". The Greek word *mythos* originally meant "word, speech, message" but in the fifth century BC started to acquire the meaning "entertaining, if not necessarily trustworthy, tale". The Romans used the word *fabula*, which was also used in modern discussions until c. 1760, when the Göttingen classicist C. G. Heyne (1729–1812) coined the word *mythus* in order to stress the veracity of myth. Ken Dowden has even suggested that it is the indiscriminate classification of "Greek myth" as "Greek myth" that encourages its use as the basis for large-scale generalised statements about the attitudes of "Greek society" (Vanda Zajko in CC 394 with reference there).

Throughout the work, however, in dribs and drabs, there are smaller and shorter discussions of myth and religion. On the first page, Woodard prefaces his Sisyphean task with the *caveat* that "what we call 'Greek myth' is no featureless monolith, but multifaceted, multifarious and multivalent, a fluid phenomenon". For some scholars in fact, such as Georges Dumézil, precious little of Greek myth appears to be inherited from earlier Indo-European periods. Woodard, following in part Jean-Pierre Vernant, discovers primitive Indo-European elements to be present in *Works and Days* as well as in the *Theogony* (3). He "taps into myth" in the same way that Plato "taps into myth" in the *Gorgias* (229). For instance, Calame takes up the challenge of definition: "neither 'myth' nor 'religion' constitutes a category native to Greek thought" (259). To this can be added Clay's comments: "the luxuriant varieties of definitions of Greek 'myth' are a symptom of the remoteness of our culture from the culture of ancient Greece" and he is doubtless

correct in asserting that "the term myth now carries a pejorative sense in modern languages" (210). Drawing heavily upon Austin 1962 and Martin 1989, Nagy offers "a working definition of *muthos* as it functions within the epic frame of Homeric poetry: a speech-act indicating authority, performed at length, usually in public, with a focus on full attention to every detail". He lays stress on *muthos* as a word describing something in epic, and only refers incidentally to the role of the gods as witnessed in the literature, while Buxton (176) states that "in Homeric epic, and in all subsequent Greek epics down to Nonnus, the gods play a decisive part" with footnote references (n. 20) to Griffin 1980, Kraus 1984, Kullmann 1992, Kearns 2004 and Feeney 1991 on post-Homeric epic. But already in Herodotus the word *muthos* or *mythos* (as Clay has it) had come to describe an idle and unbelievable tale. Clay then (210–11) enters into a discussion of *logos* and *mythos*, concluding (212) that whether a narrative is called *mythos* or *logos* depends on the viewpoint of the teller of the tale (usually Socrates) and his audience. As Plato criticises Greek myth and as he invents his own countermyths, his reader is confronted with constantly shifting perspectives. On the following page, Clay notes Plato's simultaneous dismissal and use of Greek myth (in the *Phaedrus*).

Bowie speaks of the "embourgeoisement" of the gods in Old Comedy (190). Zajko initiates a good discussion on contexts of a myth, and, citing Dowden, emphasises that one task of the interpretation of myth is to measure the extent of its "ideological distortion" (394). Zajko continues with Csapo's critique of Vernant's structuralism, finally (396) lashing out at her editor: "the special relationship women have with myth because of this potency goes some way towards explaining why the editor of a collection such as *The Cambridge Companion* has commissioned an essay on women and myth but not an equivalent one pertaining to men." (At the time of writing the professor of women's studies at Helsinki University, Tuija Pulkkinen, has announced that the name of the study in future will be "gender studies".)

Much later Strabo will distinguish between two radically different forms of writing: that presented "in guise of myth" and that presented "in guise of history". Carolyn Higbie (238) states that two genres – mythography (stories about the gods and heroes) and paradoxography (stories of the weird or unusual) – developed in the Hellenistic era, out of earlier chronography. Hall cites notions advanced by Georges Dumézil and Claude Lévi-Strauss (332) that "myth is taxonomy in narrative form" and its variation to the effect that "myth is ideology in narrative form", attributed to Lincoln. In the concluding chapter, Winkler lays emphasis on the tradition of imagining alternatives to well-attested and even canonical versions of myth that goes back to antiquity itself. Just to illustrate how

far removed such "cinematic neomythologism" can be from acts and contexts of *muthoi* is revealed, for example, by Wolfgang Petersen's comments regarding his film *Troy* (2004): "I think that, if we could consult with him up there, Homer would be the first today to advise: 'Get rid of the gods'."

3. Orchestration of CC: Part 1

The sixteen original articles of *CC* are marshalled into three sections but the allocation of articles to each section proves to be problematic. As a result the book presents neither a comprehensive nor an integrated account of ancient Greek mythic tradition. Several authoritative scholars of classical mythology and religion are notably missing from the list of contributors. Part I begins with lyric, epic, Hesiod, tragedy, Aristophanes, Plato and Hellenistic Mythographers, thus neglecting Herodotus, Thucydides, the orators and Pindar, though admittedly Pindar is included in lyric. Part II looks at the relationship between myth, religion, art and politics among the Greeks and at the Roman appropriation of Greek mythic tradition. The ambivalent reception of Greek myth from the Middle Ages to modernity, in literature, feminist or gender scholarship, and cinema, completes Part III. This reviewer would have anticipated some discussion of the confrontation of Christianity with pagan myth, of pragmatics and semiotics, of Black Athena and racism in myth and society and finally of the ways and means myths are diffused and disintegrated.

Every main section is opened by two long quotations of a modern and an ancient version of a Greek myth in Hawthorne's mid-nineteenth-century retellings and Hesiod's or Apollodorus' accounts respectively. Woodard calls this "presumptuous" and "audacious" (1) and sometimes "a bit idiosyncratic" (11). I would have preferred to see more Robert Graves' quotations, not just from *The Golden Fleece*, but also from his *Greek Myths* and *The White Goddess*. Alongside Hawthorne, Charles Kingsley, Thomas Bulfinch and Gustav Schwab (in translation) wrote pivotal works in the nineteenth century to spread knowledge of Greek mythology to Anglophone audiences. From the mid-twentieth century one can mention Edith Hamilton's *Mythology* and Robert Graves' *The Greek Myths*, both reissued in the last decade, though these collections have never been taken seriously by professional classicists. A typical view would be that of Victor Bers in a 1985 article in the *Yale Review* where he claims that these works "deserve a brief disrecommendation" (Sheila Murnaghan, *CB* 84.1 [2009] 81).

The first section *Sources and Interpretations* starts with two articles by Greg Nagy on lyric and Homer respectively and a third by Roger Woodard on Hesiod and eastern mythology. Woodard is once again "a bit idiosyncratic" in positioning lyric before epic, but this follows the new orthodoxy whereby Homeric epic has been downdated and lyric has been seen to have many features in common with epic and to function in interdiscursivity with epic. In the archaic period, composition and performance are inextricably linked. Nagy focuses on the transmitted texts works of the Lesbian lyric poets Sappho and Alcaeus. The place of such performance was the sacred ritual space of Messon – the space for the celebration of the *Kallisteia*, a festival featuring choral singing and dancing by Lesbian women – a ritual space that can be "figured ... in mythological terms". Nagy emphasises the ritual background of lyric performance which complements the mythological background of the composition. The chapter on lyric contains numerous side-glances to myth and ritual in Homer (e.g. 32–3) and to *humnos* in lyric and epic contexts (39). The chapter ends with the massive shift from east to west in the history of Greek lyric traditions and with nuanced remarks on Pindar's *Olympian* 1. In his chapter on Homer and myth, Nagy makes great play of the expression "the master-myth" of the *Odyssey*, that is the hero's homecoming or *nostos*. At the end of this chapter Nagy takes note of Homer's Indo-European antecedents, while again reminding his readers of the orientalisising factor – "the lateral influence of Near Eastern languages and civilisations".

While Nagy already mentions the Near Eastern influence on Greek myth, it is Roger Woodard, in "Hesiod and Greek Myth" (83–165), who concentrates on the east-west interface. The author's knowledge of Near Eastern languages and contexts is impressive: by depicting parallels between Hesiodic and many Oriental and Indo-European myths, he demonstrates with an almost missionary impetus that classicists often if not neglect, at least only superficially take into account—due to their lack of language skills outside Greek and Latin. The so-called kingship-in-heaven tradition of the *Theogony* is one well attested among various Near Eastern peoples of Asia Minor and Mesopotamia and is reported to have existed in a Phoenician form as well. Hesiod's kingship-in-heaven account, though a primitive and core component of the "ancient myths" of the Greeks, was almost certainly taken over from one or another of these Near Eastern cultures and not inherited from the Greeks' own Indo-European ancestors. Though Woodard is right that myths have to be told to make the stories known, he follows his passion too extensively. Many pages of his immensely long essay consist of abundant summaries intended to prove how close to each other Greek and Near Eastern or Indo-European traditions are. What is more, he also cites long pas-

sages of leading scholars, especially West and Nagy, conceding to them a source-like status. Certainly, Hesiod is very important for the establishment of the Greek mythical cosmos, and very few could trace him back to the Oriental routes as Woodard can. But if the size of his elaborations had been reduced, his points would have been even better made.

From Hesiod, Woodard's *Companion* jumps three hundred years, regrettably leaping over the hurdles of Herodotus and Pindar, to the topic of "Tragedy and Greek myth" (166–189). He shows how the mighty heroes Heracles, Theseus, Agamemnon and Oedipus experience disruptions and dilemmas generated by heroism, which "almost invariably involve the catastrophic destruction of a household" (167). Buxton also attacks the question of tragedy's distinctiveness within the mythical tradition and here he backtracks to Homer: "In Homeric epic, and in all subsequent Greek epics down to Nonnus, the gods play a decisive part" (176). Buxton casts side-glances to Hesiod, to Pindaric praise-poetry and to Herodotus into the bargain (177), where "the backdrop is a structure of religious assumptions anchored in the mythical past". So too in tragedy "the actions of divinities are highlighted in every narrative genre which retells Greek myths" (176). In the reviewer's opinion, this is something that could have been said 170 pages earlier.

Angus Bowie's essay-title "Myth in Aristophanes" (190–209) is misleading since he surveys the relation between myth and Greek comedy as a whole by beginning with a general overview of Old Comedy. Considering first the few remains of mythological Old Comedy generally – best evidenced by a summary of Cratinus' *Dionysalexandrus*, in which the story of the Trojan War "is reworked so that Dionysus becomes as it were a failed actor in the role of Paris" – Bowie observes that comedy "was a genre in which the gods were not spared mockery, even the god in whose honour the festival was being held". Indeed, from the fragmentary texts mythological Old Comedy looks to be a genre that "could take considerable liberties with mythology" and one that could frequently use a "mythical story for political purpose". Fortunately Aristophanes supplies us with more substantial evidence with his use of mythology. The backdrop of *Lysistrata* is the myth that woman is the source of danger, strife and disruption in society (206), but Aristophanes reverses the negative and positive signs normally attached to men and women. Similarly, Bowie argues, Aristophanes unmasks the constructed nature of mythology in his plays *Birds* and *Ecclesiazusae*, so that it is fair to generalise that his comedies reverse common messages of myths as provided by tragedy in order to produce an "awareness of the dangers of too uncritical or simplistic an acceptance of what some myths may convey" (208).

In the original meaning of the word, "mythology" is tautological, for in Homeric times, *muthoi* and *logoi* meant more or less the same. Diskin Clay, in "Plato Philomythos" (210–236), deconstructs the often supposed dichotomy between the two terms in later times. In reality, the relation was much more complex than a simple opposition between true and false (or, rather, fictive) tales. In Plato, it depends on the perspective of the story-teller if his tale should be considered as *mythos* or *logos*. Plato uses and dismisses myths at the same time. Clay picks examples from the myths of *Protagoras*, *Phaedrus*, the *Republic*, the *Statesman*, *Critias*, the *Symposium*, and *Phaedo*, all with generous quotations. "Plato's real quarrel", Clay claims, "is not with Greek myth; it is with the poetry of the Greek polis and its false and debasing representations of reality".

Certainly, myths appeared in prose texts before Hellenistic times, but the passion for collecting and compiling different myth traditions only arose then, as Carolyn Higbie stresses in "Hellenistic Mythographers" (237–254). For modern scholars these compilations, most typically by Apollodorus, are valuable as sources for older traditions otherwise lost and for specifically Hellenistic aspirations of facing the mythological heritage. Higbie also takes into account Eratosthenes, Parthenius, Antoninus Liberalis, Conon and the *Mythographus Homericus*.

4. Orchestration of CC: Part 2

Audiatur et altera pars. The title of Part Two, *Response, Integration, Representation*, is, in the reviewer's opinion, totally meaningless. It begins with Claude Calame's discussion of "Greek Myth and Greek Religion" (259–285) which explores Greek mythology from structural perspectives. Let it be added that he also contributes to the forthcoming *Blackwell Companion* on "The Semiotics and Pragmatics of Myth". The chapter would have been the perfect opening for Part I and as such for the entire book since Calame introduces crucial structuralist concepts that would be fundamental for the reader. These are based on his own writings and those of Detienne, in a work mentioned above, *The Invention of Mythology* (1981). These relate to the problems that modern concepts of myth and mythology pose and their lack of relevance for Greek antiquity. Calame stresses the importance of the different genres as necessary condition for making myths socially and ideologically active, e.g. in the context of cult institutions. With respect to religion, Calame illustrates the CC's motto of mythic variety: "the ensemble of the myths of the Hellenic tradition is characterized by a certain plasticity that allows the poetic creation of versions constantly readapted for cult and for religious and

ideological paradigms offered by a polytheism that varies within the multifarious civic space and time of the cities of Greece" (282).

Beginning with the claim that "neither 'myth' nor 'religion' constitutes a category native to Greek thought", Calame challenges the very existence of what we are given to conceptualize as *Greek mythology* – "unless considered in the form of manuals of mythography, such as the one in the *Library* attributed to Apollodorus". His examination of the relationship of Greek "myth" and "religion" takes the form of five case studies from the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Bacchylides' *Dithyramb* 17, Pindar's 5th *Pythian Ode*, a paean by Philodamus inscribed on a Delphic stele, and Euripides' *Ion*. In each, he observes, "we can see how an individual heroic tale is called upon to legitimate a particular cult practice through an intermediary poetic form that influences both the narrative and semantic characteristics of the account and the religious and political conception underlying the ritual concerned". Calame's conclusion from the fivefold examination – "Supported by poetic genre, this or that episode of the divine and heroic past of the Greek communities is inserted into both a specific cult institution and a form of ritual poetry, most often choral. These poetic forms make from narratives, appearing to us as mythic, an active history, inscribed in a collective memory realized through ritual." And, he continues, "the ensemble of the myths of the Hellenic tradition is characterized by a certain plasticity that allows the poetic creation of versions constantly readapted for cult and for religious and ideological paradigms offered by a polytheism that varies within the multifarious civic space and time of the cities of Greece".

In "Myth and Greek Art: Creating a Visual Language" (286–304) Jenifer Neils begins by reminding the reader that, with respect to myth, "Greek narrative art displays an amazing degree of imagination, ingenuity, and originality" and goes on to expound manageably for the reader the vast domain of Greek myth and art by focusing on two essential – one might say "performative" – elements: "First, what devices did the artist employ for depicting a myth and how did this visual language come about? Second, how did the artist make his chosen theme relevant to a particular audience at a specific point in time?" Special attention is given to the example of a wine cup decorated by the Codrus painter on which are depicted "the seven deeds of the local hero Theseus". Harbinger Jonathan Hall's discussion of Athenian usage of Theseus for political ends (Chapter 11), Neils reveals how, when the symbolism of the object is properly parsed, "this cycle cup does much more than recount some of the deeds of the hero Theseus; it rewrites history by associating Athens's glorious Bronze Age hero with its glorious present. For the Athenians their myths were their history, and they saw no problem in

embellishing them for the greater glory of the *polis*".

In "Mythic Landscapes of Greece" (305–330) Ada Cohen conjures up the topographical and nature-related sensibility of Greek culture. Countryside and gender, caves, the underworld, mountains, trees, bodies of water or perceptions of landscape in body metaphors, our sources testify to rich and viable conceptions of landscape, where "vision and imagination, real life and mythology worked in synergy" (327). She compares and contrasts mythic representation in both literature and art, exploring the "intersection of narrative and description in light of common as well as rarely depicted myths in painting and sculpture". Pausanias functions as her most important literary source: "when invoking landmark single trees and groves as noteworthy spatial markers ... Pausanias, to whom we owe much of our knowledge of ancient sites and now-lost monuments, did not linger on their greenery or on the flowers and fruits they produced, but on their cultic associations as well as associations with important events of the classical past". The use of landscape in ancient Greek art is surprisingly restricted. Even so, Cohen argues, there is in Greek art "a rich and viable conception of landscape". She concludes that "in all cases artists took for granted their audiences' deep familiarity with the Greek landscape and asked the imagination to fill the voids. This situation is in the end not so different from that of mythical discourse itself, whose multiple versions were the result of traditions colliding with individual tellers' points of view and emphases".

In "Politics and Greek Myth" (331–354) Jonathan Hall offers three case studies whereby he demonstrates the mutability and adaptability of myth. In his comments on Theseus, he argues for his establishment as a Panathenian hero, not under Cleisthenic democracy, but under the Peisistratids. The Cleisthenic democracy usurped a pre-existing figure and endowed him with new significance so that he was remembered as the founder of Athenian democracy. Here, the companion is not only up to date, but even exposes a fresh thesis which deserves to be discussed elsewhere in a more detailed way.

"The fact is that myth meant something entirely different to the Greeks of Pausanias' generation than it had to their ancestors". The political uses of myth that Hall addresses – "myth's capacity to charter and justify changing political circumstances" – are, he argues, grounded in myth's ideological character and its existence as a productive symbolic system (analogous to the system of *langue* and *parole* of Saussurian structural linguistics): "Through the dynamic dialectic between narrator and audience, traditional materials could be reconfigured and modulated to stake claims about the natural order and to advance partisan interests and it is precisely myth's ideological character that made it so effective in

the practice of ancient Greek politics." Politics is foregrounded, again, as Hall presents his readers with three case studies: these involve the Spartan and Argive use of "mythical prototypes of alliances to justify their own claims to Peloponnesian hegemony in the mid-sixth century"; the Athenian Pisistratus' capitalizing upon Theseus as "an attractive prototype of the strong, wise, and just leader" and his elevation of "Theseus to Panathenaic status"; and the fifth-century "orientalization" of the Trojans, consequent, chiefly, to the second Persian War.

A. J. Boyle, in "Ovid and Greek Myth" (355–381), stresses the otherness of Greek myth within Roman, especially Imperial culture; myths were no longer part of rituals but discursive elements of intellectual life, and regarded as *fabulae*, fiction. Ovid used Greek myth, for example, as a paradigm for *humanitas* and for comments on Augustan politics. His range of mythological interest is simply vast and his *tour de force* is *Metamorphoses* where he sustains reference to the central works of the entire mythographic tradition from Homer and Hesiod onwards. Ovid's interest in myth is neither religious nor ritualistic, but poetic. Boyle's article contains substantial quotations in the original Latin from *Ars Amatoria*, *Amores*, *Metamorphoses* and from *Tristia*.

5. Orchestration of CC: Part 3

For the opening of Part Three, Vanda Zajko, in "Women and Greek Myth" (387–406), contributes a methodologically conscious article which is valuable for reflections on myth as a source for social circumstances in general and on feminist approaches to Greek myth in particular. Her article is one of the most subtle and nuanced in the entire CC, exploring "some of the tensions surrounding the descriptions of stories about women as being "pro- or anti-women" and the ideological entailments of such descriptions". One of the issues which Zajko deals with is "the rewriting of myth". At what point does the "rewriting" of a myth create something that is fundamentally different from that myth? Is the result of the "rewriting" still "myth" – still *muthos*? She includes fascinating citations from Judith Plaskow, Lillian Doherty, Margaret Reynolds, Ken Dowden, Eric Csapo, Virginia Woolf, Mary Beard, Adrienne Rich and Angela Carter in order to demonstrate the multifarious ways in which myth has inspired feminist thinking in academic discussion.

In his essay "Let Us Make Gods in Our Image" (407–424) David Brumble's deals with allegoric use of Greek myth in Medieval and Renaissance literature, spoiling his readers with five pages of further reading recommendations.

He demonstrates how Medieval and Renaissance writers devoted more attention to multiple meanings than to organic unity and how readers in those days were much more likely to interpret, comment upon and delight in individual lines and details out of context than careful modern readers are likely to do.

In her contribution "Hail Muse! Et cetera": Greek Myth in English and America literature' (425–452) Sarah Brown traces post-renaissance reception of Greek myth rather in the same vein as Simon Goldhill in his book *Who Needs Greek?* "Mythology was central to the works of Pope, Keats, Pound, Toni Morrison and Carol Ann Duffy, inter alia, but each of these writers figures his or her relationship with the classical past in a distinctive way." She demonstrates that there were competing and oscillating versions of classicism within the English literary tradition. In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literature Dryden actually translated selected tales from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and of the complete works of Virgil. At this stage the reception of Greek myth relied far less heavily – at least on the surface – on a mediating Latinate culture than had been the case in previous centuries, she claims. During the Middle Ages and renaissance Latin writers were the supreme literary models and Greek language and literature comparatively little known. Pope's decision to translate the *Iliad* reflects the growing status of Greek language and literature, though critics found echoes from Dryden and Milton and Romanisation of Homer's gods. In 1791 Cowper put forward his rival translation of Homer as a more "primitive" and "authentic" version than Pope's.

Wordsworth and Coleridge, amongst the first generation of Romantic poets, turned away from neoclassicism, but the next generation, notably Byron, Shelley and Keats turned round the fortunes of Greek myth in English literature. Shelley reverses Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* into *Prometheus Unbound* though he bases his new work on the classical source. As a contrast Mary Shelley wrote *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* where the form and setting are contemporary. In Victorian Britain, Greek culture became naturalised with Thomas Arnold claiming that "the Greeks are virtually our own countrymen" leading to a proprietorial fondness and unwillingness to give up the Elgin marbles (432). Meanwhile in nineteenth century America, southern slave owners frequently gave their slaves classical names (such as Homer or Caesar) and looked to Greece and Rome as important republican role models. Walt Whitman, however, in the States, and the Dickens, Brontës, Eliot and Hardy in England could be classified as "anti-classicist" in their emphasis on humble people and everyday situations, but they also made use of the more familiar classical tradition (436). In E. M. Forster, myth is presented as "anarchic, sensual, countercultural and 'queer' in the

broadest sense" (p.439). In the same way Henry James used the concept "ancient Greek" to mean "homosexual" as it was impossible to call a spade a spade at this point of history.

In the twentieth century the use of Greek myths by Modernists such as Pound and Eliot has been characterised as "elitist". In the 1950s there was a movement towards a more gritty style of writing depicting lower-middle-class life, particularly with John Osborne, which led Philip Larkin notoriously to denounce "myth-kitty or casual allusions in poem to other poems or poets" (444). Brown concludes that "the synthesised tradition of Greek myth has been blessed with a unique *energeia*, retaining its traditional hold on literary culture and exerting influence on new genres and media, - westerns, science fiction, film, animation, and computer games are all in its debt" (450).

Martin Winkler, who writes on "Greek Myth on the Screen" (453–479), is very well qualified to write on *peplums* or *pepla*, gigantic widescreen and colour epics, films set in ancient Greece and Rome, on the basis of his publications, most recently *Troy: From Homer's Iliad to Hollywood Epic* (2006). Printed one year after the CC came *Hellas on Screen: Cinematic Receptions of Ancient History, Literature and Myth* (2008) edited by Irene Berti and Marta Garcia Morcillo, which succeeds in correcting the Anglophone bias in Winkler. The phenomenon of contemporary cinematic reinterpretation has been described as "neomythologism" by the Italian film director Vittorio Cottafavi. Television has also been instrumental in reimagining and reinventing antiquity. Winkler allows himself generous quotations from film directors e.g. from Duccio Tessari on how to make a *peplum*, from Wolfgang Petersen on how to treat gods in *pepla*, two quotes from Ray Harryhausen on a chessboard analogy and stop-motion effects, from Vittorio Cottafavi on using Hercules motifs, and finally from Riccardo Freda on credibility in film-making and again from Ray Harryhausen on the massive potential of mythological cinema. Filmmakers follow their own rules, such as the fifteen recommendations made by Tessari, when they make mythological films and do not consider themselves bound by their sources. Winkler concludes that the survival of classical myth in modern society does not depend on university classics departments but on the presence of myth in popular culture.

6. What is missing from the *Cambridge Companion*

The first chink in the armour I noticed was the absence of chapters by Ken Dowden, Fritz Graf, Jan Bremmer or Simon Price. A quick glance at Amazon.co.uk

supplies the explanation: Dowden is co-editing with Niall Livingstone a rival publication *The Companion to Mythology* (*Blackwell Guides to the Ancient World*), to be published in January 2010, that will compete with (and indeed complement) the *CC*. Fritz Graf and Jan Bremmer will also have chapters in this forthcoming book. A second failing is pointed out indignantly by Vanda Zajko (396) in her chapter on "Women and Myth", that the *CC* lacks a chapter on "Men and Myth". To avoid this complaint and to be more modern, Zajko's chapter could have been entitled "Gender and Myth". A third gap is any discussion of race in connection with mythology on the lines of *Black Athena*. A fourth missing link is a chapter on Herodotus and myth or in general history and myth and how the Greeks envisaged the meaning of myths in history-telling. A fifth *desideratum* would be some treatment of Greek myth and popular culture in cartoons. Sixth on my shopping list would be a chapter discussing Greek myth and Christianity or Paganism, though there is a discussion (407–8) of Nicodemus and Erasmus. Seventh is the lack of a chapter on Pindar. Finally there is a lack of verbal economy (as opposed to verbosity and long-windedness).

7. Comments:

I agree with several of Angela Kühr's points in her review (*BMCR* 2008.08.10). For instance, the reader would be better off by beginning at Claude Calame's chapter 8 on "Greek Myth and Greek Religion" (259–285) with his bread-and-butter suggestions for further reading. That is Buxton, *Imaginary Greece. The Context of Mythology*, Graf, *Greek Mythology. An Introduction*, Burkert on *Greek Religion* and Bremmer on *Greek Religion*. Calame points out that "there exists no story of gods or heroes that does not come to the public in a ritualised discursive form". Mythology and hymnology are basic also to epic (260). This is fundamental to the question of mythology.

Apart from the bibliography and the general index, sections on Further Reading following every article assist the reader in wading through the mire of literature on Greek myth and mythology. Black-and-white reproductions of vase paintings, sculptures, and film scenes in the middle of the book complement the writings of the two art historians.

Kühr is also correct in affirming that "reception" is inherent to myth itself and that reception processes begin when a myth is retold for the very first time. Companions are only supposed to give overviews, after all. But with the advent of the *Blackwell Companion* and in the light of the rise of centauromachy, gi-

gantomachy and Amazonomachy described by Jenifer Neils (CC 300), I wonder whether the world will end up in Companionomachy.

CC for the most part lacks original Greek quotations, although Greek characters and transliteration are used inconsistently within individual articles. No Greek (except for transliterated words) is used in Nagy's first two chapters and the first word I found was in Greek characters $\chi\acute{\alpha}\omicron\varsigma$ on page 86 in the third chapter by Woodard. One bibliographical quibble I have with CC is the omission of any mention of *Greek Mythology* by Marilena Carabatea (Athens 1997), which is a very well illustrated guide to mythology with emphasis on architecture.

Looking closely at the subdivision of the volume, one could niggle over the inconsistency that a genre or a representative author is mentioned in the titles of the volume's first part while the contributions themselves normally do not focus on the genre or the author exclusively. The subcategories sometimes seem artificial. Many of the chapters tend to emphasise the author in question, be it Homer or Hesiod, and elaborate on numerous aspects of the author's style and only *en passant* tackle the question of the role of mythology in the author or what the gods signified in the literature in question.

8. How the forthcoming *Blackwell Companion to Classical Mythology* will complement the CC

Many of the deficiencies of the CC will be addressed by chapters in the forthcoming *Blackwell Companion to Mythology* to be published in January 2010. First of all, the *Blackwell Companion* will have an opening chapter by Dowden and Livingstone on defining myth and a closing chapter by Jan Bremmer on the brief history of the study of mythology. These two chapters will bring together definitions and discussions of myth and mythology and how the concepts have changed in the course of time. This companion will thus begin and end by examining the relationship between myth and other traditional tales – folktales, sagas, legends – and between myth and historical narrative. Secondly there will be chapters by Fritz Graf on myth, Hellenic identity and cultures in contrast and on combating and replacing myth. Further, Ken Dowden will also have chapters on Hesiod, on soteriology or exotic myth, the myth that saves and on initiation, the key to myth. Nick Allen has a chapter on Indo-European mythology and comparative mythology, Alasdair Livingstone on Near Eastern mythologies. Ian Rutherford has a piece on mythology of the Black Land: Greek myth and Egyptian origins. Alan Griffiths writes on myth in history. This time the Platonic slot will be filled

by Penny Murray and the chapter on women and myth will be authored by Sian Lewis. Claude Calame deals with the semiotics and pragmatics of myth.

9. Final comments

Acta est fabula – plaudite! Woodard has carried out a labour worthy of Hercules. Vanda Zajko's plea for more investigation into men and myth should be taken seriously. The link between Greece and homosexuality in myth could be further explored whereas in *CC* it is only touched upon on (439). The quotation there from E. M. Forster's *Maurice*, published posthumously, on "the unspeakable vice of the Greeks" has now been taken up as a major theme in the forthcoming *APA* conference. The differences between Greek and Roman mythology still await further analysis and from a Nordic and Finno-Ugric standpoint, it would be interesting to trace the diffusion and disintegration of Greek and Roman myths into Norse mythology and the *Kalevala*. Finally in the words of Jenifer Neils (302): We must never underestimate the artistic legacy that remains one of the richest sources for our vast understanding of Greek myth and its role in Greek life."

Stephen Evans