CrossMark

General

One of my favourite undergraduate classes to teach is Greek mythology. At American universities, Greek myth is a popular choice for satisfying humanities credit requirements, and professors are faced with a double dilemma. On the one hand, students have very different levels of knowledge, ranging from, say, a science major with virtually no idea about the ancient world to a know-it-all myth-whiz Classics major at the other end of the scale. The second problem is the choice and organization of material. Tough decisions have to be made, especially if a professor insists on students reading ancient Greek and Latin texts in translation, instead of relying on a modern retelling of myth. Which tragedies to choose? Which sections of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*? The whole of Homer or just select books? The challenges are real, but the rewards are great. After the initial struggle with Hesiod's *Theogony* (despite collective grumbling, Hesiod is non-negotiable for me), witnessing the magic of Greek myth at work never ceases to amaze me. In a blink of an eye, the class is passionately defending or attacking Phaedra, or debating fate and the gods; and, of course, everyone is united in hating Jason. It was my early fascination with Greek myth that attracted me to study Classics (the main culprit was the generously illustrated Serbian translation of Gustav Schwab's *Gods and Heroes of Ancient Greece*) and the crushing sense of responsibility for sparking that first interest in my students is only matched by joy upon seeing it work. I take mythology books very seriously because they are often the gateway to the Classics. Several books on myth landed on my desk this year and I'll start with three general introductions. None of these could serve as introductions to myth for children or young adults, but each could be an excellent first step for those wishing to know more about various scholarly approaches to Greek myths and cults.

Erika Simon's classic and tremendously popular monograph, *Die Götter der Griechen*, was first published in 1969 and went through three further German editions; now, after fifty years, University of Wisconsin Press has published an English translation of the updated fourth edition from 1998.[1] Simon was an archaeologist and her richly illustrated overview of the thirteen Olympian gods (yes, thirteen: Simon added a chapter on Hestia to the fourth edition) is firmly rooted in material culture: her outline of the importance and role of each divinity in cult and their representations in literature is intertwined with incisive analyses of the god's iconography and an expert exposition of the major cult sites. Simon discusses visual material up to 400 BC, and combines the historical and the archaeological approach in order to provide a rich kaleidoscopic view of each divinity's regional cults. An added benefit for those who have not mastered German is Simon's overview of scholarship on each god, which is heavily tilted towards the Germanophone scholarship, especially Nilsson's magisterial *Geschichte der Griechischen Religion*, the most comprehensive account of Greek religion of the twentieth century, but Deubner, Meuli, Müller, and even Preller loom large in her discussions of the individual divinities (but it is worth being aware that the notes have not been updated since 1998). The primary focus of the book is lived Greek religion,

[1] *The Gods of the Greeks*. By Erika Simon. Translated by Jakob Zeyl, edited by Alan Shapiro, with a foreword by Fritz Graf. Wisconsin Studies in Classics. Madison, WI, University of Wisconsin Press, 2021. Pp. xxiv + 440. 312 b/w illustrations. Hardback $119.95, ISBN: 978-0-299-32940-2.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383521000152 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and the emphasis is on the diversity of regional cults and iconographies of divinities; the main value of this book remains its thorough engagement with material culture.

Those interested in current scholarly approaches to Greek myth will be better served by Lowell Edmunds' *Greek Myth*.[2] This is the second volume in a new De Gruyter series 'Trends in Classics – Key Perspectives on Classical Research' which aims to 'provide state-of-the-art guides to research in Classical studies (across the fields of Language and Literature, Ancient History, Archaeology, and Ancient Philosophy and Science) that explores the key themes and ideas shaping previous scholarship on individual authors, genres, and topics' (back cover). The first volume, on ancient Macedonia, came out this year, and further books on topics ranging from Livy to Neoplatonism are in the works. *Greek Myth* opens with a discussion of myth in visual media, but the emphasis of the book is firmly on myth as an oral or written tale. Starting with an overview of some current definitions of myth, Edmunds turns to Theseus, whose story serves as an example for the role of myth in visual media. He then provides an overview of various social settings and literary genres in which myths were narrated. A discussion of mythic characters in different genres (tragedy, epic, and novel) and names and genealogies demonstrates that in myth names are secondary to the stories. A succinct and useful overview of Greek mythography is provided, and questions of belief and the relationship of myth and cult are tackled next. Edmunds is on the conservative side of the debate: 'The gods of Greek myth and the gods of Greek religion have the same names but are otherwise different from one another' (80). Following H.H. Price, Edmunds distinguishes between two concepts of belief: 'belief-that' ('someone or something is or does such and such') and 'belief-in' ('someone or something'). His conclusion:

> Ancient Greeks believed that the Trojan and Theban Wars had taken place. The gods of Homer and Hesiod were another matter. . .From the sixth century, these gods could expect at best belief-that. . .The gods of cult did not command belief-in any more than the gods of myth. Worship of the gods of cult was a matter of ritual and did not depend on belief-in. (79)

Edmunds does note that the tendency of the current scholarly discussions is more in favour of belief-in, and that is certainly my own view (although I wouldn't insist on the difference between belief-in and belief-that). He gives both sides of the debate a fair hearing and I leave it to the readers to make up their own minds on the issue. The rest of the book provides an overview of the three theories of myth (the 'Cambridge school', psychoanalytic approaches, and structuralism), three main fields of comparison with Greek myth (Indo-European, ancient Near Eastern, folklore), and an appendix on *muthos* and *logos*. Edmunds manages to cover an astounding amount of ground in a mere 171 pages, and the result is a dense, fast-paced, and quite challenging introduction which might best serve advanced undergraduates and graduate students, but is certainly not an easy read.

[2] *Greek Myth*. By Lowell Edmunds. Trend in Classics – Key Perspectives on Classical Research 2. Berlin and Boston, MA, De Gruyter, 2021. Pp. vi + 213. Paperback £22.50, ISBN: 978-3-11-068233-5.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383521000152 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Those interested in the folklorist approach to myth will welcome William Hansen's *Classical Mythology*.[3] This is neither a straightforward dictionary of mythology, nor a retelling of myths, but an innovative mix of both. The introduction provides a brief overview of the concept of myth, our principal sources for it, and the Roman appropriation of Greek mythology. Classical myth is treated as a story-world, so the real orientation starts with the mythic geography and cosmos and a long section on the nature of the gods and their relationship with humans. Section 2 ('Time: What Happens in Classical Mythology') takes the cue from Apollodorus and provides a chronological overview of major events from Chaos to the aftermath of the Trojan War. Section 3 is a lexicon of characters, themes, and concepts. Unless one searches the name of a major divinity, orientation through this section can be challenging. Entries such as 'absent deity' and 'aetiology' rub shoulders with 'Aineias' and 'ambrosia'. The Muses do not have a separate entry (they are under 'Celestial Sisters'). That being said, the entries are both succinct and lively, and the index is very helpful. Section 4 contains lists of annotated resources: ancient written and visual sources, major reference works, and scholarship on reception of classical mythology. Hansen adopts a folkloristic approach to Greek myth, and his entries on concepts such as wondrous objects, human and divine tricksters, triads, or tasks are especially valuable (but I chuckled at the entry 'sexual narratives' – really? A separate entry in a book on Greek myth?). I highly recommend reading this book cover to cover, or at least inspecting the individual entries in the third section instead of treating it as a lexicon. A complete list of all entries in Section 3 would have been very helpful (perhaps worth considering for the third edition?). This book could conceivably serve as introductory reading for young adults and novices to Greek myth, but my sense is that it would be most useful as a companion to the 'real thing', the ancient texts.

Daniel Ogden's fascinating and wide-ranging study of the werewolf from ancient Greece to the Middle Ages also adopts the folklorist approach, and relies methodologically in particular on the following two principles: each written record of a folktale should be considered very ancient already at its earliest attestation; a written record of a folktale represents innumerable unattested oral tellings.[4] Not to be too cynical, but folklore really pays off in the case of werewolves in the ancient Graeco-Roman world because there *is* only one securely attested ancient story about a werewolf – the thrilling account of a werewolf's transformation narrated by an alleged eye-witness in Petronius' *Satyrica* 61–2. Ogden reads this story as a folktale attested in the written record and so necessarily a representation of a much broader undercurrent of both ancient and oral werewolf folklore. In his view, not only this tale, but all other evidence for werewolfism in antiquity, however tangential, derives from folklore. The ability of Homer's Circe to turn men into wolves, Herodotus' Neuri, Vergil's Moeris, the Hero of Temesa, the traditions of Arcadia and Mount Lykaion are all representations of a rich folklore of werewolfism resembling the one attested in the medieval period in

[3] *Classical Mythology. A Guide to the Mythical World of the Greeks and Romans*. By William Hansen. Second edition. Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. xi + 403. Paperback £12.99, ISBN: 978-0-19-750664-6. (The first edition was published by ABC-CLIO in 2004.)

[4] *The Werewolf in the Ancient World*. By Daniel Ogden. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2021. Pp. xiv + 261. Hardback £25, ISBN: 978-0-19-885431-9.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383521000152 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Europe from the eleventh century onwards. Accordingly, Petronius' story is not only far from a unique testimony, it is merely the tip of the iceberg, and Ogden uses it as a starting point in a quest for other attestations of the werewolf in Greek and Roman folklore. He also adduces medieval traditions on werewolfism as witnesses of the same folklore narrative, which he argues is independent of Petronius' text. His working definition of werewolf is 'a creature that changes form, or appears to do so, or can be inferred to do so, in whole or in part, between the humanoid and the lupine.' (7) In the first two chapters, Ogden charts the association between werewolves and witches, sorcerers, ghosts, and the dead. He then looks at the roles and conceptualization of the human and animal parts of a werewolf, the idea of soul projection (a.k.a. shamanism), and the possible werewolfism of the Hero of Temesa. The last chapter is a thorough analysis of the myths and rituals associated with the Arcadian Lykaia festival, which Ogden sees as deriving from werewolf folklore. In the conclusion, he provides a catalogue of no fewer than nine ancient 'good stories about werewolves'. This fast-paced and well-researched book certainly has a broad appeal and will be both a classic study on the topic and a useful collection of ancient sources on werewolves.

War in Greek Mythology is a popular book about conflict in Greek myth more generally, but I assume 'war' was a catchier title.[5] The chapters are essentially a collection of primary textual and some visual sources with generous side servings of quotations from secondary literature. Each chapter looks like the first draft of an encyclopaedia article: starting with the gods of war, there are chapters on Titanomachy and Gigantomachy (but also 'Typhonomachy'), Centauromachy, Amazonomachy, the Theban Wars, Heracles, the Trojan War, Returns, and even one of the Battle of Mice and Frogs.

Cyclops is a meticulously researched, richly illustrated, and superbly readable analysis of the figure of the Cyclops in ancient Greece and Rome, and its reception from the medieval period to the modern age.[6] The first half of the book provides a 360-degree evaluation of Cyclopes in ancient literature and material culture. Instead of retelling each author's or visual artist's 'take' on the figure, the authors tackle both art and text according to the dominant themes associated with the Cyclopes: landscape, physique, lifestyle, gods, names, love, and song, and finally the contexts (visual media and literary genres) in which the Cyclopes tend to appear. The second part of the book examines the reception of Cyclopes from the medieval period to the baroque and provides both a chronological and a thematic survey. Prominent themes are the Cyclopes as a monstrous race, Polyphemus in love, Cyclopes as blacksmiths, Cyclopes in the garden grotto, and the pastoral Cyclops. In their discussion of reception from the eighteenth century onwards, the authors abandon the thematic approach and divide the material into visual art, literature, and film. They demonstrate that the thematic richness of the Cyclops narrows significantly and that in the modern age monocularity becomes the dominant characteristic of the Cyclops.

[5] *War in Greek Mythology*. By Paul Chrystal. Barnsley, Pen & Sword Books Ltd, 2020. Pp. xii + 228. 50 b/w and colour illustrations. Hardback £25, ISBN: 978-1-52676-616-8.

[6] *Cyclops. The Myth and Its Cultural History*. By Mercedes Aguirre and Richard Buxton. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. xviii + 436. 94 b/w and colour illustrations. Hardback £35, ISBN: 978-0-19-871377-7.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383521000152 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Comparable in scope, but different in approach is Emma Gee's monograph on the topography of the afterlife realms from Homer to Dante.[7] While Aguirre and Buxton delight in demonstrating just how varied and innovative the interpretations of the Cyclopes were in different times and cultures, Gee seeks to discover a unifying concept in various depictions of afterlife landscapes. Her main argument is that the 'journey-vision paradigm', a combination of the soul's journey through the underworld landscape and a synoptic cosmic vision is common to Homer, Plato, Virgil, Cicero, Plutarch, Claudian, and Dante. This paradigm represents an attempt to align contemporary ideas about the physical world with the world of the soul: 'The afterlife journey becomes an attempt to harmonize the soul with the universe, as understood through the vision' (5). Gee uses the term 'psychic harmonization' to signify 'the goal of alignment between the soul and the universe', and she sees the various depictions of afterlife landscapes as 'a way of talking about the need to express the soul through the universe, and vice versa: that essential human trait of simultaneous projection and introjection of the world' (155).

The first part of the book ('Dualities') discusses *Odyssey* 11, in particular the problem of the double Heracles, an eidolon in the underworld and one of the immortals, possible models for the afterlife geography of *Aeneid* 6, and the paradoxical coexistence of various representations of the universe in Claudian's ecphrasis of Proserpina's tapestry (*DRP* 1.246–72), the sphere and the flat or stratified *oikoumene* surrounded by the Ocean. Part two ('Cosmos') argues that Anchises' speech in the *Aeneid* (6.724–51), Dante's *Paradiso*, and Cicero's *Dream of Scipio* are all directly or indirectly indebted to Plato's *Timaeus*. Part three ('Plato's Soulscapes') addresses the thorny issue of Plato's disparate eschatologies in the *Republic*, *Phaedrus*, and *Phaedo*. Part four turns to Plutarch's *On the Face in the Moon's Disc* and returns to Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Are all afterlife myths under discussion ultimately about the soul's search for harmonization with the universe?

In her general conclusion, Gee abandons all attempts to situate the plethora of texts under discussion in their cultural and religious contexts and posits:

> What we call the afterlife is the desire in the present, unachievable and so projected into the future, for a joining of faculties, the dissolution of the divide between us and the universe, the closing of the perceptual loop between what we are and what is. For this, we need to stop perceiving the universe as extraneous to ourselves. The presence of the vision of the universe in the landscape of the afterlife is one attempt to do this – to encapsulate cosmos in the landscape of soul. This is the function of what I have called in this book the journey-vision paradigm of afterlife space…Works of art are expressions of the unconscious. All are road maps of the soul. (325)

I am a lumper by nature, so I understand the temptation to generalize, but this study could have benefited greatly from some culturally specific splitting. The combination of a journey with a description of the landscape could be explained in a more banal way: if I told my female friends that I visited the monasteries on Mount Athos, an

[7] *Mapping the Afterlife. From Homer to Dante*. By Emma Gee. Oxford, Oxford University Press. 2020. Pp. xiii + 365. Hardback £55, ISBN: 978-0-19-067048-1.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383521000152 Published online by Cambridge University Press

area no woman is allowed to enter, the first question would certainly be 'How did you get there?' and the second would be 'What did you see?'

To round off my survey of OUP publications, I note three new additions to the splendid and immensely useful 'Oxford Handbooks' series. *Latin Palaeography* tackles the major types of script, material embodiment and techniques of manuscripts, their cultural setting, selected scriptoria and libraries, and varieties of book usage in sixty-three chapters penned by an international team of experts.[8] I see that the book is already out of stock – as sure a sign as any of the timeliness and need. The opening words of the Introduction of the *Handbook to Egyptology* will perhaps hit a Classicist too close to home:

> Does Egyptology have an identity crisis? If we look back to the last decade, then the answer would probably be 'yes'...The main criticism levelled at Egyptology is that it remains stuck within its core narratives focused on religion, art, kingship, temples and tombs. (1)[9]

Then we are informed that the problem are Egyptologists, because 'they continue to play the role of "zealous keepers and unique interpreters of pharaoh's achievements" and because of the way in which the myth of "eternal Egypt" and its by-products continue to hamper our comprehension of the pharaonic world' (1). The editors propose turning away from the 'navel-gazing about the past', asking new questions, changing the theoretical methods, and...creating multidisciplinary collaborations! Accordingly, the handbook aims both to provide a survey of the entire study of ancient Egypt and to solve its current problems by offering a range of multidisciplinary perspectives on Egyptology. Its sixty-two chapters tackle themes such as 'Egyptology: Perspectives on a Discipline', the natural environment of ancient Egypt, material culture, Egypt and its neighbours, sources and interpretative frameworks for Egyptian history, society, and culture, scripts and philology, textual genres, and finally museology and conservation.

The opening lines of *The Handbook of Ancient Biography* conversely rejoice in the fact that the topic of the book is one of the most widespread and popular literary genres: 'Biographies and autobiographies of actors, sportsmen, politicians, singers, Nobel Prize-winners, and other famous people have never been more prominent in book shops and publishers' catalogues' (3).[10] The first part of the book provides a conceptual and cultural orientation, with chapters on definitions and genre, ancient Greek and Roman, Jewish, and Christian biography. The second part provides an overview of individual authors and works; and the third part tackles the ancient equivalents of actors, sportsmen, politicians, and singers, namely the types of people whose lives were

[8] *The Oxford Handbook of Latin Palaeography*. Edited by Frank T. Coulson and Robert G. Babock. Oxford Handbooks. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. vii + 1052. Hardback £125, ISBN: 978-0-19-533694-8.

[9] *The Oxford Handbook of Egyptology*. Edited by Ian Shaw and Elizabeth Bloxam. Oxford Handbooks. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. xxviii + 1312. 134 b/w illustrations. Hardback £165, ISBN: 978-0-19-927187-0.

[10] *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Biography*. Edited by Koen De Temmerman. Oxford Handbooks. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. xii + 800. Hardback £110, ISBN: 978-0-19-870301-3.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383521000152 Published online by Cambridge University Press

considered interesting in the ancient world. Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, and Arabic biographical traditions are discussed in the fourth part, visual representations of biographies in the fifth, and reception from Byzantine to the modern age in the sixth.

The second of the three planned volumes of *A Social and Economic History of the Theatre to 300 BC*, *Theatre beyond Athens*, addresses the topic which is currently one of the most productive and exciting strands of research in Greek drama (for a sample of recent publications, see Malcolm Heath's reviews in the spring issue and in this issue).[11] This book is the first systematic collection and discussion of evidence for theatre outside Athens from *c*. 500 to 300 BC. Once thoroughly neglected and ignored, the theatre culture in various regions outside Athens has been such a hot topic in the past fifteen or so years that the authors note that 'scholarship in this area is evolving so quickly that we found it a full-time occupation just to keep up with developments related to our topic' (xvi). Included is textual and archaeological evidence not only for all genres of drama, but also for "men's" and "boys'" lyric choruses, and all evidence for theatres which served as venues for performances of any sort. Material is organized geographically and, unsurprisingly, the evidence for theatres in the demes of Attica, closely followed by Sicily and southern Italy, takes up almost half of the book. Each region is headed by an introduction discussing the general features of the local theatrical culture. All texts are translated and there are general introductions to each piece of evidence, providing the date and context for passages from literature, basic information about each inscription (including a drawing or a photograph), excavation drawings and abbreviated reports, and photographs and basic information about vase images. The fact that the bibliography comprises seventy-two pages speaks volumes about the monumentality of this scholarly endeavour. Csapo and Wilson discuss a formidable range of all conceivable types of evidence and succeed marvellously in their goal to 'give a full account of the character of theatre culture in each region', identify 'broader regional and transregional trends', and 'lay a foundation for the institutional history of theatre in its own right' (xvi). This book is nothing short of revelatory and will doubtless revolutionize the way we approach ancient Greek theatre.

The edited volume on religious violence in the ancient world questions the assumption originating with David Hume and repeated in many guises ever since that religious violence is rooted in monotheism, since polytheism is tolerant and monotheism is intolerant.[12] Whether one accepts this proposition depends on one's definition of violence. If violence is perceived as not only physical, but also structural and cultural, an approach the editors take in this volume, we do indeed find many instances of violence in polytheistic societies – but proving this point does not entirely invalidate the old thesis, although it does raise awareness of the uses of religion for the purposes of othering, constraining, coercing, and subjugating. Whereas studies of religious violence in late antiquity abound, the innovative aspect of this volume comes from studies on the earlier Graeco-Roman world.

[11] *A Social and Economic History of the Theatre to 300 BC. Volume II. Theatre beyond Athens. Documents with Translation and Commentary*. By Eric Csapo and Peter Wilson. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. xix + 939. Hardback £150, ISBN: 978-0-521-76557-2.

[12] *Religious Violence in the Ancient World. From Classical Athens to Late Antiquity*. Edited by Jitse H. F. Dijkstra and Christian R. Raschle. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. xiv + 432. Hardback £90, ISBN: 978-1-108-49490-8.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383521000152 Published online by Cambridge University Press

My final book is a wide-ranging and innovative study of myths about musical metamorphosis.[13] Such myths usually explain the origin of a specific sound – mostly those of birds, but also the buzzing of cicadas and phenomena such as echo. Pauline LeVen interprets these stories as reflecting not only contemporary ideas on aesthetics and music, but also on the relationship between humans and non-humans: animals, insects, divinities, plants. LeVen opens each chapter with a specific myth about a transformation of a human into a musical animal, plant, or pure sound, which serves as a starting point for broader discussions on the range of aesthetic responses to music, the manifold ways in which music bridges the gap between the species, the categories of nature, art, culture, and mimesis, voice and disembodiment, music and emotions. The final chapter invites us to redefine and re-evaluate the very idea of music. LeVen reads the story about the transformation of an extraordinary but hubristic bucolic poet into a stag beetle as an invitation to search for music beyond melody. What if this is a story not about silencing, but about the ultimate attunement of a creature to the rhythms of nature – insects are forced to undergo manifold metamorphoses following the rhythms of the seasons and so live a life of extreme attunement with their environment. LeVen's brilliant book brings Classics into conversation with animal studies, ecocriticism, and ecomusicology. She breathes new life into old and much discussed texts and offers a veritable symphony of new and exciting insights.

IVANA PETROVIC

University of Virginia, USA
Ivana.Petrovic@virginia.edu
doi:10.1017/S0017383521000152

[13] *Music and Metamorphosis in Graeco-Roman Thought*. By Pauline A. LeVen. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2021. Pp. xii + 277. Hardback £75, ISBN: 978-1-107-14874-1.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383521000152 Published online by Cambridge University Press