He also brings a keen awareness of the intersection of literature and visual art through biblical imagery (e.g. on Coptic textiles; p. 422). With all of these tools deployed in its service, A.'s book represents a masterful application of classical learning to the elucidation of a true masterwork of later Greek literature.

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NONNUS AND THE GIANTS

F. VIAN (ed.): *Nonnos de Panopolis:* Les Dionysiaques. *Tome XVIII, Chant XLVIII.* (Collection des Universités de France publiée sous le patronage de l'Association Guillaume Budé.) Pp. xiv + 235. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2003. Paper, €36. ISBN: 2-251-00508-0.

Nonnus tantalizes to the end. His last and longest book opens, as did the first, with Gigantomachy, programmatically announced in Book 25. Dionysus faces the Giants alone—but humour and parody prevail (pp. 7–9): Chiron is terrorized when Pelorus decapitates Pelion to expose his cave and all ends inconclusively at l. 89 as Dionysus withdraws for Zeus' future battle. There follow erotic confrontations more congenial to Dionysus: a titillating wrestling-match with Pallene (ll. 90–237) draws on the legends of Hippodamia and Atalanta and motifs from funerary contest, while Dionysus' liaison with Aura, the god's last earthly adventure back in his native Phrygia, is expansively treated (ll. 238–968), though Dionysus himself is absent for long passages, as in the novel handling of the bath of Artemis, where the goddess modestly enters the water fully clad—V. plausibly compares the ritual washing of a cult statue—while Aura plays female voyeur, chiding Artemis for her voluptuous breasts. Artemis' consequent visit to Nemesis in her Taurus cult-centre secures Aura's downfall through Dionysus' agency. Like Dionysus' first conquest Nicaea, Aura is inebriated by a river of wine before being raped, but additionally bound hand and foot, in the Anatolian tradition of a theomachic monster (J. L. Lightfoot, *GRBS* 39 [1998], 293–306). Her rage on discovering her fate prevents her from nursing her twin sons: one she eats before herself committing suicide, the other is entrusted first to Nicaea (!), then Athene (!), and finally inaugurated as Iacchus at Eleusis. Nonnus' capacity for innovative surprise based on immense erudition is unmatched.

Equally resilient and erudite is the scholar who initiated this massive edition almost thirty years ago: Francis Vian edited the first two books of the Budé *Dionysiaca* in 1976. This is the seventh volume for which he has been solely responsible, seven more have been produced under his guidance and the four in preparation will complete the task. In this final volume he corrects some early aberrations (e.g. pp. 23–4 n. 2, p. 81, p. 83 n. 1) and brings mature reflection to bear in interpreting not only this book (notably its frequently humorous tone, p. 9 n. 4, pp. 17–18, p. 70 n. 1, etc.), but the architecture and meaning of the poem as a whole, often improving on Keydell's views (e.g. p. 87 n. 4, p. 88 n. 5, p. 94 n. 1). Gigantomachy was, appropriately, the subject of V.'s earliest publications and his own titanic contribution in his chosen field has now been recognized by a volume of essays in his honour (D. Accorinti, P. Chuvin [edd.], *Des géants à Dionysos* [Alessandria, 2003]).

Dionysus' final affair with Aura invites examination of the entire *Dionysiaca*, which is shaped as much by the god's loves as by his battles. Aura is Dionysus' fifth mistress, parallel in many respects to Nicaea (Books 15–16), but Nonnus carefully articulates

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distinctions: so nature's celebration of the union with Nicaea is replaced by prevailing silence, since Aura's child will be Iacchus, god of the mysteries (pp. 57–8; cf. Gerlaud, vol. 6.102–7). Aura's inebriation ties this book not only to the Nicaea episode but also to Book 47, where the Athenian Icarius is killed in a drunken brawl, a link enhanced by the intervention in 48 of Dionysus' love of 47, Ariadne, who laments the god's unfaithfulness, but is finally rewarded by the catasterism of her crown, immediately prior to Dionysus' own apotheosis.

Dionysus' conjuring of wine for the thirst-mad Aura by striking a rock (48.574–7) has Mosaic overtones, the description of Ariadne as a 'wind-borne' spirit (*ψυχὴ ἠνεμόφοιτος*, 48.530; cf. 490 of Aura) parallels that of the risen Christ before his disciples (*Par.* 20.105 with Accorinti's note), Artemis' revenge includes the taunting of Aura's 'virgin birth' (48.832–4), and the mystic Iacchus finally encapsulates Dionysus' trinitarian nature. But V. argues powerfully (pp. 94–5; cf. Liebeschuetz, *Decline and Fall of the Ancient City* [Oxford, 2001], pp. 231–9) that this poem carries no covert Christian message, *synkrisis* with or prefiguration of Christ: similarities may be pointed, but Dionysus is no saviour figure; rather he is a Don Juan, a great literary creation analogous to Homer's Odysseus or Apollonius' Jason.

V. is masterly in detail as in overview, conversant with electronic publications (e.g. p. 24 n. 2), as with the latest linguistic scholarship, highlighting the strict and carefully articulated internal symmetry of scenes (pp. 3–4, 18–19 and *passim*) in this book where major episodes are so grossly unequal (respectively 89, 147 and 740 lines). An appendix (pp. 215–19) examines the enhanced proportion of grandiloquent tetracola in Book 48, a technique appropriate to elevation—witness their clustering in the closing lines—but also exploited for caricature, as in the opening epic Gigantomachy (e.g. ll. 34–5). Scenes and episodes may be unconnected, but V. does not find here the signs of incompleteness evident in some earlier books (e.g. the sea-battle of 39); see, for example, pp. 18–19 on 48.152–8, described by Keydell as *frustula*.

The text has many problems, discussed most recently by D. Accorinti, *Medioevo greco* 1 (2001), 13–20, whose views V. often shares. V. makes judicious choices, sometimes upholding Keydell's solutions (e.g. ll. 53, 78, 130, 338 transposed, 346 followed by lacuna, 365 accentuation of *ἀθήλεας*, 589/8), elsewhere reverting to the reading of the Laurentianus (e.g. ll. 13, 33, 165 *ταρσῷ*, 188, 358, 403, 505, 520, 606 with discussion p. 186, 726, 728), rejecting proposed lacunae (e.g. ll. 333, 335, 358, 666, 800, 822), and eliminating cruces (e.g. ll. 603, 659, but not 727).

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THE GREEKS ON LANGUAGE

D. L. Gera: *Ancient Greek Ideas on Speech, Language, and Civilization*. Pp. xiv + 252. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. Cased, £50. ISBN: 0-19-925616-0.

In this book Deborah Levine Gera sets out to survey ancient Greek ideas of the nature of language, its origins, and its relation to civilization and human culture, taking time to present close readings of important Greek texts in order to tease out the assumptions about language and culture they contain. She also compares modern ideas that are either closely influenced by ancient Greek thinking or that 'enable us to read backwards, so to speak, and tease out the implications of the Greek texts'

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