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Logoi and Muthoi: Further Essays in Greek Philosophy and Literature edited by William Wians

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This volume of essays is the second devoted to exploring philosophical themes in Greek literature that William Wians has edited. The first, *Logos and Muthos: Philosophical Essays in Greek Literature*, was published in 2010. Both attempt to correct and clarify the old schema of Nestle's *Vom Mythos zum Logos* [1940], a work tinged with the ideology that prevailed in Germany at the time. To this end, the volumes propose to avoid simplistic schemas, such as that of the "Greek miracle" or of the transformation of the irrational into the rational. *Muthoi* and *logoi* are realities that have much richer and more complex relationships with each other than the mere substitution proposed by Nestle.

In the introduction, "From Logos and Muthos to…" [1–15], Wians presents the purpose and content of the book. He points out that the aim of this volume is

> to consider philosophical themes and ideas in works not ordinarily included in the canon of Greek philosophical texts, both to shed light on canonical philosophical authors and also for their own sake. [2]

He thus brings together 12 essays whose purpose is

> to reinforce, at least implicitly, the recognition that current disciplinary boundaries are our own, and that much fruitful work remains to be done by crossing them, [2]

a principle with which I cannot agree more [cf. Bernabé 2008]. Wians tries a definition of myth [3] which, like all such definitions, is acceptable to a wide number of instances, but, like all of them, leaves out instances of a

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reality much richer than any simple definition can encompass. On the other hand, he suggests an acceptable proposal for what is considered *logos* and develops the axes on which its relation to *muthos* moves:

- "Story vs. Argument" [2],
- "Pedagogy and Suthority"[5],
- "Reception and Revision" [7], and
- "Myth as Narrative Construction" [8].

In chapter 1, "*Xenia, Hiketeia*, and the Homeric Language of Morals: The Origins of Western Ethics" [17-53], Kevin Robb argues that *xenia* (guest-friendship), and *hiketeia* (supplication) are the two social proprieties most prominent in Homer. To prove his point, he concentrates on the first eight books of the *Odyssey* and argues that "*xenia* and *hiketeia* dominate much of the actions of the most characters, as well as the moral language they use". Robb defines both concepts, focuses on Homer's emotive language of morals, and presents the cases of book 1 of the *Odyssey* (in which the suitors are demanding to be treated as authentic *xenoi*), and books 3–4 (in which Telemachus appears as a *xenos*). In referring to books 5 and 6 of the *Odyssey*, Robb proposes to distinguish among three variant forms of supplication: "rhetorical supplication" (for instance, the plea led by Telemachus to Nestor in book 3 and to Menelaus in book 4), "virtual supplication" (in which "the sincere intent of the supplicating person is to go through the full ritual, but for some reason is inhibited to doing so" [40]), and "full physical supplication" (for instance, that undertaken by Priam to recover the body of Hector). After he examines Odysseus' transformation from supplicant (*hiketês*) to *xenos* in book 7 of the *Odyssey* [42–45], he turns to the pleasures of *xenia* [45–46].

In chapter 2, "The Muses' Faithful Servant: Moral Knowledge in Homer, Hesiod and Xenophanes" [55–77], William Wians examines the great gulf separating the factual knowledge of gods and human beings, especially the problem of moral knowledge. He concentrates on Homer, Hesiod, and Xenophanes. All of them "express a naïve if pervasive skepticism", and, according Wians, "all three nevertheless proceed confidently, even proudly". On the other hand, the analysis proposed offers insight into the so-called rivalry between ancient poets and philosophers. Wians reviews the various attitudes of the three poets towards the problem.

In chapter 3, "How Philosophy is Rooted in Tradition: Stories Describing the Appearance of Man and Woman in Ancient Greece" [79-94], Luc Brisson studies the Hesiodic myths of the separation of men and gods, specifically,

that of Prometheus and that of Pandora. Brisson continues to maintain his criticism of the existence of an Orphic myth of the origin of human beings and his strange theory about Olympiodorus' version of this Orphic myth as an alchemical interpretation, sustained in previous works, despite the abundant bibliography against it [cf. Graf and Johnston 2005, Bernabé and Casadesús 2008, and Scalera 2016].[1]

In chapter 4, "*Muthos* and *Logos* on New Year's Day: Trial and Error in Anaximander's Seasonal Sundial" [95–134], Robert Hahn explores Anaximander's idea of a seasonal sundial, and tries to reconstruct this piece and illuminate the context of this finding. He focuses on the experimental techniques of trials and errors that philosophers can have, and uses all the textual and archaeological evidence possible, with extremely interesting results.

In chapter 5, "Tragic Values in Homer and Sophocles" [135–164], Lawrence J. Hatab examines *Resp*. 607b, in which Socrates, after condemning the tragic poetry and Homer, says, "nonetheless, if poetry…has any argument to bring forward that proves it ought to have a place in a well-governed city, we would be glad to admit it", in the hope of hearing a defense of "tragic values". He examines the world-order in Hesiod's *Theogony*, the heroic values as evident in the works of Homer and Sophocles, focusing on the figures of Odysseus in Homer and Oedipus in tragedy in contrast with the Platonic vision of Greek poetry. He concludes that "what may actually be disturbing …is that Greek poetry does affirm the importance of certain values while simultaneously acknowledging their intrinsic limits" [159].

In chapter 6, "Sketches of Oedipus in Sophocles' Play about Tyranny" [165–196], Marina Marren asks two questions:

(1) What has Oedipus to do with Athens?, and
(2) What has Oedipus to do with tyranny?

To answer these questions, she analyzes the literary and philosophical evidence, reviews the visual images in the staged performance of the play, probes the mettle of Oedipus' self-proclaimed perspicacity, and explains that Oedipus seeks power not to do good but to hide his weakness. Marren presents Oedipus' encounter with the Sphinx as a metaphor for Oedipus'

[1] Bernabé and Pérez de Tudela 2011, a book dedicated to this topic, is missing in the bibliography, which is strange, because Brisson himself contributed to it a chapter on the myth of Pandora, a chapter with many elements in common with the one presented here. Specifically, in pages 89–92, he presents exactly the same conclusions as those maintained in Bernabé and Pérez de Tudela 2011, 150–152.

blindness to his own monstrosity. Moreover, she reflects on what it would mean for the audience in ancient Athens not to see Sophocles' Oedipus as a glorious king but to understand the play as a warning issued to the bellicose city. Marren thus offers a clarifying and extremely interesting view of the meaning of the work and its value for the Athens of its time.

In chapter 7, "Helen and the Divine Defense: Homer, Gorgias, Euripides" [197–221], Ruby Blondell focuses on three texts used to exonerate Helen of Troy, examinining Priam's parliament in *Iliad* 3.164–165, the *Encomium of Helen* by Gorgias, and the apology by Helen in Euripides' *Trojan Women* 940–941, 948–950. The common theme of these texts is that the blame for the war lies not with Helen but with the gods, especially Aphrodite. With this, Blondell tries to show how in none of them is the divine defense presented seriously, in judicial terms: "Nevertheless, the contexts of utterance …shape our responses to the argument in ways that significantly affect our judgement of Helen and her responsibility" [214].

In the chapter 8, "The Hero and the Saint: Sophocles' Antigone and Plato's Socrates" [223–262], Roslyn Weiss maintains the peculiar point that, while Plato's Socrates' attitude characterizes him as a saint, Sophocles presents Antigone as a hero. To prove this claim, she reviews the attitudes to Antigone throughout the tragedy and those to Socrates in the Platonic dialogues. The problem is that in reality she compares entities that are not really comparable. Antigone is a fictional character and, as such, she is subject to the limitations imposed by the genre in which she appears, tragedy, while Socrates was a real character, although one surely idealized by Plato to make him a model of the philosopher. Consequently, they are characters that are not on the same plane and it is difficult to obtain reliable results from their comparison.

In chapter 9, "Myth and Argument in Glaucon's account of Gyges' Ring and Adeimantus' Use of Poetry" [263–278], Marina McCoy examines how Glaucon adapts the episode of Gyges that is narrated by Herodotus and how the new details that Glaucon adds are philosophically and psychologically significant to the argument in its relation to the problem of whether the unjust life can be happy. The chapter helps to clarify Socrates' argument, bringing this text from prose into the critique of poetry.

In chapter 10, "Myth inside the Walls: Er and the Argument of the *Republic*" [279–296], Pierre Destrée studies the myth of Er, which he considers "a philosophical rewriting of…the famous Nekuia from *Odyssey* 11" [279]. No doubt the statement is to some extent true. But I think that the myth of Er

is rather a philosophical rewriting of the Orpheus' κατάβασις and Orphic proposals. There are some reasons for this: first is that in other earlier passages of the *Republic* there are critical references to eschatological visions of Musaeus and his son (636cd), to the *teletai* of Orpheus and Musaeus [364e], and to punishments in Hades which are certainly not postulated by Homer [330d] but are postulated in Orphic texts [Bernabé 2011, 172ff. and 2013]. Another reason is that the "geography" of the beyond is a clear transposition of that found in such Orphic gold tablets as that of Hyponion.[2] Finally, there is even an allusion that is evidently ironic and parodic to Orpheus himself within the myth of Er [*Resp*. 620a].[3]

In chapter 11, "Priam's Despair and Courage: An Aristotelian Reading of Fear Hope, and Suffering in Homer's *Iliad*" [297–317], Marjolein Oele examines the figure of Priam in the *Iliad* as a sign of Homer's mastery of expressing how, even amidst incredible sufferings, affections can be shaped into virtue. To do this she draws on Aristotle's ideas about πάθος and his discussion of how affections can serve as underpinnings of virtuous behavior. Her analysis of the figure of Priam focuses on book 22 and her references to Aristotle, on the discussion of ἕξεις in the *Rhetoric*. She also points out how these circumstances allow for mutual understanding between Priam and Achilles as they come to recognize and relate to each other's sufferings.

In chapter 12, "Poets as Philosophers and Philosophers as Poets: Parmenides, Plato, Lucretius, and Wordsworth" [319–334], A. A. Long makes an original proposal, which follows the steps presented to a class on "divinity" held by Eric James in 1953, to make a comparative study of the relations between poetry and philosophy in four authors: Parmenides, Plato, Lucretius, and Wordsworth. This comparison, between authors who are in principle so diverse, allows one to underscore the difficulty of precisely differentiating poetry and philosophy, and raises the question of whether there are poetic and philosophic universals. Long concludes that there are no such universals, nor a determinate formula; but that just occasionally, a philosopher has also been a poet and a poet has been a philosopher.

In short, this interesting book brings together works that address, from very present-day perspectives, various aspects of the complex relations between

[2] See Bernabé 2011, 175–178, with reference to previous contributions and the balance of similarities and differences.

[3] By the way, Destrée mentions the "psuchai who choose their lives…expressly named" [283], and he is not surprised that Orpheus is the only one who does not appear in Homer—the same is true of Atalanta, but she is quoted by Hesiod.

muthos and *logos*; and shed light on areas of confluence and differentiation between these two essential manifestations of Greek culture, manifestations that are more complex than some reductionist proposals would allow. In this way, new paths are established to deepen the analysis of *muthos* and *logos*, two realities which never replaced one another but rather maintained their own courses throughout the history of Greek culture while establishing contacts between them that are both diverse and very interesting.

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