

Masciadri (V.) *Eine Insel im Meer der Geschichten. Untersuchungen zu Mythen aus Lemnos.* (Potsdamer Altertumswissenschaftliche Beiträge 18.) Pp. 412, maps. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2008. Paper, €68. ISBN: 978-3-515-08818-3.

The versions and variants of three separate myths, each connected with the isle of Lemnos, provide the subject matter for this book. These myths concern respectively the figures of Philoktetes, Hypsipyle and the Lemnian Women, and Hephaistos. All date back at least as far as Homer and in the case of each, M. focuses on tracing the transmission and divergences of aspects of the story through the ancient sources that record them. M. cites Levi-Strauss' structuralist analysis of myth as a starting point for his own work (p. 18) but M.'s approach combines this with elements of a comparative reading of myth and an interest in the individual narratives and contexts of each account. In M.'s analysis, the mythical variants gain meaning through their relationships with, and differences from, each other.

The main part of the book falls into three largely independent sections which deal with the myths in turn. Textual sources are the focus of this work, but relevant artistic and archaeological evidence plays a subsidiary role. The main body of the work is enclosed by an introductory and final section; the former giving a demonstration of M.'s method of myth analysis (using the story of Melampos), the latter providing a survey of theoretical approaches to myth, into which M. helpfully situates his own work. One could wish that this final section had taken the form of an introduction because it answers various concerns about M.'s approach to the myths and their sources, which arose while reading this book.

The nature of the source material means that more of the book is dedicated to Philoktetes than to Hypsipyle and the least amount to Hephaistos. M. presents the relationship of these three sets of stories as geographic and makes it clear in the introduction that he wishes to bring this element to

play in the book (p. 17). However it is a little disorientating that the rest of the introductory chapter stays away from Lemnos and discusses the ill-recorded myth of Melampos and snakes. This first chapter serves adequately to present M.'s method of reading and dissecting myth but grates a little against the introduction's focus on the isle of Lemnos itself. Although Melampos' snakes lead easily into discussion of Philoktetes, there is no direct link to the Lemnian Women or Hephaistos. The book uses this progressive style of narrative which may not suit all readers, but it does give the effect of the author leading the reader through the mythical landscape.

The richness of the material in this book cannot be sufficiently covered in this review but an example of M.'s method is seen in his work on the Philoktetes myth. Given the size of the Philoktetes myth, M. settles on analysing eleven narrative accounts of Philoktetes being wounded. His aim is not to construct a composite Ur-Philoktetes myth but rather to revel in the differences of each account. The level of detail is high with a wealth of ancient examples cited. Some extra sources could have been included; e.g. on p. 40-1 Sophokles' *Trakhiniai* in discussing Herakles' death, or on p. 23-4 when talking about snakes and rejuvenation, the sources cited begin with Aristotle, but it is worth mentioning Aristophanes' *Geras*, *Amphiaraios*, or *Peace*.

M. neatly adapts his method to the different sets of ancient source material that survive for each myth. In the case of Hypsipyle, M. works with the highly fragmentary evidence by taking a comparative approach which incorporates Near Eastern myths of a similar type. There is an economic system for numbering the various ancient accounts (Melampos = M1, M2, M3...; Philoktetes = Ph1, Ph2... etc.) but as these texts are scattered through the book it becomes a little awkward for the reader to use if they forget what, say, Ph3d stands for when there are eleven different accounts of the wounding of Philoktetes (Ph1, Ph2...).

In each section, M. tabulates data in order to compare the sources, as for example with the different

narratives of how Philoktetes is wounded. He then constructs stemmata to present a visual formulation of the links that he sees between the different accounts in the sources. This method of collation adopts the ideas of textual criticism but applies them to individual elements of a myth in order to suggest where variants are descended from the same or a separate tradition, although M. is at pains to separate himself from the role of textual critic.

The framing of different features within the myths in terms of oppositions, so beloved of structuralists, offers many opportunities for disagreement, since the terms of the comparison are dictated by the author's idea of relevance and importance but M. applies this method consistently throughout, sometimes uses a mediator between the two extremes, and indicating an awareness of the problems inherent in this technique in the final chapter.

The front of the book presents images of nineteenth century maps of Lemnos but their scaling renders these too small to be read with ease or even at all. The ancient sources are numerous enough that there is only space for translations. Some corresponding Greek or Latin appears in footnotes, but only sometimes are textual issues addressed e.g. p. 49 but not p. 47 and textual difficulties with the Dosiadas text. For the Besantinos text (p. 48), unfamiliar to this reader and perhaps others, it would have been helpful to include the Greek text.

The quality of the individual analyses is high and each section is constructed with an erudite touch. There is a high density of ancient sources throughout the book, reflecting its intense and sustained focus on the mythical material which is always central to M.'s discussion. Yet this does not make the writing terse and M. maintains an engaging style of writing, at times employing allusions to modern cases and similes to explain points. The book is of interest to those working on any of the three myths or on myth generally as it demonstrates the strengths and weaknesses in varying approaches to myth analysis.

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