

## NEW STUDIES ON THE MYTHOGRAPHUS HOMERICUS

PAGÈS (J.), VILLAGRA (N.) (edd.) *Myths on the Margins of Homer. Prolegomena to the Mythographus Homericus. (Trends in Classics Supplementary Volume 124.)* Pp. viii + 246. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2022. Cased, £94, €102.95, US\$118.99. ISBN: 978-3-11-075115-4. doi:10.1017/S0009840X23000689

The subject of the volume under review is the *Mythographus Homericus* (MH), the name conventionally given, since Johannes Panzer, to a mythographical handbook of the imperial period that commented on names appearing in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* by providing summaries of the mythological narratives that stood behind them. While the work does not survive in its original form, extensive fragments of the MH are preserved in the Homeric scholia, although the extent to which the scholia transform/reproduce the discussions contained in MH remains unclear (a topic expertly handled by F. Montana and F. Montanari in this volume). Johannes Panzer based his identification of MH solely on the Homeric scholia, but his suggestion was confirmed in the twentieth century by the discovery of a number of papyrus fragments, dating from the first to the third centuries CE, which proved that a collection of mythical narratives, structured in the form of a *hypomnema* around *lemmata* from the Homeric poems, had existed.

While the existence of MH seems now to be largely established, almost every other aspect of this enigmatic work – in particular its date, authorship, text, extent and intended function(s) – remains controversial. The present volume, which arises from a workshop organised in November 2017 at the University of Lisbon entitled ‘*Mythographus Homericus* 125 Years after Panzer: from Scholia to Papyri and to the Digital Era’, brings together leading scholars in ancient scholarship and mythography to tackle these questions in preparation for the editors’ forthcoming edition, the first edition of any kind of this difficult text. The editors are singularly well equipped for this task: Pagès wrote his doctoral dissertation and several articles on MH, while Villagra has published important studies (especially) on the sections of MH devoted to the *Odyssey*.

Since *Myths on the Margins of Homer* precedes rather than accompanies that edition, it is somewhat difficult to evaluate its contribution to our understanding of MH as a whole since, in the absence of an exhaustive analysis of which parts of the relevant papyri and scholia may plausibly be attributed to the imperial commentary, all conclusions about the text’s nature and purpose must remain provisional. While the publication of this volume will undoubtedly raise the profile of MH among Classicists and provide a valuable stimulus to the editors as they prepare their edition, one suspects that it would have been a different, and perhaps more useful, book if it had been published contemporaneously with or following the forthcoming edition and hence served to expand on the methodological or theoretical issues that could not be dealt with adequately in the edition. In what follows, I will first offer a summary of the contents of the book before making some tentative suggestions of areas that could be developed in the next stages of the MH project.

After a short introduction by the editors, J. Pàmias offers a valuable discussion of the historical context of Panzer’s study of the MH, drawing particular attention to the limitations of the methods of *Quellenforschung* for reconstructing texts such as MH. Part 2, which focuses on the constitution of the text of MH, begins with Montana’s and Montanari’s discussion of the reception of MH in the Homeric scholia. As the authors convincingly demonstrate, the scholiasts responsible for the mythographical sections of

the Homeric scholia often reworked the material originally contained in their sources, meaning that these sections do not preserve an unaltered version of the text of MH consulted by the scholiasts. In the closing contribution to this section F. Pontani, the leading expert on the scholia to the *Odyssey*, offers a thoughtful analysis of the transmission of MH in the third-century papyrus PSI 10, 1773, the *Odyssey* scholia and Leontius Pilatus' Latin translation of sections of the *Odyssey* scholia in the margins of MS Marc. gr. IX.29.

Part 3 contains two chapters that focus on MH as a work of mythography. Pagès's chapter reveals that aetiology (especially of Homeric words) is often an end in itself for the author(s) of MH rather than a privileged means of commenting on the Homeric text. Villagra's chapter, which focuses on material originally derived from the section of MH that dealt with the *Odyssey*, again emphasises the diverse functions of MH's discussions of myth, which range from mythographical excursuses to textual commentary, and offers a few (speculative) suggestions about the text's possible readership.

Part 4 features three chapters on a variety of themes loosely grouped under the heading 'The Mythographus Homericus in Context: Intertextuality, Parallels and the Study of Myth'. The section opens with J. Michels's detailed discussion of the parallels between MH and the most closely comparable text, Apollodorus' *Library*. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Michels does not ultimately come to a clear assessment of the relationship between these two texts, a further reminder of how daunting the task of producing an edition of MH will be.

R.S. Smith's examination of the so-called Mythographus Vergilianus highlights from another angle the singularity of MH. As Smith convincingly demonstrates, there is no evidence for a similar mythographical work for Virgil to that we know to have existed for Homer, and this underlines the fact that MH is the sole work (to our knowledge) to have concentrated exclusively on the mythology of an ancient poet. It is regrettable that the volume does not offer more satisfying explanations of this fact or seek to build firm connections between MH and the reception of Homer in imperial literature and scholarship, since it is precisely its peculiarity that offers one of the clearest grounds for justifying further research into MH.

The final contribution to this section is L. Edmunds's comparative study of the treatment of Heracles' sack of Troy in MH with those given in other ancient authors, especially Hellanicus. Edmunds concludes that the defining characteristics of MH's commentary are its concision and internal inconsistency as well as its Iliadic character. The volume closes with an afterword by R. Fowler, which seeks to place the volume's chapters in a larger frame and offers several case studies from the author's own research.

As these summaries will have made clear, this is a highly technical volume that will appeal principally to those scholars already interested in MH, mythography and the commentary tradition. Consistently with its specialist character, Greek is generally not translated, although Smith sometimes provides translations of the Latin texts he cites. Yet, as the editors and Fowler in the afterword clearly recognise, the volume also needs to make a clear and cogent case for why scholars new to MH should become interested in such a philologically thorny text. My main reservations concern the extent to which the necessarily provisional suggestions made in the present volume allow such a case to be made effectively.

The major argument presented in the volume for why MH merits the attention of the scholarly community at large is its alleged importance for the study of imperial mythography and Homeric scholarship. However plausible this suggestion may be, it remains frustratingly undeveloped. A few examples may make the point clear.

One of the features we can securely attribute to MH is an interest in aetiology, which is attested in a large number of papyrus fragments and scholia (especially to the *Iliad*). This is

a topic ideally suited both to isolating the distinctive features of MH's commentary versus the role played by aetiology in mythographical and other ancient texts and to demonstrating the relevance of MH for non-specialists since it emphasises MH's continuities with a theme that is pervasive in all periods of Greek literature. Moreover, since aetiology is attested in so many entries in our evidence for MH, we can be confident about its prominence in the original version of the text(s), meaning that the absence of a critical edition is not so significant a drawback in this case. It is therefore somewhat disappointing that Pagès's chapter does not devote more space to identifying the distinctive nature of the role played by aetiology in MH, especially since further consideration of this topic promises to offer clues about the work's broader motivations. It is to be hoped that the editors' ongoing work will concentrate on points such as this where progress in our knowledge is realistically attainable.

Perhaps the most promising aspect of the study of MH is its implications for the editing of ancient pedagogical and scholarly texts. The limitations of *Quellenforschung* as a method for reconstructing MH are well noted by Pàmias in Chapter 1, yet the author has no alternative suggestions for what models we can use to reconstitute texts that, like MH, may have circulated in multiple forms and could be rewritten by successive generations of students and teachers while still being regarded as fundamentally the same text. Ultimately, such questions will have to wait for the forthcoming edition, yet it would have been possible for the contributors to this volume to highlight that the difficulties encountered in studying MH, from another point of view, pay eloquent testimony to the significance of their project. A new edition of MH, as the editors rightly observe, would not present an authoritative account of a text so much as of an exegetical-mythographical tradition. The project to which *Myths on the Margins of Homer* contributes could thus lead to innovative results for the editing of other ancient texts.

It is in this and other features of the study of MH that seem to challenge rather than to conform to our expectations of mythographical and other ancient texts, that the interest of MH lies, and it is therefore surprising to find that a more fully developed argument for that proposition is not included in the present volume. Of course, the full realisation of that project will have to wait for the eventual publication of the edition of the text. Yet that only highlights the disadvantages of publishing the present volume when so much of the crucial work remains to be done. Fortunately, the expertise displayed in the book leaves no doubt that the editors have the skill and industry necessary to perform this exceptionally complex task. Let us only hope that they will have the time and resources to do so.

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## MOTIVATION IN HOMER'S *ILIAD*

LESSER (R. H.) *Desire in the Iliad. The Force That Moves the Epic and Its Audience*. Pp. x + 270. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. Cased, £75, US\$100. ISBN: 978-0-19-286651-6.

doi:10.1017/S0009840X23001397

This study is, for the most part, a book-by-book Iliadic discussion, which becomes increasingly persuasive as it marches from Chryses' rejection to Hector's funeral. The