

post-retirement reflection on one's publications may interest New Testament professors, but detracts from the possibilities offered by this new mimetic synopsis.

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## GREEK AND ARMENIAN LITERATURE

MURADYAN (G.) *Ancient Greek Myths in Medieval Armenian Literature*. (Armenian Texts and Studies 5.) Pp. xiv + 441. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2022. Cased, €110. ISBN: 978-90-04-51979-4.

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From its origins at the start of the fifth century CE Armenian literature has always engaged with and responded to other literary traditions and cultures. The first translations from the books of the Old and New Testaments may have been made from Syriac, but it has been demonstrated that they were revised according to Greek exemplars. Other translations – of liturgical, homiletic, historical, philosophical and scientific compositions – were made directly from Greek and, as discussed further below, several of these are preserved only in Armenian. Within a generation of the invention of the Armenian script, Armenian scholars began to compose their own works, guided to a greater or lesser extent by the form and content of the translated material available. The corpora thereby created in Armenian will have overlapped with one another to a large extent, but they will almost certainly have contained unique elements as well; frustratingly it is not possible to establish the contents of any late antique or medieval Armenian library. In the highly fragmented political, social and cultural landscape of medieval Armenia, centres of knowledge transmission and intellectual production, both clerical and monastic, developed in different places at different times, each with its own particular selection of literary compositions, and these were cherished and preserved over the centuries.

This long prologue is intended to provide some context for readers familiar with ancient Greek mythology but unaware of their reflection in the Armenian literary tradition. On the one hand, Armenian tradition is late in time and predominantly Christian in terms of both authorship and preservation; on the other, it is both conservative and eclectic. Furthermore, it remains significantly understudied. There are major manuscript collections that have yet to be fully catalogued, and there is some way to go before we can be entirely confident as to what has, and has not, been preserved in the tradition. We can anticipate further discoveries.

M.'s volume occupies an analogous position to much of medieval Armenian literature, looking in several directions at the same time. At its heart, it is a compilation of extracts derived from Armenian texts, both translations of Greek works and original compositions in Armenian. Such a compendium might seem to reflect a traditional form of scholarship, but nothing like this presently exists. This is the first systematic survey of ancient Greek myth in medieval Armenian literature. M. has assembled a comprehensive dataset of references and organised these according to the sequence of myths preserved in the *Bibliotheca* of Pseudo-Apollodorus. Given the diverse nature of the extracts, and their differing degrees of relationship to known versions preserved in Greek, this organising principle is as good as any. In total, 154 sections or episodes are presented; of these 153 appear in the *Bibliotheca*, only one, concerning Narcissus, does not. Each entry

follows the same pattern. After a short description of the myth and the relevant chapter in the *Bibliotheca*, along with other Greek sources if required, M. presents the excerpted Armenian passages in broadly chronological order, that is, according to the date of composition of the works from which they have been extracted. Alongside these are placed the original Greek versions (if extant) from which the Armenian citation or paraphrase derives. In the final column there is an English translation of the Armenian, with any minor differences in the Greek text supplied in parentheses and identified as such (Gr.). If the differences are more substantial or more significant, the Greek passages are cited and translated separately. Through each section, therefore, one can trace how the myth entered Armenian literature and its literary reception, the ways in which it came to be adapted or transformed in later works. The literary development of each myth is thereby established.

Although the 154 sections dominate the volume (pp. 35–332), other bodies of relevant material have been assembled and are situated both before and after these sections. The sections are followed by six appendices (pp. 333–415), of which the first two – ‘Mentions of Greek Gods, their Armenian Equivalents and Images’ and ‘Complete Narrations about the Trojan War’ – are the most substantial. The sections are preceded by five tables under the general heading ‘Names of Gods and Other Personages of Myths’. These draw upon information presented in the subsequent parts of the volume and provide a helpful guide to the material, distinguishing between precise transcriptions, substitutions and corrupted forms, amongst others. Collectively these tables will enable readers to identify any mythological figure in any medieval Armenian text as well as tracing different forms of the same name.

The dataset is preceded by a short but highly important preface that establishes the wider context for the presence of this material in Armenian literature, both in terms of transmission and subsequent deployment. Of the 154 episodes, 79 are attested only in the Armenian translations from Greek; these include multiple passages from the *Chronicle* of Eusebius of Caesarea, whose first part (the preliminary, unreconciled extracts known as the *Chronographia*) is preserved only in Armenian. The sixth-century *Commentaries* of Pseudo-Nonnus, which interpret four sermons of Gregory of Nazianzus (*Or.* 4, 5, 39 and 43), are shown to have been a particularly fruitful source. Almost half of the episodes (66) are attested both in Armenian translations from Greek and in original Armenian compositions, and the majority of these are directly connected, in that the latter can be shown to derive from the former. Five of the episodes can be found only in original Armenian compositions. As a result of this meticulous analysis, we can now be confident which ancient Greek myths have been preserved in Armenian, including the underlying Greek sources, and where they may be consulted. It will be for others to study precisely why these myths were included in original compositions and how they were transformed, including the possible role of intermediate compositions.

This volume fills an important gap in the scholarship. It will be of interest and value for a range of readers, including those interested in the reception of ancient Greek myth and its place in late antique Christian intellectual traditions as well as those working on the composite nature of medieval Armenian literature. It is comprehensive and meticulous. For those familiar with the materials, and in particular the dating of the texts, it is also accessible; for those unfamiliar with that tradition, it provides a starting point into the literature.

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