

## Book reviews

M. Xagorari-Gleissner, *Meter Theon: Die Göttermutter bei den Griechen* (Peleus Studien zur Archäologie und Geschichte Griechenlands und Zypern, 40), Ruppolding: Verlag Franz Philipp Rutzen 2008. 161 pp., 14 pls. ISBN: 3-938646-26-7.

This study of the Mother Goddess by Maria Xagorari-Gleissner focuses on the Greek aspects of the goddess. It aims to examine both the relationship between Meter Theon and the Anatolian Mother Goddess Kybele, and between Meter Theon and the Mother goddesses of the Bronze Age; especially those of Minoan and Mycenaean cultures. The emphasis is on shrines and cult places, which is the most important contribution of this study, but other aspects of the cult such as the iconography, the priesthood and the festivals are also discussed.

Xagorari-Gleissner begins by examining the Greek nature of Meter Theon (Chapters 1–5) before she moves on to investigate the Greek metroa. This is a large undertaking and therefore it is not surprising that the examination of Meter Theon (Chapters 1–4) is, to a large extent, confined to being merely a summary of her earlier research. Her method of identifying the Greek features of Meter Theon by comparing her with the Anatolian Mother Goddess proves to be a difficult undertaking because the poor extant evidence of the Anatolian Mother simply does not allow a valuable comparison. Furthermore, I believe that it is perhaps not possible to define the origin of each and every specific feature in the cult because Greece was an integrated part of the *koine* of the eastern Mediterranean during both the Bronze Age and the Iron Age.

In the introduction (Chapter 1) the author questions the identification of Meter Theon with the Phrygian Kybele, and whether her cult was foreign or not in Greece. She further outlines the history of research regarding the Mother Goddess in Greece and Anatolia, but unfortunately she has

missed several recent publications<sup>1</sup> which may have proven useful in her analysis. This is plausibly due to the fact that Xagorari-Gleissner's research was conducted during the years of 2002–2004, prior to the publication of these works in 2006. However, earlier works on Phrygian (cult) places, such as C.H.E. Haspels' *Highlands of Phrygia* (Princeton 1971), have not been consulted either.

The literary evidence, with focus on transmitted myths and the historical outline, is discussed in Chapter 2. Xagorari-Gleissner claims that a comparison of the myth and cult of Rhea with those of Kybele is useful in order to answer her questions. However, the extant sources force her to compare the myths of Rhea with earlier Hittite stories and, to a lesser extent, with the much later preserved stories of Kybele and Attis as are present in the Greek sources since there are no extant Phrygian literary sources. The fact that the literary accounts of so-called Phrygian myths are all Greek, dating to periods long after the Phrygian cult prospered, should have been taken into consideration to a larger extent when comparing the cults and myths. It is concluded that the Greek Mother Goddess came to be identified with the Anatolian Kybele during the course of the historical period, when she was referred to as Meter Theon. In earlier Greek literature (Homer and Hesiod) she was instead always referred to as Rhea, while the earliest example of the later appellation Meter Theon can be found in Herodotus and the 14th Homeric Hymn.

A more nuanced approach to the various goddesses of Asia Minor and the Near East would have been welcome. For example, Xagorari-Gleissner does not make any distinction between Kubaba and Kybele and treats them as one and the

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<sup>1</sup> M. Munn, *The Mother of the Gods, Athens, and the Tyranny of Asia*, Berkeley 2006; S. Berndt-Ersöz, *Phrygian rock-cut shrines: Structure, function and cult practice*, Leiden & Boston 2006. The study by P. Borgeaud (*La Mère des dieux: De Cybèle à la Vierge Marie*, Seuil 1996) is briefly mentioned, but has not been taken into consideration.

same Mother Goddess. However, Kubaba is often compared with Aphrodite in earlier Greek sources and it is doubtful whether she can be considered to be a Mother Goddess. The Phrygian epithet Kubileya probably derived from the name of Kubaba, but the Phrygian Matar is a different goddess than Kubaba, as is proven by their different attributes.

Chapter 3 describes the Mother Goddess from prehistory to the Classical period in Greece and aims to place Meter Theon in a historical framework. It is argued that Meter Theon is the heir of the Minoan and Mycenaean *matere teija*, but that in Asia Minor she also adopted features of Anatolian mother goddesses. It is further argued that during the beginning of the Hellenistic period Meter Theon was frequently worshipped in the form of Agdistis in Greece. However, the evidence for Agdistis in Greece is sparse with less than ten preserved inscriptions, which in my opinion cannot be regarded as evidence that Agdistis replaced Meter Theon. Instead, Agdistis was another name for the Anatolian Mother Goddess who spread to limited parts of Greece with Anatolian immigrants.

The cult statue of the Mother Goddess was brought from her home in Anatolia to Rome in 204 BC and the historical circumstances of this event have been widely discussed among scholars as the literary accounts differ on this point (See, e.g., L. Roller, *In search of God the Mother*, Berkeley 1999, Ch. 9). Xagorari-Gleissner, however, does not mention these converging theories, instead she claims that the statue was brought from Pessinous and kept in the Megalesion in Pergamon for some time before it was transported to Rome by Attalos I (pp. 25, 131). It would have been interesting to learn how the author came to this conclusion as her theory cannot solely be based on Varro, the only ancient source she refers to (p. 131), as Varro does not mention Pessinous.

In Chapter 4 the Greek iconography of the Goddess is analyzed and compared with those of the Phrygian Matar and the Neo-Hittite Kubaba. Do you mean that 'It would have been beneficial if comparisons with the Lydian images of Kybele had been included in context with this.

The Phrygian Kybele is said to have been worshipped most frequently in aniconic shape (p. 25), but it is uncertain which deity the numerous so-called idols represent, as none of them are identified through inscriptions. The only certain images of Phrygian Kybele are those where she is represented in anthropomorphic shape. The Phrygian Kybele is further described as being flanked by lions, which is however, not the customary image of Matar. We know of only two such examples (the rock-cut façade at Arslankaya and a dinos from Boğazköy), instead Matar is usually associated with a predatory bird.

The specific features of the Greek images of Meter such as the naiskos, the seated position, the accompanying lions,

the *tympanon*, the *polos*, the hair-style, the omphalos bowl and the sceptre are all dealt with one by one. It is concluded that the earliest Greek images date to around 600 BC, during which features from several cultures were combined. The author argues that the seated position and the polos have their origins in the Mycenaean world. In my opinion it is perhaps not possible to determine a specific origin, as the Mycenaean, the Minoan, and the Hittite world, as well as the Near East were part of the same Eastern Mediterranean *koine* where influences and borrowings took place. Both the seated position and the polos can, for example, also be found together with Hittite and Neo-Hittite female deities and there is also an Early Phrygian example of a seated figure. The latter may, however, not be a female deity.

The Greek cult of the Mother Goddess is addressed in Chapter 5 and is one of the more interesting parts of the study. The priesthood of Meter Theon is examined and it becomes clear that there were both priests and priestesses, but the only preserved images are those of female attendants, often holding a *tympanon* as their only characteristic feature. Xagorari-Gleissner interprets the female cult attendants as a heritage from Mycenaean and Minoan cult practices. It should be noted, however, that priestesses also played a central role in Bronze Age Anatolia, and that the preserved evidence from Iron Age Anatolia is not sufficient enough to inform us as to whether there were any priestesses of the Phrygian Mother Goddess or not.

The issue of castrated priests is dealt with on p. 53, where it is stated that self-castration was already practiced among priests in Anatolia during pre-Phrygian periods. This interpretation of Phrygian cult stems from the Christian writers of Late Antiquity who were trying to defame the rival cult of Attis and the Mother Goddess, and cannot be taken as evidence of self-castration during the Phrygian or even pre-Phrygian period. Castrated priests existed in Anatolia during the much later Achaemenian period, as for example at Ephesus. However, as we lack evidence for them during the earlier Phrygian period it has to remain an open question as to whether they existed or not during this period. Furthermore, it is difficult to accept that the worshippers actually castrated themselves, as castration usually took place before the boy reached puberty and was then performed by others.

The author's discussion of the iconography of the cult personnel is interesting, and Xagorari-Gleissner convincingly argues that a Classical relief from Kallithea/Mustaphades illustrates the cult personnel of the Mother Goddess. It is further demonstrated that those standing figures on the *antae* of certain *naiskoi*, which have usually been interpreted as divine, should instead be interpreted as cult attendants (p. 60).

In Chapter 6 the author finally deals with the cult places, which is the main objective. This chapter is supported by a

catalogue where shrines attested to in archaeology or literature are collected. Also, the structures of a more uncertain character are included in a special section. The catalogue comprises 48 entries where each entry includes basic measurements and a bibliography, followed by a paragraph discussing the particular shrine. Several interesting discussions are therefore 'hidden' in the catalogue texts, instead of being in Chapter 6.

The investigation shows that there were surprisingly few monumental temples, which Xagorari-Gleissner explains by saying that the metroon was intentionally built in a simple manner because it imitated the earlier *Herdhaus* (house with hearth). In the *Herdhaus* both cultic and profane functions took place and, as she suggests, it is possible that it once also housed the cult of the predecessor of Meter Theon. The Prytaneion later replaced the *Herdhaus*, and it is suggested that its earlier cultic function came to be moved to separate shrines or temples. Although the evidence is lacking, the suggestion has some potential and would help to explain why the Metroa is often located by the agora and also had other functions apart from pure cultic, as it many times housed the city's archive as well. Xagorari-Gleissner wants to see the metroon as a continuation of earlier Mycenaean buildings via the Greek Geometric *Herdhaus*. However, the most relevant parallel; the Phrygian megaron, is not considered in the study. Instead, a comparison is made with the Bronze Age temples at Hattusha, which are quite different, and the much later megaron-styled temples from Larisa. The Early Phrygian (10th-9th centuries BC) megara at Gordion were also centrally located, and at least some of them were surely also used for cultic purposes (although their precise functions are uncertain). A combined function of profane and cultic duties as suggested for the Greek *Herdhaus*, is very probable for these buildings as well (see e.g. Roller 1999, 112; Berndt-Ersöz 2006, 180). We may further note that later Phrygian images (7th and 6th centuries) depict Kybele standing in the porch of such a megaron building. These façades are often part of rock-cut shrines, but they are likewise not considered in this context. Instead, the only Phrygian cult monuments used as comparisons are the rock-cut step monuments. These, Xagorari-Gleissner believes, are dedicated to the Mother Goddess, and as this type of monument cannot be found in Greece, she interprets them as evidence that the Greeks did not have the same conception of the Mother as the Phrygians. Different conceptions are likely, but the step monuments cannot be used as evidence as it is uncertain which deities these were associated with (see Berndt-Ersöz 2006, 158-166).

In Chapter 7 the popularity of the Mother Goddess and the geographical distribution of her cult in Greece are discussed. It is explained that Meter Theon was an important goddess as her shrine was located by the agora, but she never

became as popular as many other female deities such as Demeter.

The Greek sanctuaries of the Mother Goddess are a topic that has hitherto been neglected, so therefore this is a welcome contribution. Xagorari-Gleissner treats several aspects of the cult and her collection of information on and discussion of the Greek Metroa are the most valuable contributions, in addition to her analysis of the cult personal which offers some new and illuminating insights.

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Ralph W. Mathisen & Danuta Shanzer (eds.), *Romans, Barbarians, and the Transformation of the Roman World. Cultural Interaction and the Creation of Identity in Late Antiquity*, Farnham: Ashgate 2011. 378 pp., 27 ills. ISBN: 978-0-7546-6814-5

The present volume is the published result of the sixth biennial *Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity Conference* held at the University of Illinois in 2005. As the title suggests, the conference—and consequently the book—dealt with the integration of barbarians in the period between the early fourth and seventh centuries CE, “one of the most significant transformations of the Roman world” (1). As stated in the Introduction, the inclusion of the phrase “The Transformation of the Roman World” in the title of the conference was a deliberate comment by the organizers. They felt that the vast research project of the same name funded by the European Science Foundation between 1993 and 1998, had failed to present a single or more coherent theme about the transformation of the Late Antique world; rather it produced as many models as there were participants (of which there were 150!). Therefore, the stated aim of the conference was to present such a coherent theme: the role of barbarians.

Apart from the Introduction by the editors, the book contains 25 chapters grouped thematically into four main parts. I will not concern myself with the minutiae of editorial details apart from one little quibble: the volume does not include a bibliography, which lessens its usefulness somewhat. As it is, one has to trawl through the notes to find a particular reference which is unnecessarily annoying. The quality of the chapters is generally good but, as can be expected in a collection of this kind, somewhat uneven with the occasional excellent chapter as well as some of poorer merit. The limited space allowed for this review precludes an assessment of all chapters individually; I will limit myself to discussing some general concerns and points of interest raised by the book and

its individual chapters. Although most of the contributions deserve attention, only those illustrative of the themes I have chosen will be mentioned.

The first point I wish to raise concerns the overall theme of the book. Although the stated aim in the Introduction is to provide a single and more coherent theme about the transformation of the Roman world, the title itself contradicts this: the themes covered by the title, and indeed the chapters of the book, represent such a wide range of subjects so as to lose the desired coherency, at least to a certain extent. It is true that all contributions deal with barbarians in one form or another, but within the term “barbarian” lurks more than the usually imagined uncivilized Germans and Huns. The chapters of the book cover peoples and groups from most of the Empire’s main borders, from Britain and the rivers of the Rhine and the Danube to southern Egypt and the North African deserts and from the Tigris to Spain. On these frontiers the Romans encountered many types of barbarians and each barbarian group had its own relationship with the Roman Empire. To make matters even more complex, some of the contributions do not deal with barbarians living outside the Empire or whose recent origins were considered to be outside the Empire (such as the Goths in the late fourth and fifth centuries), but with groups such as the Jews (De Palma Digeser; Shahar) or the Vascones (de Brestian) who by Late Antiquity had been Romans—in a technical sense as citizens and in many ways also culturally—for centuries. Although all the groups discussed in the book may have been viewed as barbarians to some extent, the variety or gradation of their barbarity differed. It must be said that the inclusion of more than the most stereotypical kind of barbarian is one of the strengths of the book, and one does get a good idea of the sheer number of different Roman-barbarian experiences. However, the variety itself and the different problems it presents for the scholar trying to study the creation of identity in a changing, and in some ways very fluid, Roman Empire by necessity detracts from the coherency of the volume. Perhaps a discussion on this aspect should have been included in the Introduction to better tie the various contributions together.

This problem—if indeed it is a problem—is compounded by the fact that there is little, apart from the terms “barbarians” and “transformation,” to connect some of the chapters to the overall theme of the volume. For instance, Chapter 8 by Yuval Shahar (“Imperial religious unification and its divisive consequences: Diocletian, the Jews, and the Samaritans”) discusses the unforeseen consequences of the persecutions of Christians during the Tetrarchy. By exempting Jews from sacrificing to the Roman state gods, but not the Samaritans, Diocletian increased the divisions between these two groups. Before the persecutions the Jews viewed the Samaritans as being almost like themselves, they were slightly odd Jews. But

this perception changed as a consequence of the Great Persecution. The Tetrarchs’ effort to unite the Empire resulted in the exact opposite: an increased division. Shahar spends some time establishing the Jews as barbarians, citing textual evidence, but in the end one cannot get away from the feeling that he is protesting too much. The fact remains that Jews had been integrated into the Roman world for centuries and their role in the transformation of the Empire in Late Antiquity probably lies closer to how other, long established groups within the Empire—whether defined by religious, cultural, or any other parameters—affected this change or, indeed, were affected by it (cf. de Brestian in the same volume). Although Shahar’s discussion and conclusions are sound in themselves, the chapter has little to do with the role of barbarians in the transformation of the Roman world.

What Shahar does illustrate—and this is an important aspect—is the role of the imperial government in this transformation, a theme that also occurs in Linda Ellis’ contribution (“Elusive places: A Chorological Approach to Identity and territory in Scythia Major (Second-Seventh Centuries”). She argues that the emergence of a Scythian identity in this Danubian province was as much the result of Roman political and administrative control as anything else. The barbarians themselves were transformed but often it was the Empire, not the barbarians, that was the active agent in the transformation. In the debate over the role of the barbarians in the transformation, or decline (or however one wants to phrase it) of the Empire, it is sometimes overlooked that the Roman authorities themselves were promoters of change, and that often this change, as in Shahar’s example, was due to internal concerns/forces, rather than external.

One of the strengths of the book is that several of the contributions allow for a more nuanced view of Roman-barbarian relations and the various aspects that guided them. For instance, Kevin Uhalde’s chapter (“Barbarian Traffic, Demon Oaths, and Christian Scruples (Aug. *Epist.* 46–47)”) demonstrates that religious concerns sometimes outweighed the importance of ethnic or cultural differences in the day-to-day interactions between Romans and barbarians, and also that such relationships were peaceful more often than not. This is further emphasized in several chapters that address the important issue of perception: by whom were barbarians perceived as barbarians, and under what circumstances? For example, Salim Faraji (“Kush and Rome on the Egyptian Southern Frontier: Where Barbarians Worshipped as Romans and Romans Worshipped as Barbarians”) discusses the situation on the Roman-Kushite border in southern Egypt and how Romans participated in Kushite cults and vice versa. As is indicated in Faraji’s paper, originally non-Roman cultural or religious traits were unproblematic for those who identified themselves with the Roman Empire. Also, for the individuals

involved, the idea of participating in cults devoted to specifically Nubian gods was not seen as anti- or even non-Roman.

The sharp division between civilized Romans and barbarians that may (or may not) have existed in earlier times, became less and less of a reality. As Elisabeth Robertson Brown shows in her chapter (“Banditry or Catastrophe?: History, Archaeology, and Barbarian Raids on Roman Greece”), late fourth century writers such as Claudian and Eunapius could no longer maintain a clear distinction between Roman armies and barbarian invaders, although not for a lack of trying. The idea of the strange and dangerous “other” as opposed to the cultured Roman was the view of the intellectual elite, who in their writings could afford to portray barbarians as more similar to animals than rational human beings. In everyday life, especially on the frontiers, such ideas were not very common (cf. Uhalde). It is debatable whether the people in the Roman-Kushite border zone perceived their existence and their relations with each other as a Roman, non-Roman dichotomy, apart from perhaps as a political veneer.

Kimberly Kagan’s contribution (“Spies Like Us: Treason and Identity in the Late Roman Empire”) emphasizes the difference between one Roman-barbarian interaction from another as she compares the situation on the Persian border with that on the Rhine. The distinction between Roman and non-Roman was much more clearly defined on the Persian border. The complexity and great age of the Persian civilization, as well as Persia’s military strength and political rivalry with Rome, meant that the kind of mixed identities that developed on other frontiers did not occur here. As discussed by Kagan, interaction between Rome and Persia was guided by a single state loyalty, and changing one’s identity from Roman to Persian (or vice versa) was not undertaken lightly and involved an act perceived—even by those who did it—as fundamentally wrong. If one defected, one changed identity completely—thus preserving the single state loyalty. In the west, on the Rhine frontier, matters were different and more akin to the Kushite frontier with a mingling of identities that were not mutually exclusive. Barbarian rulers often served as Roman commanders while still being kings of their respective peoples. As leaders of client kingdoms they were an integrated part of the Roman system. The point is that it was not necessary to change identity since adopting a Roman identity did not preclude a Germanic one.

Kagan’s chapter also points to the reason why the integration of barbarians into the society of the western provinces in the fifth and sixth centuries worked relatively well. Already part of a mixed culture and incorporated into the Roman military system, the groups (mostly Germanic) taking over in the West were not as alien as they are sometimes portrayed. Their identity, whether Roman or barbarian, was a product of Roman perceptions and created within a Roman frame of

reference, thus making them familiar to Roman sensibilities (if only as the proverbial “other”). On the eastern frontier, the society, culture, and thus the identity of the Persians were based on traditions older than the Romans and just as dominant. Thus they were also much more alien to the Roman mind (and therefore perhaps more acceptable as something to admire, cf. McDonough and Drijvers in the same volume). The relative ease, then, with which some Germanic groups coexisted or integrated with the indigenous Roman (Spanish, Gallic, Italian, etc) populations following the end of the fourth century was due to the fact that their identities were already part of a Roman system. This point is further borne out by two chapters dealing with the post-Roman Spanish elite. Schwarcz (“Visigothic Settlement, Hospitalitas, and Army Payment Reconsidered”) and García Moreno (“Building an Ethnic Identity for a New Gothic and Roman Nobility: Córdoba, 615 AD”) show that the post-Roman elite in Spain, and their landholdings, were not organized along a Gothic-Roman dichotomy as much as it was based on imperial administrative practices (Schwarcz). These practices were themselves the result of increased Roman barbarian interaction in the aftermath of the battle of Adrianople in AD 378—coupled with ideas on Roman senatorial nobility (García Moreno).

There are a wide variety of themes and sub-themes covered by the book and I have only had room to discuss some of them. Apart from a certain lack of focus in the way some contributions relate to the stated theme of the book, the general impression is positive and it is a book well worth reading. All in all, this volume provides the reader with many different perspectives on barbarian and Roman interaction in late antiquity. Perhaps the most valuable contribution of the book is the recognition of the fact that the transformation of the Roman world took place in a Roman political, cultural and geographical context. Even the role of the barbarians was defined within Roman parameters and was dependent upon cultural traits as well as political and religious issues.

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S. J. Harrison (ed.), *Living Classics. Greece and Rome in Contemporary Poetry in English (Classical Presences)*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2009. 346 pp., 1 fig. ISBN 978-0-19-923373-1.

It is somewhat of a paradox that in today's climate, which sees the effective knowledge of the classical languages decreasing, that poets and authors (especially in the Anglophone world) show an ever growing interest for the ancient authors as starting points for their own work. The texts in this volume, 17 chapters in total divided into three sections, portray this interest from two perspectives; the subjective reflections of the poet translating or re-creating the classics for a modern audience, and the scholarly analysis of the same process.

The first two sections feature contributions from contemporary poets and authors working with translations of classical poetry or stage drama, Greek as well as Latin. The first part 'Poets and Practice' examines modern poetry founded on the images of the classical world, as presented by the poets themselves. In Chapter 1 'Horace on Teesside', Maureen Almond (1945–) narrates the process of her repositioning of the Epodes of Horace, in themselves a sort of narrative of his own life in the year 30 BC, into autobiographical comments on her own childhood in Teesside, North East England. In the following chapter, 'Jumping the bones: Translating, Transgressing and Creating', Josephine Balmer (1959–) discusses the possibility of modern poets shedding new light on Classical texts through modernist verse and the creation of new pieces of poetry, as she has done herself with fragments by for example Sappho, Corinna, and also Catullus. Balmer also mentions the possibility offered in the rendering of classical texts to step away from oneself and write about topics that might be too painful to place in one's own proximity, such as the death of a child. In Chapter 3, 'Reconnecting with the Classics', the Scottish poet Robert Crawford (1959–) examines the idea that new translations of Classical poets, as exemplified by those on Sappho and Alcman, may produce very different solutions from the poetic notion of the poems, depending on how the translator approaches aspects such as rhythm and cadence. Catullus re-emerges in the fourth chapter, 'Catullus in the Playground', in which New Zealand poet Anna Jackson (1967–) tells of her translations of the Roman verses into a language aimed at younger readers, for her third collection of poems, *Catullus for Children* (2003). The section ends with the chapter 'Lapsed Classicist', in which Irish poet Michael Longley (1939–) reflects on his own long-lasting infatuation with the Homeric epics. Several times, Longley writes, has he found himself acting as the "mouthpiece" of Homer, in re-telling the Homeric images for a modern society which is itself seeing the very same kind of human conflicts and sacrifice.

The second part of the book, *Poets in the Theatre*, consists of two chapters only: 'Weeping for Hecuba' by Tony Harrison (1937–), and 'Title Deeds: Translating a Classic' by Seamus Heaney (1939–). Both chapters focus on the role of ancient drama in the modern world, exploring the very poignant function these classical texts may have in a contemporary political climate. Harrison's text is more remote from the poetic process itself, in that his concern is with Euripides' two plays *The Trojan Women* and *Hecuba*, and the image of the Trojan queen as the tragic epitome of a woman who, at the end of a war fought by men and in which she herself has had no active part, loses everything. Heaney instead analyzes his own translation of Sophocles' *Antigone*. Over the last century, Heaney explains, the play has had a significant impact on its audiences in the context of the on-going political turmoil of Northern Ireland, and it is now more a pretext for debate than a mere text from a theatrical repertoire.

The third part 'Scholars on Poets' is the longest section of the volume with ten chapters. The first three chapters focus on Northern Ireland and the classical influence in the works of Longley and Heaney. Longley is the poet most prominently studied, in both Chapter 8 'The Argippaei (Herodotus 4.23) in Belfast' by Maureen Alden, and Chapter 9 'Michael Longley Appropriates Latin Poetry' by Brian Arkins. In the following chapter 'The Homeric Convergences and Divergences of Seamus Heaney and Michael Longley', Oliver Taplin compares the habit of both poets in borrowing from Homer, in more or less synchronic works though in a far from symmetrical way. In Chapter 11 'Is "the Frail Silken Line" Worth more than "a Fart in a Bearskin"? or, how Translation Practice Matters in Poetry and Drama', Lorna Hardwick contributes a more theoretical discussion on classical translations, exemplified through the works of already cited Longley, along with his fellow Irishman and dramatist Brian Friel (1929–). The influence of Greek dramatists on women's poetry is discussed by Anastasia Bakogianni in Chapter 12 'Electra in Sylvia Plath's *Poetry: A Case of Identification*', and the history and nature of Western perception of the Self becomes the focus of Chapter 13 'The Autobiography of the Western Subject: Carson's *Geryon*' by Edith Hall, on the Canadian poet Anne Carson's novel *Autobiography of Red*. In Chapter 14 '"Purple Shining Lilies": Imagining the Aeneid in Contemporary Poetry', Rowena Fowler considers different levels of identification with Virgilian motifs in the works of several contemporary poets and authors, mostly Irish and British. In Chapter 15 'Shades of Rome in the Poetry of Derek Walcott' Emily Greenwood analyses the Classical origins in the poems of the Caribbean poet. She connects his playful use of Latin words in the midst of Creole expressions with the poet's fellow Nobel Laureate, Seamus Heaney, and his dialogue which contains contemporary Irish. In "We'll all be Penelopes

then”: Art and Domesticity in American Women’s Poetry, 1958–1996; Isobel Hurst discusses the changing perspective and creative freedom of American women poets during the last decades of the 20th century, in the alternating applications of the image of Penelope at her loom. In the last chapter ‘Catullus in New Zealand’ Stephen Harrison, who is the editor of the volume, reflects on the position of the Latin poet in the works of Kiwi poets James K. Baxter (1926–1972) and C. Karl Stead (1932–), finding in Baxter a tendency to further explain the Latin original and a tendency to provide an ironic and critical sidelight on the contemporary New Zealand literary context in Stead.

Throughout its various sections the volume combines the introvert reflections of the creating poet with the academic distancing evaluation of the process and its result. The various contributing poets come from divergent backgrounds and thus add different reflections on the classical texts on which they based their compositions. Both Almond (Ch. 1) and Jackson (Ch. 4) confess to not knowing Latin or Greek, and take scholarly translations as starting points for their new renderings of the classical works. The remaining poets, especially Longley (Ch. 5) and Heaney (Ch. 7), instead reminisce on their own early schooling in the ancient authors, and make critical choices between alternative readings in their interpretational and creative work. These divergent backgrounds are, however, not that scattered when it comes to the global perspective. In the introduction, Harrison advertises the collection of essays as an “eclectic account” (p.1) of contemporary poetic engagement with the literature of Greece and Rome. Given that most contributors come from a British context, the volume presents an assortment of chapters dealing with poetry from the British Isles, with a rather pronounced focus on Northern Ireland through the repetitive mention of Longley and Heaney. The poetry of both New Zealand and North America is represented, but the post-colonial perspective is breached only through Wilcott (Ch. 15). Most of the poets invited to contribute or analyzed by scholars were born in the first half of the last century (pre-1950s), the youngest voice heard being that of Anna Jackson (1967–).

The volume as a whole thus combines several very different perspectives, gathered under the umbrella of the problem of translation, and the conscious deliberations of the translating poet become the starting point for a varied and thought-provoking insight into the creative process as such. Several contributors stress the point that any translator will, almost as a force majeure, take up a medial path between the role of the mediator (by re-locating the classical texts in a modern perspective) and the innovator, by adding her/his subjective views of and on the material itself.

Several of the chapters in the first two sections of the volume concern the question as to whether one, as a translating

poet, should remain faithful to the original or aim at differentiation and/or appropriation of the material for one’s own subjective needs. The scholarly discussion in the third section aims at establishing a platform from which this triple perspective can be effectively analyzed, that of the original poem, the modern poet re-working it, and the modern reader meeting the contemporarily generated version.

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B. Santillo Frizell, *LANA, CARNE, LATTE. Paesaggi pastorali tra mito e realtà*, Mauro Pagliai Editore, Firenze 2010, ISBN 978-88-564-0095-3

*Lana, carne, latte. Paesaggi pastorali tra mito e realtà* non è semplicemente una guida alla conoscenza e alla fruizione consapevole di quanto resta del paesaggio pastorale ma si impone, oltre le intenzioni dell’autrice, come un saggio che trova degna collocazione tra le opere che trattano di storia dell’economia rurale.<sup>2</sup> E va a colmare le non poche lacune riscontrabili negli studi storici, che solitamente si sono concentrati sulla cultura egemone, demandando a discipline considerate “minori” l’analisi delle manifestazioni della cultura materiale delle classi subalterne. L’editore Pagliai, consapevole dei pregi dell’opera, ne valorizza l’aspetto divulgativo inserendolo nella collana “Storie del mondo”.

Ciò che maggiormente colpisce il lettore, oltre la ricchezza della documentazione e dei confronti storici ed etnografici, è l’approccio “compartecipante” per cui l’autrice si compiace del proprio coinvolgimento nei contesti che osserva: un metodo mutuato dalla ricerca sociologica ma anche un atteggiamento che potremmo definire “nordico”, non tanto per l’accostamento fin troppo scontato allo stato d’animo dei viaggiatori ottocenteschi, quanto per la vena autenticamente romantica che sgorga dalle pagine. D’altra parte per l’autrice lo studio del pastoralismo e degli usi, costumi e tradizioni connessi è diventato quasi una ragione di vita, a partire dai primi anni novanta del secolo scorso con il rapporto sul progetto pilota *Per itinera callium*, pubblicato nel 1996 in *Opuscula Romana*, per giungere, attraverso una nutrita bibliografia, a *Lana, carne, latte*.

<sup>2</sup> E. Sereni, *Storia del paesaggio agrario italiano*, Bari 1971; M. Bloch, *I caratteri originali della storia rurale francese*, Torino 1973; C. Cattaneo, *Saggi di economia rurale*, Torino 1975; F. Braudel, *Civiltà materiale, economia e capitalismo*, Torino 1987.

Santillo Frizell esplora prima di tutto il paesaggio reale delle terre mediterranee, ricerca le cause per cui in quelle terre, nella tarda preistoria, si è determinato l'indirizzo economico basato sul trattamento delle pecore e delle capre come bestiame da frutto e trova le spiegazioni nelle fonti archeologiche e in quelle letterarie epiche relative alle origini della civiltà ellenica e di quella romana.

Nella seconda parte dell'opera l'autrice affianca al paesaggio fisico quello immaginario dell'Arcadia popolata di personaggi mitologici: un'utopia sempre cara alle classi egemoni (principali destinatarie dei benefici economici derivanti dal mondo pastorale) che ha conosciuto una enorme fortuna in età rinascimentale e barocca, perdurante, in forma attenuata e diversa, ancora oggi e facilmente riconoscibile nelle comuni esigenze di sottrarsi ai ritmi frenetici della quotidianità, di praticare una sana alimentazione, di stabilire un maggiore contatto con la natura.

La terza parte è dedicata agli aspetti della produzione e del consumo delle materie prime e dei loro derivati. La lana, che un tempo era il prodotto più redditizio, oggi ha un valore minimo rispetto alla carne e al latte. Anche la carne di pecora ha perso di importanza rispetto al consumo che se ne faceva nel passato sia per motivi salutistici sia per ragioni etiche. Ne consegue che la pastorizia moderna trae i suoi maggiori vantaggi dalla lavorazione del latte e il *cacio pecorino* è, secondo la definizione di Santillo Frizell, il "re dei formaggi".

Il quarto capitolo è dedicato all'impiego, a scopo veterinario, delle acque minerali e sulfuree specialmente nel mondo antico. Per illustrare questo particolare aspetto dell'economia pastorale vengono utilizzati gli esempi del santuario di Ercole Vincitore e delle *Aquae Albulae* a Tivoli e dell'antico complesso termale di Methana nel Peloponneso.

Il libro si chiude con un epilogo che definisce ulteriormente il gusto e lo stile arcadico come prerogative dei principi europei e dei gruppi aristocratici e politici che popolavano le loro corti travestiti da miti pastorelli e ninfe boscherecce e che dall'economia pastorale traevano enormi vantaggi con investimenti minimi. Barbro Santillo Frizell ricorda in proposito la figura della regina Cristina di Svezia, la sua passione disinteressata per il dramma pastorale e il suo rapporto con l'Accademia dell'Arcadia fondata a Roma nel 1690. Ma la conclusione vera del libro scaturisce da una domanda: paesaggi con o senza animali al pascolo? L'autrice non ha dubbi: i paesaggi senza animali sono inconcepibili e in particolare il paesaggio pastorale non esiste senza pecore, capre, vacche e cavalli. Portando come esempi il caso italiano di Blera (Viterbo) e le esperienze svedesi di Pilane (Tjörn) e Grimsholmen (Falkenberg), l'autrice dimostra come sia possibile perseguire lo sviluppo sostenibile coniugando il sistema agro-pastorale con il turismo archeologico, gastronomico e paesaggistico.

Fin qui, in sintesi, il libro: una lettura coinvolgente che, allargando l'orizzonte della conoscenza, denuncia problematiche di grande attualità, specialmente in ordine al concetto di *paesaggio* così come introdotto dalla *Convenzione europea del paesaggio* adottata a Firenze nel 2000.<sup>3</sup>

Questo libro è una sorta di macchina del tempo capace di riportarci indietro fino agli albori della civiltà europea quando l'intervento dell'uomo sulla natura divenne talmente sensibile ed invasivo da determinare un cambiamento irreversibile: la rivoluzione neolitica. Da qui bisogna partire per poter fare le dovute considerazioni rispetto al presente e misurare quanto resta delle nostre origini.

Le fonti archeologiche riferibili ad età neolitica documentano la concezione e il culto della terra come madre generosa capace di produrre risorse alimentari che si rinnovano ciclicamente, disponibile agli interventi umani tendenti a stabilizzare e migliorare la quantità e la qualità di tali risorse con le pratiche agricole e con l'allevamento. Dalle stesse fonti apprendiamo che i gruppi umani diventano stanziali.

Forse è superfluo ricordare che il seme della nostra civiltà urbana viene gettato proprio nel Neolitico quando l'utilizzazione economica dei terreni ha imposto la loro divisione in base alla destinazione d'uso, comportando varie distinzioni concettuali di cui la principale è indubbiamente l'antinomia *insediamento-territorio*, entità che si escludono a vicenda essendo il primo lo spazio costruito ed il secondo quello non costruito. Queste entità, insieme ai concetti di *percorso* (inteso come collegamento tra gli insediamenti) e *confine* (inteso come delimitazione dei territori), costituiscono le prime forme della strutturazione dello spazio antropico da parte delle società sedentarie e ancora oggi sono categorie fondamentali dell'urbanistica. Basti pensare agli strumenti di pianificazione moderni, i Piani Regolatori Generali, che distinguono la zona urbana dalla zona agricola e la recente pianificazione regionale che, con i Piani Territoriali Paesistici, incentra la zonizzazione proprio sul concetto di paesaggio.

<sup>3</sup> La Convenzione europea (European Landscape Convention, www.coe.int) considera il paesaggio dal punto di vista della percezione che ne hanno gli uomini per cui tutto può essere paesaggio; nella tradizione della legislazione di tutela italiana si ha un'accezione di paesaggio come "bellezze naturali", esclusivamente estetica e pertanto assai limitata, purtroppo ancora presente nel D. Lgs. 22.01.2004, n° 42 e s.m.i. recante il *Codice dei beni culturali e del paesaggio*; gli ecologisti considerano il paesaggio come ecosistema; altri ne esaltano la valenza economica di territorio organizzato dall'uomo per funzioni diversificate; altri ancora ne accentuano la dimensione idealistica della percezione interiore. Se nessuna di queste concezioni è pienamente soddisfacente possiamo considerare la definizione di paesaggio un problema filosofico ovvero geofilosofico. A questo proposito è utile la lettura di L. Bonesio, *Geofilosofia del paesaggio*, Milano 1997 e di M. Cacciari, *Geofilosofia dell'Europa*, Milano 2003.



Nell'antichità, fino ad un passato relativamente recente, il territorio esterno alla città, compreso entro i confini civici, era lo spazio destinato alla produzione agricola, distinto a sua volta in due zone: quella più vicina all'abitato per colture ortofrutticole e seminativi e quella più vicina ai confini dedicata alle attività pastorali e venatorie. Pertanto il territorio civico era concepito schematicamente come un insieme di tre cerchi concentrici il più interno dei quali era la città a cui gli altri due cerchi erano funzionali. Il sistema, con alti flussi di interscambio (anche di natura conflittuale), aveva raggiunto un equilibrio stabile grazie a un robusto intreccio di norme, consuetudini e riti che regolavano i rapporti tra l'ambito urbano e quelli naturali. Per fare un solo esempio della specializzazione ed al contempo della interdipendenza degli ambiti basti considerare la tipologia dei luoghi di culto nel mondo antico (ma non solo): le aree sacre urbane, dove si veneravano divinità celesti dalle connotazioni politiche (Giove, Giunone e Minerva sul Campidoglio); le aree sacre suburbane dedicate a divinità agrarie (Cerere, Libero e Libera sull'Aventino); le aree sacre di confine, che spesso ospitavano santuari oracolari e terapeutici, in zone marginali e impervie presso sorgenti di acque minerali e termali (quindi incluse nel paesaggio pastorale), meta di pellegrinaggi da parte delle comunità contermini talvolta sede di culti federali e necessariamente di fiere e mercati (Sibilla Tiburtina e Ercole Vincitore a Tivoli). A questo proposito l'autrice sottolinea correttamente il caso di Delfi in Grecia e di Tivoli in Italia come santuari di confine nati e sviluppati in stretto rapporto con l'attività pastorale.

La originaria tripartizione economica del territorio ha dato luogo a tre diversi tipi di paesaggio: il paesaggio urbano (costruito), il paesaggio agricolo (coltivato) e il paesaggio pastorale (naturale); in una sequenza che, dal centro alla periferia, va dal più artificiale al più naturale, dal più costruito al meno costruito. Oggi, in molte parti d'Italia e d'Europa, i tre paesaggi non sono più distinguibili a causa dell'urbanizzazione selvaggia delle campagne che, negli ultimi cinquanta anni, ha travolto col cemento una quantità inimmaginabile di territorio. La confusione paesistica attuale sarà sempre più grave ed insostenibile quanto più favore incontreranno l'ambientalismo estremo e l'animalismo intransigente molto di moda, come la speculazione edilizia, in certi circoli urbani.

A causa di questo fenomeno erosivo Barbro Santillo Fritzel è dovuta andare alla ricerca del paesaggio pastorale nei luoghi dove si è maggiormente conservato distinguendosi dal territorio urbanizzato: boschi, radure, sentieri, fonti, corsi d'acqua a perdita d'occhio. L'autrice considera giustamente questo raro paesaggio un patrimonio storico dei popoli mediterranei, un relitto delle comuni origini che si riflette anche nel modo di sentire e di immaginare l'Arcadia, quel luogo

fuori dell'ordinario, teatro di miti e leggende, ispiratore di capolavori dell'arte, della letteratura e della musica.

L'autrice ha trovato a Blera uno di questi luoghi dove l'ambiente è più integro e dove ancora ha senso parlare di lana, carne e latte; dove il paesaggio pastorale è rimasto immutato nonostante la sostituzione dei suoi abitanti: ai pastori e alle pecore maremmane sono subentrati i pastori sardi con le loro pecore.<sup>4</sup> Un contesto che oltre agli aspetti ecologici ed estetici di rilevante pregio mantiene ancora oggi un valore economico notevole per le attività produttive che vi si svolgono: la pastorizia e l'allevamento allo stato brado, la silvicoltura e il turismo rurale. Tutte risorse inesauribili a condizione che non venga alterato l'equilibrio del contesto, come del resto il volume auspica nel delineare le opportunità di conservazione del paesaggio agrario in funzione economica definendolo "un valore aggiunto".

La domesticazione selettiva di certe specie animali e vegetali sta alla base della nostra civiltà e la pecora, con la sua alta resa produttiva a fronte delle minime esigenze di mantenimento, è stato sicuramente l'animale più vantaggioso per l'uomo. Principale indicatore di ricchezza nell'antichità, produttore di latte, carne, lana, la pecora è stata simbolo di stabilità. Ma la sicurezza richiede reciprocità e tra il pastore e il suo bestiame si è instaurato un rapporto simbiotico che ha comportato necessariamente la condivisione dello spazio vitale. Paradossalmente, nonostante la loro fondamentale importanza economica per l'intero gruppo sociale, le greggi e gli uomini ad esse addetti sono sempre stati spinti e mantenuti ai margini della civiltà, a distanza sia dalle città sia dai campi coltivati. Ma il paradosso è solo apparente: basta infatti provare a cercare le ragioni di questa "emarginazione" per percepire la presenza di una volontà pianificatrice centrale tanto più forte quanto più netta appare la separazione spaziale delle attività produttive. Tanto è vero che le strade di transumanza, che nello Stato della Chiesa prendono il nome di Strada della Dogana delle Pecore,<sup>5</sup> nascono con questo esclusivo scopo, non collegano nessun centro abitato, come invece fanno le strade vere e proprie, e i pascoli sono generalmente situati lontano dagli insediamenti civili: sulle montagne quelli estivi e nei latifondi prossimi al mare quelli invernali.

<sup>4</sup> Il paesaggio pastorale a Blera attualmente coincide in larga parte con i beni demaniali civici amministrati dal Comune e dalle Università Agrarie di Blera e della frazione Civitella Cesi. Proprio il gravame di "uso civico" ha facilitato la conservazione di questi territori.

<sup>5</sup> F. Ricci & L. Santella, *La chiesa dell'Ave Maria sulla Strada della Dogana delle Pecore*, in *Informazioni* n. 10, pp. 56–63, con bibliografia relativa. Tanto per avere un'idea dell'importanza della pastorizia nell'economia dello Stato della Chiesa basti considerare che, alla fine del XV secolo, la fida pascolo per il bestiame transumante, già imposta durante il pontificato di Paolo II, costituiva la seconda entrata della Camera Apostolica dopo l'allume dei Monti della Tolfa.

Nelle zone di contatto tra le coltivazioni intensive e i pascoli si sono sempre sviluppati contenziosi, spesso cruenti, del tipo Caino-Abele, che il potere centrale ha dovuto regolare giuridicamente.<sup>6</sup> Oggi, dunque, il contenzioso per l'uso del territorio non ha più come attori il pastore e l'agricoltore ma vede il cittadino contrapposto all'autorità locale. Il cittadino pretende di abitare in campagna con tutti gli agi della città, sostituendosi, dopo averli espulsi, ai suoi tradizionali abitanti. L'ampliamento non pianificato dello spazio urbano non solo modifica irreversibilmente il paesaggio rurale ma porta con sé effetti negativi a breve e a lungo termine: altera l'assetto idrogeologico, aumenta i rischi di inquinamento ambientale, turba il mercato dei terreni agricoli.

Tre o quattro milioni di anni fa la specie umana è scesa dagli alberi per impadronirsi della terra, della sua flora e della sua fauna; oggi dobbiamo seriamente considerare che il nostro destino, quale che sia, non può essere quello di tornare nella foresta. Quindi, per il bene di tutti lasciamo che le montagne, i boschi, i pascoli, le sorgenti e le campagne coltivate continuino ad avere i loro abitanti di sempre: pastori, allevatori, agricoltori, pecore, cavalli e vacche. Questo è il messaggio che Santillo Frizell ci trasmette col suo libro: valorizziamo, tutelando, l'ambiente rurale. Solo così potremo sempre avere la possibilità di sognare l'Arcadia e talvolta anche l'occasione di viverla.

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<sup>6</sup> Le leggi agrarie sono da considerare tra le più antiche regole di convivenza civile: la parola *nomos* in greco significa legge ma anche pascolo.