

particular from the following observations: the ancient statements that Chrysippus makes rich use of poetry are confirmed in their tendency. An important principle for the citation of poetry is *πιθανόν*, i.e. the use of poetry not as scientific proof in the proper sense, but in order to derive the habitual or customary nature of a statement. R. finds the techniques of expansion of meaning, shifting of meaning, repetition, correction and change of speaker, which were worked out on the basis of the speeches in Plutarch, confirmed for the entire corpus.

An overall result is that we should speak of symbolic rather than allegorical interpretation. In the course of the work R. pays a great deal of attention to the citation segments and pre-contexts – here, a synopsis, a look at Chrysippus’ library and when and where he reaches for which author might have been fruitful. But the index of passages, which helps to open up the impassable terrain that R. has traversed, offers a substitute. On the whole, R. presents an exemplary study. It not only underlines how omnipresent and significant poetic quotations are in the philosophical discourse of antiquity, but also what helpful insights can be gained from a systematic and methodically conscious investigation of this phenomenon.

*Bergische Universität Wuppertal*

STEFAN FREUND  
[freund@uni-wuppertal.de](mailto:freund@uni-wuppertal.de)

## A COMMENTARY ON *MEGARA*

TSOMIS (G.P.) *Das hellenistische Gedicht Megara. Ein Kommentar.* (Palingenesia 130.) Pp. 236. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2022. Cased, €50. ISBN: 978-3-515-13108-7.

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The anonymous Hellenistic poem *Megara* consists of a conversation between Megara, the first wife of Heracles and mother of the children whom he killed in a fit of madness, and her mother-in-law Alcmene. Megara first looks back on the events of the murder and speaks about her emotions and, after a few transitional lines by a narrator, Alcmene utters her lament as Heracles’ mother, in which a dream about Heracles and his brother Iphicles is an important element.

T. presents a new edition with commentary, translation and introduction of this poem and thus provides readers and students of Hellenistic poetry with a welcome update after the commentary of J.W. Vaughn of 1976. The purpose of this edition is to offer a new perspective on the *Megara* by analysing its debts to epic, lyric and dramatic Greek poetry and showing how it is a typical instance of Hellenistic poetry.

In Chapter 1, about the ‘epyllion’ as a literary form, T. offers a critical evaluation of earlier views and plausibly infers that the so-called epyllion is best regarded not as a fixed genre, but as a Hellenistic innovation of the form and contents of the old epic, offering an alternative to epic poetry and including elements from drama and lyric poetry. In Chapter 2 T. discusses the poem’s date and authorship and, rejecting the attribution to Moschus, regards it as the work of a poet of the early Hellenistic period because of connections with Apollonius Rhodius and Theocritus. This conclusion seems a little abrupt: it would have been good to offer some striking examples of similar techniques or clear connections with early Hellenistic poetry to support it and make it more

convincing. Apart from this, T. should also have addressed the question how the mad and suffering Heracles of the *Megara* fits in with the heroic and 'Ptolemaic' Heracles we find in, for example, Theocritus 24 (which T. contrasts with the *Megara* in Chapter 10). Chapter 3 focuses on mythical aspects of the poem and shows how it may be connected with Euripides' *Heracles Furens* and the prose description of the fate of Megara and Alcmena by Nicolaus of Damascus.

After these three chapters the text of the poem is given with an apparatus and a translation. Then there are more chapters of an introductory nature: Chapter 5 about the metre; 6 on the poem's dramatic form and structure, with attention to generic aspects. After the commentary (pp. 71–172) a few other introductory chapters follow: 8 about Alcmena's dream (with an interesting discussion of possible connections with ancient ways of the interpretation of dreams as in Artemidorus' *Oneirocritica*); 9 about Megara in connection with Megara in Euripides' *Heracles Furens* and Deianeira in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*; 10 about the *Megara* in relation to Theocritus 24, where Alcmena is more active and Heracles appears more as an example for the Ptolemaic kings than in the *Megara*; 11 about the poem's audience and performance, possibly at festive occasions in a theatre.

The commentary is rich and well organised and discusses the poem in great detail. It is particularly strong on the use of words, their occurrence in the literary tradition, their position in the line and their role in signalling connections with other texts, i.e. as markers of intertextuality (on the whole T. is well able to distinguish between 'mere' parallels and meaningful allusions). In many cases T. offers good interpretative discussions of the vocabulary in the framework of the literary tradition, for example on 1–2a about μήτηρ ἐμῆ and about the allusion to Leucothea in *Od.* 5.339–40; on 47–8a about εὐφραίνω in connection with the hero returning from the war; on 89b–90 about allusions to Homeric women mourning the fate of their male relatives; on 94–5 about μακέλη connecting Heracles with Achilles in the *Iliad*.

In most respects this work is of a high professional standard. It is well documented and well written and shows a thorough knowledge of the relevant primary sources. T. has a good sense of what demands attention in the commentary and particularly shows great diligence in collecting and presenting useful parallels. Even so, there are a few points on which there is room for improvement.

(1) The organisation of the book: it would have been good to offer a survey of the poem's contents and structure at the beginning of the introduction; the introductory chapters, which in themselves are useful and offer a thorough discussion of many relevant aspects of the *Megara*, should have been concentrated at the book's beginning; in these chapters there are many longer quotations from Greek or Latin authors, where readers might have benefited from translations (e.g. pp. 40, 139 and 178–9); the bibliography and the way in which references are abbreviated are somewhat confusing and uneconomical (there is first a list of editions of the *Megara*; then a list of editions of other authors; then a list of abbreviations of much quoted works and on pp. 203–12 there is a bibliography: to a certain extent these lists overlap); a list of the sigla used in the apparatus would have been useful; for readers it would have been easier if the poem's translation had been placed next to the text; at the end of the book there is an extensive 'Stellenregister' (pp. 213–36): here I would have preferred a shorter index containing only the passages that are discussed at some length and then two more indexes, one of the words that are discussed and one of names and subjects, so as to make the commentary's often valuable contents more easily accessible for readers who are not reading it from cover to cover.

(2) The use of secondary literature: here are some gaps, for example there is no awareness of later research on particles (e.g. on 52 T. refers only to J.D. Denniston's *Greek Particles* [1934] and not to any modern research on this topic); in the bibliography

the commentaries on Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica* Books 3 and 4 by R. Hunter (1989) and E. Livrea (1973) are not mentioned; in the chapter on the possible audience T. should have referred to A. Cameron's *Callimachus and his Critics* (1995) about the performance culture in the Hellenistic period.

Some questions remain that could have been discussed with profit. For example, in Chapter 8 T. briefly mentions the similarity between Heracles' plight in Alcmena's dream and the episode of Achilles and Scamander in the *Iliad*: it could have been worth investigating this issue further (elaborating on the useful remarks in the commentary on 94–5). In connection with this, it could also have been useful to collect the many allusions to the *Iliad* in the *Megara* and discuss them in connection with each other (for instance, several allusions seem to draw attention to the fate of parents; see e.g. the commentary on 82 about Niobe, recalling *Il.* 24.602 and the fate of Priam; on 89b–90, where *δυσάμμορος* refers readers to the women of the *Iliad*, Thetis, Hecuba and Andromache). On a larger scale it would also be interesting to add further discussion of the women's perspective in connection with later works such as Ovid's *Heroides*. One may wonder whether the *Megara* was among the texts that inspired Ovid to his approach.

However, in spite of these critical remarks and suggestions, this book is a valuable addition to the existing range of commentaries on Hellenistic poetry. It certainly helps to understand this intriguing poem much better and may well trigger further interest in it.

*University of Groningen*

ANNETTE HARDER  
[m.a.harder@rug.nl](mailto:m.a.harder@rug.nl)

## HELLENISTIC AND IMPERIAL DIALOGUES

KÖNIG (J.), WIATER (N.) (edd.) *Late Hellenistic Greek Literature in Dialogue*. Pp. xiv + 416, ill. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. Cased, £90, US\$120. ISBN: 978-1-316-51668-3.

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The title of this volume invites a dialogic response. What counts as '(late) Hellenistic', as 'literature' and 'in dialogue' with what or whom? The volume offers a robust set of possibilities. The introduction highlights the relative inattention to late Hellenistic and Augustan Greek literature, long overshadowed by third-century Alexandrian poets (p. 2). The 'plurality' (p. 4) of a 'dynamic, constantly shifting' (p. 4) sense of Hellenistic material deserves fresh attention. Yet this summons offers more than a familiar strain of 'worthy-because-less-studied': the volume aims ambitiously at reading the comparatively marginal adjacent to the more prominent. Dialogue, then, encompasses both 'interrelations' (p. 12) among late Hellenistic texts (composed in the second and/or first centuries BCE) and imperial works, read side-by-side to reveal continuity and difference, including on Rome's perceived (un)importance, ideas of classicism and senses of generic innovation (pp. 19–30). In some of the most satisfying chapters, we find civic decrees read alongside Diodorus Siculus (B. Gray); Strabo in dialogue with philosophy (M. Hatzimichali); the Sibyl in contest with Homer (E. Greensmith). At other times the notion of 'dialogue' is less textually bounded but no less enriching, as when notions of space and scale both inscribe and are re-digested by works vast (Polybius) and small (epigram).