

EPITHETS FOR GODS

BONNET (C.), PIRONTI (G.) (edd.), *Les dieux d'Homère III. Attributs onomastiques*. (Kernos Supplement 38.) Pp. 300, colour ill. Liège: Presses Universitaires de Liège, 2021. Paper, €25. ISBN: 978-2-87562-292-1.

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This is the third volume of a series that studies the gods in Homeric poetry through the lens of Herodotus (2.52–3), who credits Homer and Hesiod with teaching to the Greeks some of the essential aspects of their gods: their *theogonia*, *eponymiai*, *timai*, *technai* and *eidea*. Volume 1 (2017) concentrates on the *timai*, ‘spheres of influence’, and *technai*, ‘functional knowledge’, of the gods, and how they functioned within the polytheistic system and poetry. Volume 2 (2019) focuses on the *eidea*, ‘images’, of the gods, with an emphasis on anthropomorphism. Volume 3 centres on *eponymiai*, ‘surnames’, which includes epithets and other types of qualification that fit under the category of ‘attributs onomastiques’. Volume 4 will be about *theogonia*, the genealogies of the gods.

Volume 3 is the product of a symposium in France in 2018, which brought together this ongoing study of the gods of Homer with the MAP (Mapping Ancient Polytheisms) project, a collaborative study of the naming of gods in the Greek and Semitic worlds. In Chapter 1 the editors, Bonnet and Pironti, argue that all the ways of naming and addressing the gods, not just their names, constitute a language that both describes and creates Greek polytheism. The MAP project proposed speaking of ‘onomastic attributes’ as a general category and ‘onomastic sequences’ to describe how poets put these attributes together into semantic chains. So, this volume is appropriately subtitled *Attributs onomastiques* because the authors go beyond the study of names and epithets to discuss the whole variety of verbal attributes. Like the visual attributes by which we can recognise deities in iconography, onomastic attributes are verbal constructions that allow us to recognise deities in poetry.

The most important feature of the volume is that it presents a departure from a mechanistic view of epithets as formulae that exist merely for the sake of completing a line of hexameter. Certainly, epithets have a necessary rhythmic function, but they also carry semantic functions, which can only be understood by paying attention to narrative contexts and the methods by which onomastic attributes are put to use. Each contribution in the volume shares this unifying theme of reconsidering the elements of divine naming (theonym, epithet etc.), which takes into account their contexts of usage and how they contribute to a creative representation of the divine. This enlargement of the notion of epithets responds to the fluidity and creativity of the practice of divine denomination, allowing a richer understanding of how the poets contributed to the formation of Greek polytheism. The authors break away from the rigid dichotomy of name-epithet and offer a more flexible approach to understanding a variety of onomastic attributes.

The first chapter provides an introduction to the topic as a whole, and the second chapter also serves as an introduction, where R. Gagné outlines the theoretical basis for the studies that follow. He discusses another passage that guides the contributions in the volume: Pausanias 7.21.7–9, which argues that Poseidon’s name Hippios is neither a poetic epithet nor a local cult title (*epichoria*), but an ‘epiclesis common to all’, a reference to Poseidon’s function as god of horses, which is attested in both epic poetry and local cult practice. Interpreting this as a warning against imposing too rigid a system of classification

over onomastic attributes, Gagné provides a detailed history of scholarship on the meaning of epithets (pp. 27–44), leading him to conclude that most studies of divine names have assumed that these terms had a fixed meaning. However, Gagné argues that these terms were subject to different interpretations in different contexts. The tendency of the volume is in the opposite direction, where the authors view onomastic attributes as participating in a more fluid discourse. The *eponymiai* of the gods evolved and circulated beyond the original context of cultic and poetic performance that gave them their form, and this circulation caused a continuous process of interpretation.

The rest of the book consists of a series of case studies, split into three broad (but insufficiently defined) categories. Chapters 3–5 are ‘Parcours/Portraits’, with each contribution focusing on a particular epithet. In Chapter 3 Gagné moves from theoretical discussion to a case study of Zeus Panomphaios, an epithet that appears once in the *Iliad* (8.250) but multiple times in later texts. Panomphaios is based on *omphe*, the divine voice that allows Zeus to communicate with humans indirectly. Gagné discusses the use of this term and its cognates in later texts and argues that ancient authors never ceased to create new meaning for this *hapax* of the *Iliad*. In Chapter 4 Bonnet et al. apply a similar methodology to Euryopa, an epithet always associated with Zeus in Homer. Euryopa could either mean ‘with a powerful voice’ (from *ops*, ‘voice’) or ‘wide-seeing’ (from *ops*, ‘eye’). After reviewing every occurrence of Euryopa in Homer, the authors suggest that the term does not have a fixed meaning: sometimes it refers to Zeus’s far-seeing gaze, sometimes to his far-reaching voice, and sometimes the sense is ambiguous. The polysemy of the term was assumed by the poets and put to creative use. In Chapter 5 O. Cesca considers the phrase *Dios angelos* in relation to *Ossa*, ‘Rumour’, who appears in *Iliad* 2.93–4. Cesca argues that usually in Homer *Dios angelos* is not a fixed epithet because it describes a momentary function, not a permanent quality. However, in later texts it often appears as an epithet describing beings who regularly act as messengers. Cesca concludes that in *Iliad* 2 *Dios angelos* is an epithet for *Ossa* because her function as divine messenger is an intrinsic, permanent quality.

Chapters 6–9 are ‘Nommer/Appeler’, and they look at different ways of naming and addressing the gods. In Chapter 6 D. Bouvier offers an intriguing quantitative analysis of a large number of name-epithet combinations. He tests Milman Parry’s principles of economy and analogy against statistical data compiled by J.H. Dee and demonstrates that these principles are not rules but tendencies. The principles of economy and analogy only describe a limited number of formulae, not the complete collection of noun-epithet combinations; so the choice of an epithet was not determined by metric function alone, but also by semantic function. C. Calame begins Chapter 7 with a review of Chryses’ prayers in *Iliad* 1, a passage where poetic and ritual usage overlap. From here, he discusses Apollo’s epithet *argurotoxos* and demonstrates that the use of this term, either as poetic qualification or as ritual appellation, can only be understood in relation to its context. Chapter 8 by C. Pisano also starts with Chryses in *Iliad* 1 and questions how to understand *argurotoxos* when an epithet is used in place of a theonym. Simply put, it is an ‘epithet with theonymic function’, which means it can either be a qualifying epithet appearing with the theonym or be used to replace the theonym. By comparison, *Loxias* is a heteronym because it is only ever used as an alternate name for Apollo. Pisano argues that in cases where an epithet replaces a theonym it is chosen as such because it refers to characteristics of the god that are appropriate to the context. In Chapter 9 D. Jaillard considers the *Homeric Hymns* and argues that it is the particular configuration of onomastic attributes that constructs the identity of the deity within the polytheistic system. Each hymn draws together a particular

set of descriptions, functions and relations that do not exhaust the identity of the deity, but are tuned to the particular performative and ritual context in which the deity is invoked.

Chapters 10–12 are ‘Articulations/Circulations’, and these chapters look beyond the Homeric corpus in different ways. In Chapter 10 M. Herrero de Jáuregui focuses on toponymic epithets of the gods in the *Iliad*, which link a deity to a specific place. Usually these occur when a mortal seeks divine favour, but the effectiveness of the epithet is uncertain. In *Iliad* 1 Chryses appeals to Apollo as Smintheus and gets what he asks for; but in *Iliad* 16 Achilles prays to Dodonian Zeus, and only half of his prayer is heard. These are examples of the tension between the local and the Panhellenic identities of the deities involved; sometimes local affiliations must be set aside to make way for the overarching will of Zeus. In Chapter 11 A. Grand-Clément relates onomastic attributes to iconographic attributes and finds that, although some epithets might refer to visual elements of statues (e.g. Poseidon *kyanochaites*, ‘with dark blue hair’, referring to lapis lazuli), most epithets describing visual attributes are not directly related to iconography. One important exception is the statue of Athena in Troy, characterized in *Iliad* 6 as *eukomos*. Grand-Clément includes photos of cult statues that show Athena’s well-ordered hair and suggests that *eukomos* in *Iliad* 6 describes Athena’s statue in Troy. In the other direction, the epithet *glaukopis* seems to have influenced sculptors in later centuries to depict Athena with dark eyes. In Chapter 12 Pironti studies the slipping of sense of post-Homeric epithets. The birth of Aphrodite in Hesiod’s *Theogony* contains a rich collection of onomastic attributes describing her, but one epithet that is conspicuously missing is Ourania, commonly used in the classical period partly because of Hesiod’s influence. Pironti discusses Hera *chrysothronos* and demonstrates that *-thronos* underwent a slipping of sense, between ‘adorned with flowers’ and ‘throne’. This slipping of sense is an example of ancient poets taking advantage of the polysemic potential of an epithet, amplifying its semantic charge.

What makes this book valuable, beyond the individual contributions, is this widening of the meaning of ‘epithet’ to ‘onomastic attributes’ and the move towards a more flexible way of interpreting them, beyond their metrical function, by taking into account the varying semantic functions of epithets within their specific contexts. The case studies used to demonstrate these points are not exhaustive, and they were never intended to be, but they are well chosen, and they offer a variety of perspectives, all of them unified around the central methodology outlined in the first two chapters. With regard to presentation, as an anglophone I cannot speak to the quality of writing, but I am disappointed by the constant use of specialised terminology without proper definitions (Pisano defines some terms on pp. 159–60). It would have been better to clearly define the term ‘attribut onomastique’ and all of its subcategories (theonym, heteronym, epithet, epiclesis, epichoria etc.) at the beginning of Chapter 1, in order to help orient readers who are not experts. Having said that, the central argument of the book and each of the case studies are convincing and fascinating.

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