

Zitierhinweis

Finkmann, Simone: review of: Silvio Bär, Herakles im griechischen Epos. Studien zur Narrativität und Poetizität eines Helden, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2018, in: Plekos. Elektronische Zeitschrift für Rezensionen und Berichte zur Erforschung der Spätantike, 23 (2021), p. 89-101, downloaded from Website



copyright

Dieser Beitrag kann vom Nutzer zu eigenen nicht-kommerziellen Zwecken heruntergeladen und/oder ausgedruckt werden. Darüber hinausgehende Nutzungen sind ohne weitere Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber nur im Rahmen der gesetzlichen Schrankenbestimmungen (§§ 44a-63a UrhG) zulässig.

Silvio Bär: *Herakles im griechischen Epos. Studien zur Narrativität und Poetizität eines Helden*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag 2018 (Palingenesia 111). 184 S. € 44.00. ISBN 978-3-515-12206-1.

This monograph is the most comprehensive narratological character study of the mythical hero Heracles in Greek epic to date. It systematically scrutinises the intra-, intertextual, and metapoetic function(alisation) of Heracles in the most prominent Greek epics and epyllia from Homer to Nonnus. The author builds on his previous work in this study, especially in his chapter on Heracles in Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*.¹ He has subsequently also published a condensed English version of his chapters on Heracles in the Homeric epics and Apollonius in a special issue he co-edited for *Symbolae Osloenses* on narratological character studies² as well as a more detailed analysis of the *μηλον*-variants for Heracles' Eleventh Labour, his theft of the golden apples or sheep of the Hesperides.³ The volume is well-written and has been very carefully edited with hardly any mistakes of note remaining. It is logically structured and consists of three main sections that are further subdivided into eleven individual chapters.

Part I:

The first part comprises three chapters that discuss Heracles' different functions as god, man, and national hero (Chapter 1), explain what Bär calls the "System Mythos" (21; Chapter 2), and succinctly summarise the most influential theories and methods adopted in this study as well as its objectives (Chapter 3).

In Chapter 1 (11–17) the author offers a thematic introduction to the legendary hero Heracles, in which he highlights Heracles' extraordinary popularity and pervasiveness in Greek myths, culture, religion, iconography, and

- 1 S. Bär: Erzählen, wo es nichts zu erzählen gibt? Herakles bei Apollonius Rhodios, der narrative Palimpsest und die Widerspruchsfähigkeit des Mythos. In: *Nexus* 4, 2016–2017, 6–8.
- 2 S. Bär: Heracles in Homer and Apollonius: Narratological Character Analysis in a Diachronic Perspective. In: *SO* 93, 2019, 106–131.
- 3 S. Bär: Herakles und die Schafe der Hesperiden. In: *Prometheus* 45, 2019, 108–116.

especially literature from the archaic period to Late Antiquity. To navigate the abundance of modern scholarship on Heracles Bär strategically restricts his literature review in the introduction to a small selection of seminal publications that address Heracles “*in globo*” (11 n. 2). More specialised contributions are then cited and discussed in more detail in the individual chapters on the portrayal of Heracles in the most prominent Greek epics and epyllia from Homer to Nonnus in the second part of the study.

Bär starts this discussion by tracing the development of the myth and origin of the Heracles figure. He follows Walter Burkert⁴ in explaining the lack of an authoritative, canonical source for the Heracles myth with its rootedness in the polytheistic Greek religion and identifies the Dodecathlos, which is first documented in its canonical form on an iconographic source, the Metopes of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia (c. 460 BC), as the core of the myth. Bär in particular attributes the extraordinary heterogeneity and multiformity of the Heracles myth to this early canonisation of the Twelve Labours, which allowed for the myth to be expanded freely without a fixed chronological order, resulting in what Dennis C. Feeney aptly calls the “Heracleian paradoxes”⁵ – a multitude of very different character types for Heracles: e.g. *Hercules comicus*, *Hercules Stoicus*, the strong-man motif, *Hercules epicus*, or *Hercules furens/tragicus*.

Chapter 2 (18–22) provides a short overview of the most important theories and characteristics of ancient myths. Bär’s analysis is firmly based on the premise that ancient poets are generally independent in their creative treatment of Greek myths and its heroes,⁶ albeit within the established genre conventions (in this case the characteristic formularity, diction, and versification of the epic genre) and their work’s respective performance or production context. He stresses the multiformity and dynamic, ductile na-

4 W. Burkert: *Oriental and Greek Mythology: The Meeting of Parallels*. In: J.N. Bremmer (ed.): *Interpretations of Greek Mythology*. Totowa, NJ 1986, 10–40, here 14; W. Burkert: *Griechische Religion der archaischen und klassischen Epoche*. 2. ed. Stuttgart 2011 (*Die Religionen der Menschheit* 15), 18–21.

5 D.C. Feeney: *The Gods in Epic. Poets and Critics of the Classical Tradition*. Oxford 1991, 95 n. 134.

6 Bär here uses Gyburg Radke’s terminology: G. Radke: *Die poetische Souveränität des homerischen Erzählers*. In: *RhM* 150, 2007, 8–66.

ture of ancient myths,⁷ which often results in co-existing variants. Another common feature of ancient myths the author highlights is the occurrence of internal contradictions or chronological inconsistencies (e.g. the topos of the Argo as the first ship or the joint participation of Heracles' son Telemachus [Hom. Il. 2,653–670] along with his two grandsons Pheidippus and Antiphus [Hom. Il. 2,676–680] in the military expedition against Troy). Bär aptly characterises this phenomenon as myth's innate tolerance and capacity for contradictions, for which he proposes the term “Widerspruchsfähigkeit des Mythos” (19):⁸ Consequently, these alternative versions and contradictions are not only tolerated and expected by the recipients, but they are perceived to be enriching the literary tradition and welcome the combination of both complementary and mutually exclusive narrative strands of a myth according to what Bär calls the “Prinzip der additiven Argumentation” (21).

In Chapter 3 (23–29) the author systematically explicates his narratological approach and discusses the key concepts of narratological character analysis and transtextuality which form the methodological basis of his study. Bär follows Fotis Jannidis' cognitive approach, which postulates a human-like status for literary characters,⁹ and introduces the term “real life fallacy” (24), in analogy to the already established concepts of ‘intentional fallacy’ and ‘biographical fallacy’ for the problematic identification of real and implied author, for the tendency to equate literary characters with real persons.¹⁰ He moreover advocates for the application of Jannidis' concept of situative frames that can be activated by the poet and identified by the recipient at any point in a narrative to the concept of transtextual characters and accordingly proposes the use of terms such as intertextual frame, mythical, traditional, or inherited frame (26–27).

7 Bär here builds on Virgilio Masciadri's study and terminology: V. Masciadri: *Eine Insel im Meer der Geschichten. Untersuchungen zu Mythen aus Lemnos*. Stuttgart 2008 (Potsdamer altertumswissenschaftliche Beiträge 18).

8 See also note 1.

9 F. Jannidis: *Figur und Person. Beitrag zu einer historischen Narratologie*. Berlin/New York 2004 (Narratologia. Beiträge zur Erzähltheorie 3).

10 Bär (24 n. 3) describes his term as a close but more precise alternative to Mieke Bal's “character-effect”: M. Bal: *Narratology. Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. 3. ed. Toronto/Buffalo/London 2009, 113.

There is some overlap between the first part of this study and the detailed discussion of the passages from Greek epic in the second part of this volume: e.g. Bernd Effe's characterisation of Heracles as a popular hero in the sense that he is a "Held der unteren Schichten" who carries out his heroic deeds "aus seiner untergeordneten [...] Knechtposition heraus" (quoted on pages 11 and 43)¹¹ or the repetition of examples, such as the abovementioned *μηλον*-variants for Heracles' Eleventh Labour (19–20 and 95) or the joint introduction of Heracles' son and two grandsons as participants of the Trojan expedition in the Catalogue of Ships in *Iliad* 2 (19 and 37) as examples for co-existing variants and deliberate chronological *inconcinnitas* respectively.

Bär concludes the first part of his study with a convincing argument both for Heracles as the perfect case study for a transtextual mythological character because of his highly representative complex and ambivalent nature and his omnipresence in ancient literature, as well as for the necessity to limit his narratological character study to a self-contained series of narrative texts from one genre in general and the choice of (almost) complete epic poems and epyllia because of their narrative character, continuity throughout their literary tradition, and Heracles' regular occurrence in most epic and epyllic poems from the archaic period to Late Antiquity in particular. Bär, however, does not address his reasons for excluding Latin epic from his discussion, which – as he himself later acknowledges in the outlook of his study (147) – would have provided further valuable insights and could have served as a helpful means of comparison for his findings for Greek epic, nor for his criteria for including the (Ps.-)Hesiodic epyllion *Aspis* but, for example, not considering Theocritus' *Idylls* 13, 24, and 25 in his analysis.

Part II:

The second and by far longest section of the volume consists of the diachronic character study of Heracles in Greek epic from Homer to Nonnus (31–136). Bär separately scrutinises Heracles' intra-, intertextual, and metapoetic function(alisation) in the individual epics under discussion in

11 B. Effe: Held und Literatur. Der Funktionswandel des Herakles-Mythos in der griechischen Literatur. In: *Poetica* 12, 1980, 145–166, here 148.

chronological order and highlights the similarities and differences between the respective portrayals of Heracles. His analysis comprises a total of eight epics and epyllia: the Homeric epics (*Iliad*: 33–44; *Odyssey*: 45–52), the (Ps.-) Hesiodic *Theogony* (54–62), *Catalogue of Women* (62–68), and *Aspis* (68–71), Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica* (73–99), Quintus of Smyrna's *Posthomerica* (100–117), and Nonnus of Panopolis' *Dionysiaca* (118–136). Each close reading (with the exception of the *Aspis*) is preceded by a list of all references to Heracles in the respective work which contains brief summaries and select annotations that offer a short commentary as well as seminal primary and secondary literature on the passages in question. The volume does not display the original Greek text passages or Bär's translations of them. Both are instead made available as a pdf-download on the author's departmental website, making the subject matter more accessible to a broader audience.¹²

Chapter 4: Homer, *Iliad* (33–44)

The author identifies a total of thirteen references to Heracles in the *Iliad* that present him as a paradigmatic figure from an earlier generation of heroes who indirectly still influences the narrated time of the Trojan War (e.g. Nestor can only take part in the battle because Heracles spared him in his youth unlike his eleven brothers: Il. 11,690–693). The memory of Heracles is kept alive in regular intervals both by the primary and secondary narrators throughout the *Iliad* in the form of external analepses. Bär rightly identifies Heracles' main function in the epic as harbinger of the Trojan catastrophe: The depiction of the city's first destruction by Heracles is a prolepsis for the imminent second destruction of Troy. Bär moreover highlights Heracles' positive image as a national hero *par excellence* in the *Iliad* which is effectively strengthened by Heracles' parallelisation with Achilles through the narrator and other characters, such as Agamemnon and especially Achilles himself who tries to console his mother Thetis by reminding her that even Zeus' son Heracles had to die (Il. 18,114–121). One may disagree with the author's swift rejection of previous Homeric scholarship that has

12 S. Bär: Herakles-Passagen im griechischen Epos (Homer bis Nonnos). Griechisch – Deutsch, 2018, available on Bär's website under the section "Publications", URL: https://www.hf.uio.no/ifikk/english/people/aca/classics/tenured/silviofb/herakles_im_griechischen_epos_textpassagen.pdf.

advocated for a much more critical reading of the Iliadic Heracles, most notably Karl Galinsky who all but deems Heracles irreconcilable with the heroic code of the *Iliad*,¹³ but Bär's interpretation of Heracles' and Achilles' similar fates and in particular their corresponding struggle to control the external or internal rage that has served as driving force of their personal narratives – Heracles overcomes increasingly difficult tasks to escape Hera's anger and Achilles undergoes a gradual process of internal growth until he is eventually able to quell his own anger – is intriguing and will stimulate further debate.

Chapter 5: Homer, *Odyssey* (45–52)

Bär starts his discussion of the *Odyssey* by establishing the similarities and differences in its general narrative approach to the portrayal of Heracles in comparison to the *Iliad*: Passages about Heracles also predominantly take the form of eternal analepses and he is again depicted as a mythical hero of the past. The frequency of references to Heracles (four in total) and his relevance for the epic plot are, however, greatly reduced and the Odyssean Heracles is portrayed in a much more negative light. Bär rightly identifies the nekylia in Book 11 as key to the interpretation of the Odyssean Heracles figure and his relationship with the epic protagonist, from whom he is separated by space, not time difference when his εἰδωλον tries to engage with Odysseus. The scene is the only instance in which Heracles occurs in *propria persona* as part of the diegesis – simultaneously among the Olympian gods and as an avatar in the Underworld – and, as Bär is careful to point out, may be a later interpolation (Od. 11,601–627). His interpretation of Heracles' programmatic spatial confinement to Olympus and the Underworld as well as his negative portrayal as a ferocious prototypical barbarian in the *Odyssey* as the poet's metapoetic functionalisation of Heracles and attempt to delete the Iliadic Heracles from the epic memory is very convincing: Bär compellingly argues that Heracles does not serve as a paradigm for Odysseus in the *Odyssey* because, unlike Achilles who compares his own fate to that of Heracles in the *Iliad*, Heracles' likening of his suffering and misfortune to Odysseus' is ignored and thus implicitly rejected by the latter. Odysseus' swift interruption of the description of Heracles'

13 G.K. Galinsky: *The Herakles Theme. The Adaptations of the Hero in Literature from Homer to the Twentieth Century*. Oxford 1972, 9.

golden baldric moreover effectively strikes the narration of Heracles as famous slayer of men and beasts (Od. 11,609–614; in contrast to its model, the extensive ekphrasis of Achilles' shield at Il. 18,478–608), from the nostos epic until the end of the *Odyssey*. When Heracles' memory is finally evoked again in Book 21, his comparison with Odysseus only further adds to his negative characterisation as hubristic antagonist of the gods (Od. 8,214–225) and highlights the different value systems both heroes represent: whereas Odysseus uses the bow that once belonged to Heracles to punish Penelope's suitors for their violation of the laws of hospitality, Heracles used it in his own blatant infringement of these very laws when he killed Iphitus out of greed (Od. 21,11–41).

Chapter 6: (Ps.-)Hesiod (53–72)

The sixth chapter contains the synchronic study of three epics and epyllia that have been written by or assigned to Hesiod. The question of the poems' authorship is explicitly excluded from the discussion. They are first analysed separately before Bär summarises the results of his analysis to identify the most important narrative patterns in (Ps.-)Hesiod's portrayal of Heracles and to answer the question whether a general shift in the portrayal and functionalisation of the Heracles character can be determined.

Theogony

The author's general observation that the *Theogony* inverts the chronology of the references to Heracles in the Homeric epics forms the starting point of his analysis: all of the eight passages in Hesiod's poem about the creation of the world up to the establishment of cosmic order, i.e. the reign of Zeus, are external prolepses referring to a later epoch, and thus go beyond the end of the plot. Bär rightly emphasises the stark difference between the *Odyssey*'s strikingly negative portrayal of Heracles and his consistently positive depiction as bearer of culture and civilisation and a model for other demi-gods in the *Theogony*. In particular, he distinguishes three clearly separated thematic blocks in Hesiod's characterisation of Heracles: 1. Heracles is first introduced as a saviour from and remover of dangerous monsters and hybrid creatures, some of which could potentially have become rivals

to Zeus' power (theog. 287–294, 313–318, 326–335). Before this background Bär redefines the disputed reduplication of the Geryon episode (theog. 287–294; 979–983) as a deliberate ring composition that marks the start and end point of references to Heracles in the *Theogony*. 2. Heracles is then portrayed as the liberator of Prometheus (theog. 526–534) in a scene which Bär persuasively interprets as an inversion of the aforementioned Odyssean Iphitus scene (Od. 21,11–41) and an intertextual connection to the account of Hesiod's predecessor that shifts the power dynamics in favour of Heracles. 3. Lastly and most importantly, Heracles' role as Zeus' son and champion of the cosmic order and consolidator of his father's reign is repeatedly emphasised at the end of the *Theogony* (theog. 943–944, 950–955, 979–983).

Catalogue of Women

The (Ps.-)Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* is the only fragmentary epic included in this study. Bär accordingly highlights the caution with which any conclusions must be drawn about Heracles in this work. He fittingly describes the *Catalogue of Women* as a thematic sequel to the *Theogony* and prequel to the Homeric epics, and again starts his analysis with a detailed comparison to the already discussed poems: While the narrative's focus on Heracles' earned immortality and his main function as a model for other demi-gods are comparable to the *Theogony*, there is surprisingly no overlap between the portrayed achievements. Instead, like the *Iliad*, the *Catalogue of Women* appears to ignore Heracles' Dodecathlos (with the exception of fr. 190) almost entirely and instead highlights Heracles' role as a powerful warrior, conqueror, and destroyer of cities (frs. 26 and 35), most importantly Laomedon's Troy (fr. 165). Bär in particular draws attention to scenes that also play a prominent role in the *Iliad* (e.g. Heracles' killing of Nestor's eleven brothers: fr. 35,5–14) and the *Odyssey* (e.g. Heracles' death and descent into Hades [fr. 25,24–25], which is immediately followed by his apotheosis and marriage with Hebe [fr. 25,26–33], and recalls Heracles' simultaneous placement in the Underworld and on Olympus in the context of the *nekyia*).

Aspis (Shield of Heracles)

Bär concludes his synchronic analysis of the (Ps.-)Hesiodic works with the *Aspis*. It is the only extant fully transmitted hexameter epic of antiquity which is in its entirety dedicated to Heracles. He characterises the epyllion, whose first 56 verses about the conception and birth of Heracles are also contained in the *Catalogue of Women* (The *Ehoie* of Alcmene: fr. 195), as a “spin-off” (70) and suitably acknowledges the *Iliad*’s description of Achilles’ shield (Il. 18,478–608) and his parallelisation with Heracles to be the main model for Heracles’ portrayal as a single combatant in his duel against the Thessalian brigand Cycnus and especially for the comprehensive ekphrasis of his shield (*Aspis* 139–317). Bär also carefully weighs the various Iliadic and Odyssean strategies and themes in the *Aspis*’ shield description: On the one hand, in a similar fashion to the *Odyssey*, the *Aspis* programmatically banishes one of its predecessor’s main narrative functions for Heracles – in this case Heracles’ Theogonic role as slayer of monsters (theog. 270–336; *Aspis* 144–177 and 223–234) and potentially also as liberator of Prometheus (theog. 526–534, *Aspis* 133–134) – to the ekphrasis as a mere commemorative emblem outside the narrative proper. On the other hand, unlike the Odyssean ekphrasis, the *Aspis*’ depiction of Heracles’ shield is not prematurely interrupted like Heracles’ baldric in the *Odyssey* (Od. 11, 609–614) and embraces Heracles’ military prowess and the Iliadic war theme by displaying even more gruesome battles than the Iliadic description of Achilles’ shield.

Chapter 7: Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* (73–99)

The *Argonautica* stands out in Bär’s analysis as the most diverse portrayal of the Heracles figure and the only epic under discussion in which Heracles is part of the diegesis as a member of the Argonauts and their voyage to recover the Golden Fleece, albeit only until the end of Book 1 when he is separated from the group. From this point onwards the memory of Heracles who thereafter takes up his Labours again, which he abandoned at the start of the narrative in favour of the Argonautic mission, is kept alive in the poem with regular references to the lost hero and the value he could have added. Bär expertly summarises the most prevalent interpretations for the recurrent evocation of Heracles after his departure as well as the most influential scholarship on Heracles and Jason’s antithetic relationship and

the different types of heroism they represent before coming to the conclusion that not only Jason is portrayed as a struggling, indecisive leader but that Heracles, too, shows signs of ἀμηχανία, and that the question if Heracles is in fact a better option, is not ultimately answered by Apollonius. He convincingly argues that it is not Apollonius' aim to create a coherent character conception for Heracles but that he instead, in typical Alexandrian allusiveness, programmatically utilises ambivalence, contradictions, and a plurality of perspectives in his multi-faceted portrayal of Heracles to open up novel perspectives by combining and reflecting upon different narrative strategies and mythological strands of the myth on a metapoetic level. As a result, the *Argonautica* strikingly unites the main types of the Heracles figure in the legendary hero's seemingly incompatible or contradictory character traits, such as the *Hercules furens*, *Hercules Stoicus*, *Hercules comicus*, and *Hercules epicus*. The latter type, as Bär rightly points out, however, appears to be both marginalised and ironised in the *Argonautica* with only one passage (the catastrophic nyktomachy on Cyzicus at Apoll. Rhod. 1,1040–1041 during which Heracles kills two opponents – in contrast to the monsters he otherwise exclusively faces), just prior to Heracles' relegation from the main plot to a separate narration of his remaining Labours, a 'narrative palimpsest' (93), as Bär aptly calls it, behind the main narrative of the Argonautic mission.¹⁴

Chapter 8: Quintus of Smyrna, *Posthomerica* (100–117)

Bär's analysis shows that the *Posthomerica* not only emulates the Homeric diction, narrative practice, and Iliadic war theme, but also Heracles' narrative function as a hero of the past who is mentioned in thirteen external analepses that are distributed in regular intervals throughout the epic. This also applies to the proleptic function of Heracles' first destruction of Troy, which foreshadows the city's ultimate downfall, as well as to the parallelisation of Heracles with Achilles. Bär moreover demonstrates in great detail that this parallelism is expanded in the *Posthomerica* to include not only the second best of the Achaeans, Aias (Q. Smyrn. 4,443–456), but also Philoctetes, who fatally wounds Paris (Q. Smyrn. 10,231–241), and Heracles' grandson Eurypylos, Paris' cousin, who ruthlessly spills the blood of the

14 See also note 1.

Achaean (e.g. Q. Smyrn. 6,316–651, 7,98–168), and thus to fighters from both war parties: The comparison with Aias evokes the tragic *Hercules furens* via the insanity motif and both characters' manner of death (Q. Smyrn. 5,639–651), while the comparison to Philoctetes inverts the *Odyssey's* negative depiction of Heracles' archery skills (e.g. Od. 8,214–225). Just as Heracles destroyed Troy the first time, Philoctetes' presence and in particular the bow he inherited from Heracles (Q. Smyrn. 9,392–397) are a precondition for the final destruction of Troy (Q. Smyrn. 10,231–368) and, like in the *Iliad*, underline Heracles' continued indirect influence upon the narrated present long after his death. Bär cogently argues that the related ekphrases moreover have a poetological dimension in so far as they establish a strong intertextual connection with the ekphrases of Quintus Smyrnaeus' epic predecessors: Achilles' shield (Q. Smyrn. 5,6–100) completes the Iliadic shield description (Il. 18,478–608), Eurypylus' shield (Q. Smyrn. 6,198–293) with a total of eighteen images displaying Heracles' Twelve Labours and some of his other heroic achievements expands the *Aspis'* description of the shield owned by Eurypylus' grandfather Heracles (*Aspis* 139–317), and the ekphrasis of Philoctetes' baldric and quiver (Q. Smyrn. 10,178–205) takes up the prematurely interrupted description for the previous owner of the baldric, Heracles, in the *Odyssey* (Od. 11,609–612). While the author's conclusion that this extension of the parallelisation from Achilles in the *Iliad* to representatives of both war parties in the *Posthomerica* renders its characterisation of Heracles more complex and ambivalent than in the *Iliadic* model is convincing, his suggestion that it is also indicative of the poet's questioning of the war's sense and justification in general would have greatly benefited from a joint discussion of the related question of the narrator's overall (neutral or biased) attitude towards the Trojans and Achaeans – a question which Bär leaves open due to the limited scope of his study (115).

Chapter 9: Nonnus of Panopolis, *Dionysiaca* (118–136)

The analysis of Heracles in the *Dionysiaca* focuses on this role as a foil for the epic protagonist, his half-brother Dionysus, with whom he shares many similarities: Heracles and Dionysus are both sons of Zeus and mortal mothers who are pursued by their jealous stepmother Hera, are facing numerous dangers while wandering the earth, for example, in the form of shapeshifters, and have to earn their acceptance among the Olympian

gods. Bär identifies several interesting patterns in the portrayal of Heracles which is dominated by the narrator's auctorial comments and is predominantly embedded in narrative digressions and especially comparisons: Firstly, Heracles' importance is underlined by the frequency with which he is mentioned; besides the gods no other character who is not part of the diegesis is mentioned nearly as often as Heracles (eleven times). All references have in common that Heracles and his heroic deeds are either implicitly or explicitly downgraded by the narrator and contrasted with excessive praise for the achievements of his epic protagonist. Bär systematically summarises the narrator's most common rhetorical strategies and cogently interprets its effect as follows: With the exception of the synkrisis in Book 25 and one unflattering isolated reference to Heracles' Sixth Labour, the Stymphalian Birds (Nonn. Dion. 29,237–242), the unreliable narrator does not acknowledge Heracles' Dodecathlos but instead focuses on his lesser-known deeds. When Heracles is compared to Dionysus, the latter either surpasses Heracles in his heroic actions (e.g. Nonn. Dion. 11,224–231: Dionysus is faster in his search for his beloved Ampelus than Heracles in his for Hylas), he achieves them much earlier than Heracles (e.g. Nonn. Dion. 25,184 and 25,193), or he is generally the *primum comparandum* whereas Heracles is only the *secundum comparatum* who is likened to a less powerful character (e.g. Nonn. Dion. 10,373–377: Dionysus lets Ampelus win as Zeus does Heracles: Dionysus is compared with Zeus, Heracles only with Ampelus). The synkrisis of Perseus (Nonn. Dion. 25,131–147), Minos (Nonn. Dion. 25,148–174), and Heracles (Nonn. Dion. 25,174–252) in the medial proem constitutes the climax of the narrator's elevation of Dionysus. While it finally acknowledges Heracles' Twelves Labours in both expanded (Nonn. Dion. 25,176–241) and compressed, catalogue-style form as achievements (Nonn. Dion. 25,242–251), it at the same time downplays and ridicules them, thereby confirming Heracles' status as a national hero, model for other demi-gods, and the worthiest of Dionysus' counterparts on the one hand, and his vast inferiority to Dionysus on the other.

Part III:

The final part of the volume contains a detailed synopsis (Chapter 10: 139–146) and a brief outlook on potential applications of its results (Chapter 11: 147–148): Bär succinctly summarises his findings and discusses the applicability of his narratological character study of Heracles and the related

research questions to Latin epic and epyllion as well as other literary genres, non-literary art forms, and media. The volume concludes with a comprehensive bibliography (147–168), an *index locorum, rerum* and *nominum* (169–184), and a short list of the Greek terms employed in the study (184).

This monograph constitutes an important contribution to the field of transtextuality and narratological character studies which are still under-represented in Classical Philology. The author succeeds in advancing the study of one of the most influential, complex, and inherently contradictory characters of Greek mythology, but also the understanding of ancient epic and its heroes and (demi-)gods. This volume will in particular serve as an excellent introduction for students of Greek literature because of the author's ability to summarise the most important theories and methods succinctly and break down the discussion to its core components, rendering his study suitable for a wider audience. At the same time, Bär enriches the scholarly discussion with several new terms he proposes for the study of ancient myths in general and transtextual characters more specifically. It is, however, especially the multitude of interesting observations the author makes about the intra-, intertextual, and metapoetic function(alisation) of Heracles in the individual Greek epics under consideration that will certainly stimulate further debate.

Simone Finkmann, Universität Rostock
Heinrich Schliemann-Institut für Altertumswissenschaften
simone.finkmann@uni-rostock.de

www.plekos.de

Empfohlene Zitierweise

Simone Finkmann: Rezension zu: Silvio Bär: Herakles im griechischen Epos. Studien zur Narrativität und Poetizität eines Helden. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag 2018 (Palingenesia 111). In: Plekos 23, 2021, 89–101 (URL: <http://www.plekos.uni-muenchen.de/2021/r-baer.pdf>).
