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Klaus Junker, *Interpreting the Images of Greek Myths. An Introduction.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Pp. xvi, 225. ISBN 9780521720076. €24,99 (pb).

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This book is a translation from the German 2005 book *Griechische Mythenbilder. Eine Einführung* and presents an excellent introduction to the iconography of Greek myth, being a *Geheimtipp* among readers of the original. Junker's work is an excellent tool for myth classes, both for undergraduates and graduates, since he stimulates discussion in his text and gives good suggestions for further reading in the bibliography.

Junker's main concern is to establish the degree of dependence or independence of myth representations in ancient art from written sources. The old debate (going back to Carl Robert at the end of the nineteenth century) has been fed over the years and never yields conclusive results. Here, Junker rightly refers to three studies by Susan Woodford, Luca Giuliani, and Jocelyn Penny Small, published in 2003. Junker addresses the problem of 'contextual meaning of images of Greek myths' (p. xii) and strongly pleads for an independent development of artistic representations.

His starting point, in chapter 1, is a case study: the famous image of Achilles tending the wound of his friend Patroklos on the tondo of the Sosias cup in Berlin. It is not an episode that occurs in the *Iliad* and seems barely heroic because it expresses friendship, human weakness, and the proximity of death. *Iliad*-related is the fact that Patroklos is not far from dying, since he is the mature warrior ready to go to the battle field, although the scene is timeless and may have happened at any time in the nine years before the fifty one days described by Homer. The exterior of the cup shows Herakles' introduction to Mt. Olympos. Together, we see heroes struggling with the prospect of death, but also finishing with divine honors. War and strife may convey great honors, despite the efforts and the tragic cruelties. In the context of a symposium, these themes may provide food for debate and reflection.

In chapter 2, Junker addresses the definitions of myth and mythology, and simultaneously asks what functions myths had in society. The mix of religion and secular character (as well as divertissement) is a principal reason for the use of myths in life. He points to the drastic and dramatic contents of these stories, creating a cathartic effect in drama, which may not only be true for old stories but also for new inventions, such as the contest of Poseidon and Athena for the patronage of Athens (described in Herodotos, 8.55 and shown on the west pediment of the Parthenon).

The relationship between text and image, as noted, is the main point discussed. Images *never* function as illustrations of texts. They work 'on their own' (p. 33) and should be studied independently. This does not mean that texts are important for the interpretation of images, for they have their own imaginative power. Fifth-century drama, for instance, can be very

pictorial. However, images show a moment, have no past or future, and cannot explain a large problem. These features are demonstrated by an image of Priam visiting Achilles in his tent and begging to retrieve the corpse of Hektor (fig. 11). Junker describes expressions of visual narratives as snapshots, such as the Priam scene; synoptic images, e.g. Theseus, Ariadne and the Minotaur (fig. 12); ‘comic strip’-like compositions as on Roman sarcophagi; and ‘hieroglyphic’ scenes of one figure, such as the sleeping Barberini Faun (fig. 14).

According to Junker, images should not be seen as reproductions of the *Lebenswelt* (pp. 51-52). Even portraits convey more (or less!) than the facial features of an individual, demonstrating power, character, and the like. This is also true for mythological scenes: they have their own discourse, as do written texts. Junker addresses problems, such as identification of unnamed figures, the presence of *Zuschauerfiguren* and/or gods, who seem to involve the onlooker in the scene. The mix of reality and mythical fantasy should not be underestimated.

The third chapter is devoted to the making of myths. Again, Junker starts with texts: Homer, Hesiod, Pindar, and the dramatists tell – and produce - stories we also see in art, but which have their own qualities. These ‘makers’ of myth believed that there were divine powers, more or less represented by gods and heroes we know from myth. Drama and philosophy use myth in their own ways as exempla, a nice specimen of which is Prodikos’ motif of Herakles on the crossroad. The production of myths in the visual arts is no less extensive. Junker sketches the development, from the late eighth century onwards, showing a remarkable increase of images as well as themes.

In the fourth chapter the media – ceramics, sculpture, and Roman artifacts bearing mythical images--are discussed. In an admirable way Junker sketches the problems concerning the use and contexts of the categories and introduces the scientific agendas pertaining to ceramics and other categories to non-specialist readers. Here the Roman world is involved for the first time. Junker explains the lack of Roman themes in the visual arts because of their poverty of ‘allegorical narrative’ (p. 110), which I do not quite understand. The main Roman media are paintings and mosaics in private houses and sarcophagi in tombs, while Greek objects, such as vases, no longer seem to play a role.¹ Thanks to their context, the function of mythical images in Roman houses seems clear. As for sarcophagi, Junker reserves a full discussion for chapter 6. He does not ask for whom these sarcophagi were made, which is not an easy question, but it seems that rich people not belonging to the old elite were the patrons.²

Chapter 5 gives an overview of (theoretical) approaches and methods to read mythical imagery. Junker explains important terms, such as hermeneutics and context, and briefly addresses scholarly approaches by distinct scholars. As an example of in-depth reading, he treats the (reconstruction of) Myron’s group of Athena and Marsyas (figs 35- 38), with exemplary results about the understanding of this often wrongly interpreted work of art. He convincingly sees the two figures as actors in subsequent phases of the story, together transmitting the history and quality of the *aulos*, while also attractively representing the contrasting poles of divine figures.³ Further associations with the statues and their story are explained in the sense of “mythologemes,” while the historical setting is addressed in various ways, without – prudently – giving a definitive interpretation, which does not exist. For both non-expert and expert readers, these pages are highly instructive: one learns possibilities and impossibilities and obtains tools for the treatment of a deceptively difficult image.

The last chapter investigates the 'content and intention' of various classes of art works bearing mythical images. We encounter, again, Roman sarcophagi, Greek (mainly Athenian) vases, and architectural sculpture. Junker sketches the range of themes, the possibilities of the creators and the meanings expressed, insofar as we can establish them. It is an intelligent summa of all written in the previous chapters, combined with a thorough evaluation of relevant scholarship. Even if we see the same myth in various media, its meaning(s) can be different. This is quite obvious when we take into account the context, but it warns us against overly simplistic comparisons frequently made, a warning that Junker does not formulate *expressis verbis* but which I glean from these pages and cannot but endorse. He ends with a scene similar to that on the Sosias cup: Achilles and Ajax playing at dice (fig. 48). His analysis of this popular scene adopts all models described throughout the book. The seemingly innocent scene refers to death in the war and heroic behavior, as well as the competition of the two great heroes.

The book has no foot- or endnotes, but there is a good list of literature, in which mainly English and German publication are listed. French and Italian are almost entirely absent, which may be explained by the anticipated readership: students who do not (yet) have access to languages other than their own. I do not blame the author, but it is a pity that this expected lack of skills is becoming more and more a self-fulfilling prophecy and that even scholarship shows an increasing lack of mastery of the main languages in our field of research. Of course, this does not diminish the qualities of this book, which leaves the reader with many thoughts that yield a fresh and well- instructed way to view myths depicted in ancient art.

Notes:

1. For this section the bibliography is much poorer, probably because of the lack of English publications? One should refer, at least, to S. Muth, *Erleben von Raum, Leben im Raum: Zur Funktion mythologischer Mosaikbilder in der römisch-kaiserzeitlichen Wohnarchitektur*, Heidelberg 1998; J. Hodske, *Mythologische Bildthemen in den Häusern Pompejis: Die Bedeutung der zentralen Mythenbilder für die Bewohner Pompejis*, Mainz am Rhein 2007; K. Lorenz, *Bilder machen Räume: Mythenbilder in pompeianischen Häusern*, Berlin/New York 2008.

2. At least, such is an interesting explanation in E. E. Mayer, *The Ancient Middle Classes: Urban Life and Aesthetics in the Roman Empire, 100 BCE-250 CE*, Cambridge Mass. 2012.

3. As so often, the word is unfortunately translated as flute, whereas it is a sort of oboe blown with a reed (cf. p. 133 for the correct explanation of the word).

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Pp. xiv + 225, illus. Â£55/\$95 (hbk); Â£17.99/\$32.99 (pbk). 9780521895828 (hbk); 9780521720076 (pbk). Richard Buxton (a1). (a1). University of Bristol, Richard.G.A.Buxton@bris.ac.uk. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S007542691300102X>. Published online by Cambridge University Press: 19 September 2013. Export citation. Abstract. Interpreting the Images of Greek Myths. An Introduction. by Klaus Junker, Johannes Gutenberg UniversitÃ¼t Mainz, Germany, Translated by Annemarie KÃ¼nzl-Snodgrass, University of Cambridge and Anthony Snodgrass. Classical Studies. In ancient Greece and Rome textual and pictorial versions of myths coexisted. This book is a concise introduction to the interpretation of the images of Greek myths and describes the strategies ancient artists used in order to instruct and persuade. 9780521720076 PB 247 x 174 mm 240 pages 48 b/w illus. 1 table. HIGHLIGHT.Â Cambridge University Press Australia & New Zealand, New Releases - April/May 2012. 9. AU\$ 59.95 NZ\$ 74.95. Specifications. Publisher. Cambridge University Press. Book Format. Paperback. Original Languages. English. Number of Pages. 225. Author. Klaus Junker. ISBN-13. 9780521720076. Publication Date. November, 2011. Assembled Product Dimensions (L x W x H). 9.55 x 6.90 x 0.45 Inches. ISBN-10. 0521720079. Customer Reviews.