

JENNY STRAUSS CLAY, *The Wrath of Athena: Gods and Men in the «Odyssey.»* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983. Published for the Center for Hellenic Studies. Pp. xii + 268. Cloth. \$27.50.

The Wrath of Athena is a provocative book that astutely presents us with a new interpretation of the relation of *polytropos* Odysseus, foremost among men in *metis*, with Athena, foremost among divinities for *metis*. The trickster hero who is so well known for his ability to think and to act, is also known for his ability to experience and suffer. His mental agility embraces technical skill, cleverness, craftiness, and duplicity and «the intellectual qualities (*metis*) that *polytropos* designates are in themselves profoundly ambiguous» (p. 32). Understanding, counsel, art of skill, intelligence, trickery, and deception, which are the fuller range of *metis*, as described by Hesychius, are also taken up by Clay as she superbly shows how the *metis* of Odysseus (which in the Cyclops incident, for example) stands for the arts and skills of civilization, the *technai*, are contrasted with the *bia* and lack of technology and civilized life of the Cyclopes. In the widest and most significant sense, the *Odyssey* is a poem of the *metis* of Odysseus competing with or contrasted to the *metis* of Athena (who, it will be remembered, sprang from Zeus' head after he swallowed Metis whole).

Jenny Strauss Clay sees the originality of the *Odyssey* in the challenge of the *metis* of Odysseus to the *metis* of Athena and consequently a challenge to the nature and possibilities of human life within the limits of mortality. In the debate between cleverness and knowledge, Athena acknowledges that Odysseus is the cleverest of human beings but also notes that he has only limited knowledge of the gods; Odysseus, on the other hand, admits his mortality but rejects his supposed inferiority. Put another way, «*Odysseus is too clever; his intelligence calls into question the superiority of the gods themselves*» (p. 209). Clay tries to show that Odysseus' name means «divine wrath» and that he attempts to break through the dangerous limits that separate men and gods which may lead to *kleos aphthiton*, «imperishable fame». In ten years of wandering and isolation Odysseus has learned his lesson and become a wiser man — more appropriate as an object of Athena's pity rather than her wrath. He has learned to prefer home, family, old age, and death to the immortal allurements of Calypso. In short, he has learned to think mortal thoughts.

Clay spends valuable time attempting to reconcile human misery with divine justice — what she calls the «double theodicy of the *Odyssey*». She suggests that the *Odyssey* contains two conceptions of the role of the gods in human affairs: (1) they are concerned with the workings of justice among men, but they may, in fact, (2) inflict good and evil on the basis of caprice and whim rather than on the basis of justice. The *Odyssey* appears to contain a profound contradiction in the role it depicts the gods as playing in relation to human life, but, Clay observes, «the notion of divine punishment for injustice is usually expressed in hopes and prayers, for which Greek has a separate verb form, the optative, whereas the idea that the gods randomly apportion good and evil — especially evil— is asserted as a matter of fact, in the indicative» (p. 226). There is the suggestion that men exert a kind of pressure on the gods to act justly, or

else no one will pay attention to them. Ultimately, Clay sees that the men need the gods to be heroes and the gods need heroes for entertainment (for high tragedy and low comedy). The gods' own sense of superiority is thus reinforced. The gods also need prayers and sacrifices; otherwise, divine envy results. «The gods need men to reassure themselves of their blessedness, to maintain their position of superiority, and to preserve what they consider to be their prerogatives» (p. 238).

Gods and men are argued to be mutually dependent. Men invoke the gods to the cause of justice to punish evil-doers and reward the doers of good. Such justice confirms divine existence. «*In the Odyssey*, the wrath of Athena is finally deflected from Odysseus and transformed into righteous indignation against the suitors. Men need the gods to lend strength and majesty to the gods» (p. 238).

The Wrath of Athena by the daughter of the late Leo Strauss provides the reader with a highly documented, brilliantly conceived, and convincingly argued new interpretation of Homer's *Odyssey*. Homeric scholars everywhere will appreciate its insights and its brilliance.

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JOHN PINSENT, *Greek Mythology*. Library of the World's Myths and Legends. New York: Peter Bedrick Books, 1983. Distributed by Harper and Row in the U.S.A. Cloth. Frontispiece. Illustrated. Pp. 144. \$16.95.

STEWART PEROWNE, *Roman Mythology*, Library of the World's Myths and Legends. New York: Peter Bedrick Books, 1984. Distributed by Harper and Row in the U.S.A. Cloth. Frontispiece. Illustrated. Pp. 144. \$17.95.

The Library of the World's Myths and Legends is a new series written by a team of well known scholars, which includes archaeologists, linguists, and specialists in comparative religion, who present in a single book of uniform size the major myths of a culture with the world culture that these stories reveal and the art forms they have inspired. Fully illustrated with the artifacts and paintings related to these myths, ethnological material is also included as appropriate, to demonstrate the role of myth and religion in everyday life. In addition to the Greek and Roman titles, volumes on Egyptian, Indian, and Japanese mythology have been published thus far.

Both the Greek and Roman volumes were originally published in Britain in 1969. They are very richly illustrated, with many of the plates in color. They are obviously meant for the general reader and for general use. They both give the reader a fairly, if not totally, authoritative view of Greek mythology and Roman religion respectively. John Pinsent teaches Greek at Liverpool University and Stewart Perowne is well known as an Orientalist, archaeologist, historian, and British government official.