

JORDI PÀMIAS (ed.), *Apollodoriana. Ancient Myths, New Crossroads*. Sozomena 16, Berlin-Boston: De Gruyter, 2017, vi+253 pp., € 109.95, ISBN 978-3-11-054074-1

Anyone who has ever studied Greek mythology in any depth knows about and has consulted Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca*. Because of its comprehensive scope, its carefully structured organization, and especially its copious amount of details (not to mention the fact that it has survived virtually whole), the *Bibliotheca* has continually exerted great influence on the way we conceive of ancient myth as a system and remains a trusted source of "authentic" Greek myth. Given its importance to students of myth it is hard to fathom why it had remained, until the last 25 years, an understudied work. Even now, with several recent editions and commentaries since 1991, there has appeared no monograph-length study on the work that has come down to us under the name of Apollodorus. The book under review here, an outgrowth of a 2013 conference in Barcelona, "Apollodoriana. Antics mites, noves cruïlles" and an "homage to Paco Cuartero" (p. 2), is a partial attempt to fill the void by presenting fourteen studies on various aspects of the *Bibliotheca*. Some of the studies start from still-entrenched approach of source criticism, but others take more innovative approaches to Apollodorus' text –ones that emphasize the role that the author had in shaping the narrative fabric of the *Bibliotheca*.

As is expected of a volume that is part *Festschrift* and part conference proceedings, the quality of the contributions varies widely, and some of them cohere less well with the whole than others. In terms of the latter, two essays barely deal with Apollodorus at all. In "From Panyassis to Pseudo-Apollodorus: The Resurrection of Tyndareus" Jaume Pòrtulas uses the catalog of people that Asclepius raised from the dead (3.121) as a hinge to consider how Panyassis might have treated the myth, and in what context. After a rather speculative attempt to tie Tyndareus to Asclepius through cultic associations, Pòrtulas suggests that Tyndareus' resurrection would have been a conscious doublet of that of Iolaus, both of which would have been told in Panyassis' *Heracleia*. Such speculation is well and good, but it tells us nothing about the presence of this episode in Apollodorus himself, and the short discussion of Apollodorus' account of Spartan myth (29–30) is problematic.¹ Similarly, the brief contribution of the late Ezio Pellizer on

¹ Even if Pòrtulas is right in demonstrating that the episode is in Panyassis' work, it tells us nothing about Apollodorus' relationship with early Greek sources. First, he takes for granted that the catalog is not a later interpolation despite the first person verb *heuron*, the only place

the cosmic dimensions of Typhon only gently touches upon Apollodorus' account as it moves from Hesiod, through Plutarch, Synesius, and Nonnus, and finally to the Jesuit Athanasius Kircher and the contemporary painter Dario di Meglio.

Our understanding of the enigmatic *Bibliotheca* continues to evolve, but it is also important to see where we have been as we look forward. Two contributions, focusing on earlier editions of the text, offer insights into how the text was viewed at key points in its history. First, Ulrike Kenens in "The Edition of Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca* by Thomas Gale (Paris, 1675): Between Tradition and Innovation" considers the important contributions made by the former Regius Professor, which include establishing that the *Bibliotheca* was a different work than *On the Gods* (Gale, like Heyne after him, thought that both works were by Apollodorus of Athens) and articulating the distinctions between different forms of mythographical discourse. In a similar vein is Sotera Fornaro's "The Apollodorus of Christian Gottlob Heyne," which articulates how the Göttingen professor "restored *mythos* as a scholarly word" and sought to make the study of myth a central part of *Altertumswissenschaft*. For Heyne, Greek mythology was serious business; the *Bibliotheca*, which rejected interpretative fantasies, was a "product of an erudite age eager for rare and little known details," drawing on the ancient poetic tradition, mainly through the lost work of Pherecydes (p. 220–21). Thus, the text was "a productive way to understand how myths had been used in antiquity" (p. 222), as evidenced by his massive four-volume 1783 edition.

We have, of course, come a long way from Heyne. Thanks to Carl Robert's 1873 dissertation, no one thinks that the *Bibliotheca* was composed by Apollodorus of Athens. And yet, Robert's philological exactitude led him to conclude that the author of the *Bibliotheca* used Pherecydes, Acusilaus and Asclepiades directly, and several other early sources indirectly. Much of the work on Apollodorus in the 120 years after Robert focused on source criticism, not least because of the pervasive idea that the author of the *Bibliotheca* was but a compiler of earlier material. José B. Torres in "Between the *Homeric Hymns* and the Mythological *Bibliotheca*: Demeter in Apollodorus" takes just such a position that Apollodorus "would be unlikely to invent new

in the *Bibliotheca* that indicates the author's research (pp. 22–3). Second, even if it is original, Panyassis' name is found in a *Zitatennest*, which cannot be evidence that Apollodorus used him directly and extensively as a source.

In Pörtulas' discussion of the two figures named Perieres (Apd. 1.123), the chart on p. 30 omits the key figure Oebalus, son of Perieres son of Cynortas, as found in the passage under discussion. When added, Apd.'s version is in complete agreement with the scholia from Homer's *Iliad* and Euripides' *Orestes*. Furthermore, confusion about the two Perieres (one son of Aeolus and another son of Cynortas) is unwarranted: see S. Trzaskoma, "Citation, Organization and Authorial Presence in Ps.-Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca*," in *Writing Myth: Mythography in the Ancient World* (Leuven 2013) 75–94, esp. 84–91.

variants of the information that came down to him via intermediate sources” (p. 9, n. 12). After comparing the Homeric Hymn and the *Bibliotheca*, concluding that there are more discrepancies than similarities (and, as far as I can tell, only one clear verbal echo: see p. 11), Torres rejects the Frazerian idea that Apollodorus’ text was “based” on the Homeric Hymn but rather that it was only one of many sources for his account. On the basis of a very tenuous argument based on a single, possibly over-interpreted detail,² Torres suggests that another significant source would have been an Orphic version of story. These two sources would have been supplemented also by a local myth from Hermione, an Athenian version, and “texts authored by Panyassis and Pherecydes” (p. 13)—although the latter is based on a misunderstanding the role of *Zitatennester* in the *Bibliotheca*, which does not imply that Apollodorus used the versions of Panyassis and Pherecydes beyond the limited scope of the variant genealogies.³ The impression we are left with here is that the *Bibliotheca* is a pastiche of elements taken directly from old sources. Similarly, Alberto Bernabé (“Orpheus in Apollodorus”) argues that Apollodorus’ narrative, which rejects wholesale the “modern” interpretative tradition represented in Strabo and Pausanias, follows instead “the most ancient tradition that we know...the Pindaric one” (p. 116; cf. the conclusion on p. 123). Here, at least, Bernabé is suggesting that Apollodorus *made the choice* to follow the tradition evidenced in Pindar over other alternatives available to him.

Taking a similar source-critical approach is the contribution of Nereida Villagra, “Lost in Tradition: Apollodorus and Tragedy-Related Texts,” a careful study of Apollodorus’ engagement with tragic material, but one that focuses primarily on the relationship between Apollodorus and Asclepiades of Tragilus. While the close comparison of the texts offers valuable insights, the overall conclusion is negative: there is little to no evidence that Apollodorus consulted Asclepiades himself (as Robert had thought) and it is impossible to determine how influential Asclepiades’ work was on the *Bibliotheca* even through intermediate sources. Even in the one instance where there is close correspondence (the riddle of the Sphinx), it is unclear how that material reached Apollodorus. She concludes, wisely I think, “one wonders

² At *Bibl.* 1.33 Demeter is said to have put a heavy stone on top of Ascalaphus after he bore witness that Persephone ate a pomegranate seed, and at 2.126 after Hercules rolled the stone off of him, Demeter turned Ascalaphus into an owl. Torres interprets these as evidence that Demeter was physically present in the underworld, which would then be consistent with the Orphic tradition, in which Demeter was said to descend there to retrieve her daughter. Is this not subjecting myth to an over-literal approach? Even if at 1.33 Demeter *is* in the underworld to retrieve Persephone, surely she is not still present when Hercules rescues Ascalaphus from under the rock.

³ Similarly, when Torres points to other Orphic influence in Apollodorus, he specifically cites the *Orphikoi* mentioned in the much-contested *Zitatennest* of people raised from the dead at 3.121, which seems unlikely to be original.

if the fact that the texts share thematic or structural narrative features is not simply the effect of a common cultural ambiance” (63). Similarly, Joan Pagès, “Apollodorus’ *Bibliotheca* and the Mythographus Homericus: An Intertextual Approach” reaches a similar conclusion after studying the nature of the relationship between the *Bibliotheca* and the putative *Mythographus Homericus*: there is no definitive proof that the *Bibliotheca* draws on the MH or the other way around, although the D-Scholias (who drew on the MH) does consult the *Bibliotheca* when filling in where the MH text is deficient. Rather, the overlapping aims and structures of these texts “suggest a common literary ground for both, the MH...and the *Bibliotheca*” (76). In terms of readership, Pagès sees both texts as “destined to satisfy the demand of readers in a period when reading had become an everyday activity and access to a certain degree of literary culture enabled middle-class citizens to exhibit their literacy in social gathering” (77). Regardless of whether one agrees with the notion of a substantial number of middle-class citizens engaging in everyday reading, it remains true that increasing literacy in the imperial period necessitated aids for reading and cultural literacy in a new context.

These shifts toward a view that Apollodorus’s activity was part of a cultural *koine* and that he was not just a compiler of older views is welcome. Also welcome is a new focus on his authorial choices and narrative structure. Of particular interest in this respect is Lowell Edmunds’ “Helen in Pseudo-Apollodorus Book 3,” the title of which does not do the article justice. It is, in essence, a close reading of the Helen episode from a narratological perspective. Distinguishing between *récit* (narrative discourse) and *narration* or *énonciation* (the act of producing a narrative), he evaluates the compositional technique of the author and the choices he makes to include or omit certain details.⁴ His careful analysis yields fertile results. At times, Apollodorus makes certain choices to ensure a concise and coherent narrative, called *munditia fabulae*. At others, Apollodorus purposefully omits a tradition—even one that may be well known—to simplify the narrative and not populate it with variants, which Edmunds terms *incuria inconvenientium*. Extensive catalogs, such as that of Helen’s suitors, stand outside of the narrative itself and is an “act of narration...a gesture by the narrator to the audience” (p. 91) and the purpose of citing his sources is “to establish his authority” (p. 96; cf. discussion of Fowler’s article below). Edmunds, who identifies several places where Apollodorus offers the only version of a detail, is surely right to emphasize Apollodorus’ “inventiveness” (p. 95) when he combines various

⁴ The one criticism of Edmunds’ approach here is based on his conviction that we can frequently identify Apollodorus’ sources. I do not agree that “[m]uch is known about the sources of Apollodorus” (p. 82 n. 2), and on several occasions Edmunds attempts to identify a particular source, but these are often speculative at best.

traditions into one single narrative.⁵ In the same vein of invention, Glenn Most's "Postface: The Mazes of Mythography," offers a preliminary study of the relationship of Apollodorus to the Hesiodic *Catalog of Women*, which has long been regarded as the model for the *Bibliotheca*. Most offers a cautionary tale by comparing Apollodorus' opening chapters and Hesiod's *Theogony*, concluding that "at some point someone went carefully, thoroughly, and radically through the text of this section of Hesiod's *Theogony* and adapted it systematically" (p. 233), suggesting that there is no reason to suspect that it was not done by Apollodorus himself. Such reorganization ought to warn us against assuming that Apollodorus relied on the *Catalog*, as well as caution us not to be dogmatic that the *Catalog* can be reconstructed based on the *Bibliotheca's* structure. One hopes that Most fulfills his desire to provide a more systematic study (p. 230, n. 5)

Complementing Edmunds' contribution is Robert Fowler's useful study, "Apollodorus and the Art of the Variant," which provides an analysis of the several points in the *Bibliotheca* where the author pauses to consider an alternative genealogy or narrative element. As Fowler demonstrates, the 114 passages that include one or more variants (helpfully listed in the appendix to the article, pp. 168-74) typically do not interrupt the singular nature of the narrative: "[w]e are getting, essentially, one story at a time and only one" (p. 163). Why, then, do we encounter a variant or cluster of variants every one and a half pages? The reason is that Apollodorus is establishing his *bona fides* as an authority, asserting "his sovereign command of the mythographical tradition" (p. 164). In other words, it is a narrative act—and here we are reminded of Edmunds' focus on énonciation as narrative act in producing catalogs—meant to give "the impression of an urbane narrator, performing a service for the reader who has aspirations to sophistication." Apollodorus is not interested in an encyclopaedic representation of the whole of myth (no ancient Gantz, he), and yet his working method offers his readers glimpses into the more complicated world of scholarship—redolent, to some degree, of historians like Diodorus.

Both Edmunds and Fowler, like Pagès, consider the potential readership of the *Bibliotheca*, the former emphasizing the "popularizing" aims of a singular narrative (p. 95–96), the latter suggesting that the *Bibliotheca* targets a broad audience, but that it could also be useful to an elite readership

⁵ This idea of what I have called elsewhere "creative mythography" has been attributed to the author of the *Bibliotheca* by a recent study by Trzaskoma on Spartan myth (op. cit. n. 1, p. 89), not cited by Edmunds, "...even though Ps.-Apollodorus' aims are clearly geared toward compilation, this leaves a great deal of room for what we may consider creative handling of the material." Given Edmunds' findings, one wonders how many of the 50 unique details identified by Anna Söder in the first book of the *Bibliotheca*, which Robert Fowler ("Apollodorus and the Art of the Variant") attributes to Apollodorus' desire to also "reach an elite readership" (p. 165), are instead the result of Apollodorus' own shaping of the mythical system.

(165). By contrast, Charles Delattre focuses exclusively on the act of reading the text in “Apollodorus’ Text: Experimental Layout and Edition.” Approaching the text from the perspective of “information retrieval,” a methodology prompted by the utilitarian nature of the text itself, Delattre considers the difficulties finding material in the continuous dense forest of Apollodorus, especially in comparison to the more user-friendly entries found in Hyginus’ *Fabulae* (an organizational principle that in fact masks a hidden continuity). After a review of the manner in which earlier editions attempted to summarize the order of the *Bibliotheca*, sometimes only succeeding in creating the impression of disorder, we benefit from a close reading of the opening chapters. This analysis seeks to articulate the internal stylistic cues—helpfully converted by the article’s author into a chart form—that help organize and break up the mass of data we meet along the way. As Delattre puts it, “[t]he accumulation of names and anecdotes is organized in a grid for reading imposed not from the outside but from within the text itself. Like a computer program whose capabilities one progressively discovers, the more one reads the text of the *Bibliotheca*, the better the text functions” (192). Delattre concludes that an edition of such a dense and potentially confusing text might well benefit from using a digital platform, where the schema of the author could be highlighted by “the use of colors, indents, underlines, etc.,” which corresponds to the textual markers that Apollodorus himself included in his work.

Let us now turn to the scholar who might be called the *honorandus* of the volume, Francesc J. Cuartero, who subjects three passages to close reading in “The *Bibliotheca* of Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Textus Unicus*,” the Talos episode (1.140–41), that of Demeter in Eleusis (1.29–31, considering the knotty textual issue of the name Praxithea), and that of Althaemenes (3.13ff.). As is expected of the editor of a multi-volume edition and commentary of the *Bibliotheca*, Cuartero brings his rich experience in textual and mythographical analysis to bear on these passages that concern myth and cult. Finally, we may mention Anna Santoni’s analysis of the only two catasterisms in “Myths of Star and Constellation Origins in the *Bibliotheca*,” those of Callisto and the Hyades. The discussion of the catasterisms themselves are thorough. The proposed reasons for their inclusion—Callisto is the most popular constellation, so it is “a *must* in a mythographical text,” and the catasterism of the Hyades is “a basic element of their mythological identity” (p. 143)—will, of course, remain speculative, although it is encouraging that Santoni sees the inclusion not “the simple result of a mechanical process of aggregation of information,” but reveals instead “a certain level of elaboration and selection of data in the composition of the work.”

The book, then, provides valuable studies that advance our understanding of the text and, hopefully, will lead to further work on the compositional strategies of the author of the *Bibliotheca*. Even so, one hopes that the

continued search for “the” sources of Apollodorus—a method always prone to availability bias—yields at last to the study of the text that we do have, to the authorial choices Apollodorus makes, and to the narrative structure of the whole. The volume here is a good step toward a better understanding of the *Bibliotheca*; even if some studies take as their methodology source criticism, their conclusions usually lead us in the right direction: Apollodorus’ *Bibliotheca* is a construct of an active mind attempting to homogenize a highly complex system, part of an industry of thinkers who took as their task providing mythical knowledge for an increasingly literate society.

R. SCOTT SMITH
University of New Hampshire
Scott.Smith@unh.edu

