

Greek Myths And Christian Mystery

NOTICES OF BOOKS

215

interpreting a vast and disputed *corpus* of material evidence. It is inevitable here that we should think about the tablets. Linear A gets one reference and Linear B two, and the author in his preface advances as the reason for the omission, first, the misgivings of certain scholars on linguistic grounds, and then 'the poverty of the present material and the difficulty of its interpretation (which) would remain as obstacles preventing its use for immediate historical purposes'. But are the uncertainties much greater than in some or most of the material evidence? He may well follow the judgements of Professor W. K. C. Guthrie on the tablets and the religiously set-off, but what about the 'social matrix' or the economic background? It is quite clear that a great deal can be made out of the Linear B tablets, and it is to be wondered whether there is much point in carrying the scope of the book so far back without some consideration of them. These doubts and problems also afflict his second section 'Transition and Continuity'. How far can one bit from one literary or archaeological context be combined with another in a chain which also includes modern authorities? And incidentally, despite the imposing Bibliography, works of modern scholarship which one would certainly expect to find are not always cited in the abundant footnotes. The wood is sometimes lost in the trees, and these latter are sometimes of very dubious substance. This is not to deny that we should be grateful to the author for a collection of material of absorbing interest, to dip into (after the manner of A. B. Cook's *Zeus*) and to quarry for recondite information. This applies particularly to the chapters on 'The Cretan Goddesses'; on the youthful gods, the Cretan Zeus, Dionysos and Hyakinthos; on Asklepios and the Cretan Olympus (Zeus, Hera, Apollo, Artemis, Athena, Aphrodite, Ares, Hermes, Poseidon), with an extremely useful account of their cult-titles. Diverse odds and ends round off the book, including a discussion of the Song of Hybrion. There is, in fact, a vast deal of valuable stuff in this book, in the religion and myth of the classical period and later. It is not easy to give it any strongly defined unity. It is also true that Mr Willetts is most readable when he forgets his high sociological purposes.

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WALTER (H.) *Vom Sinnwandel griechischer Mythen*. Waldsassen, Bavaria: Stiffland. 1959. Pp. 66. 50 illus. DM 9.80.

Neither the gods nor their worshippers were the same in all ages. Nevertheless this obvious fact has often been ignored by historians of religion and mythology, who have tended to refer to Apollo or Dionysos as if they embodied conceptions which never changed. A study of Greek myth should prove a salutary corrective in such instances, and although Hans Walter is concerned with one era only, viz. the notable

interim which separated the Parthenon sculptures from Praxiteles, his methods are applicable to other periods.

The post-Parthenon era was characterised by a profound change of outlook towards the gods. Dionysiac scenes, and the statuesque qualities of deities and heroes gave way to realism. *Muses*, *Maenads* and *Aphrodite* herself all became indistinguishable from mortal women. Backgrounds too altered with the accent on personal relationships, so that divinity in vase paintings is sometimes hard to detect. *Zeus* made even the *Centaur* human, and the boundaries separating mythological from genre scenes began to disappear. *Helen* was no longer the perfidious adulteress of the sixth century B.C., nor the tragic heroine of the fifth, but the personification of the power of female beauty. The emphasis now is no longer on the gods as something remote from men, but on the human qualities that embody 'dämonische Mächte'. Men were no longer controlled by fate, as *Sophocles* had believed, but by the forces of human passion as *Euripides* showed. The existence of these forces was recognised by *Praxiteles* who 'hat in der Göttin die Frau gesehen', and emphasised youth and realism through the medium of common life. W.'s views, though persuasively argued, are sometimes vitiated by specious generalisations. Certainly the statement that 'die griechische Kunst ist die Geschichte der Menschen' might astonish the Chinese. Again the phrase 'dämonische Mächte' is curiously reminiscent of *Kunze's* description of the *Sirens* (AM 1932). The book is beautifully printed and the photographs are superb. They not only serve to illustrate the text, but help the reader to see into the minds of the artists of the fourth century B.C.

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RAHNER (H.) *Greek myths and Christian mystery*. Trans. B. Battershaw. London: Burns and Oates. 1963. Pp. xxii + 399. 12 plates. £3 3s.

Hugo Rahner's *Griechische Mythen in christlicher Deutung* seems to have attracted little attention in Britain when it first appeared in 1957, and it is good to be reminded of its existence in this fluent and idiomatic version by Brian Battershaw. The book falls into three parts, loosely held together by an overbranching theme. The first part, 'Mysterion', is a series of lectures given at *Eranos* congresses at *Ascona*. The second section, 'The Healing of the Soul' comprises two brilliant papers, on *Moly* and *Mandragora*, written in honour of *Jung*, and also reprinted from *Eranos Jahrbuch*. The final section, 'Holy Homer', brings together papers from other sources, and tells of the place of the willow in Greek and Christian symbolism, and of the Christian transformation of the myth of *Odysseus* and the *Sirens*. Those who elect to work in a field which combines

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