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BOOK REVIEWS

Guy Darshan, *Stories of Origins in the Bible and Ancient Mediterranean Literature*, translated by Hannah Davidson, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023. 333 pp. ISBN: 9781009344487.

The book under review is the revised English-language version of the author's *After the Flood*, which he published in Hebrew in 2018.[1] The Hebrew version was in turn based on his PhD thesis of 2013. *Stories of Origins* has thus been long in the making and in many ways that is a good thing. Guy Darshan has taken time to research his argument thoroughly and think hard about the challenges one faces when crossing cultural and disciplinary boundaries in the ancient world. The results are significant and will be of interest to scholars in a range of disciplines, including classics.

The book is in two parts, each consisting of four chapters. After an introduction which sets out the author's aims and approach, Part I, entitled 'Before the Flood and After', begins with a discussion of the 'Table of Nations' in Genesis 10 before surveying parallels in Greek genealogical literature (Chapter 1, pp. 41–76). We then move to Noah planting the first vine (9:20–7), again followed by a survey of Greek parallels (Chapter 2, pp. 77–87). Chapter 3 takes us all the way back to the creation of woman in Genesis 2–3 and in Hesiod's *Theogony* and *Works and Days* (pp. 88–113). Chapter 4 focuses on the divine-human couplings of Genesis 6:1–4 and Greek sources describing the fall of the heroes (pp. 114–35). Part II, 'From Man to Nation: Literary Patterns', goes over similar ground as Part I, picking out specific motifs that the author considers characteristic of origin stories. Chapter 5 (pp. 139–71), on first inventors, recalls Chapter 2, on Noah and the first vine, but casts a wider net. Particularly noteworthy here is the author's discussion of Philo's *Phoenician History*. Chapter 6 (pp. 172–204) looks at ancestral brothers, Chapter 7 at ancestor figures who settle in a new land (pp. 205–52). Chapter 8 rounds out the book by considering the history of the origin story as a genre. The book includes a bibliography, an index of sources, and an index of names and places.

The author's central claim is clear, and important: for all that the Hebrew Pentateuch was shaped by Mesopotamian tradition it also looks to the Mediterranean world and the Levant. This is not in itself a novel insight, but it is here developed to good effect. D. concentrates on genealogical texts that trace the earliest history of one or more population groups. He argues that this way of telling stories was characteristic of Iron Age Levantine and Mediterranean cultures but not of Hittite Anatolia, Mesopotamia, and Egypt. In practice, much of the evidence comes from Israel and Greece. The author does not postulate direct contact between these two regions but rather suggests, sensibly to my mind, that we should reckon with shared sources of inspiration among the largely lost literatures of the northern Levant.[2] It was from there, he suggests, that this type of literature spread in the wake of the Bronze Age—Iron Age transition, when new societies throughout the eastern Mediterranean sought to establish their credentials in a changing world (pp. 36, 240–52). That is a promising hypothesis, which will need testing against Marc Van De Mieroop's work on the spread of alphabetic writing (*Before and After Babel*, Oxford 2022); and

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1 אַחַר המבול: סיפורי מוצא במקרא ובאגן הים התיכון המזרחי = *After the Flood: Stories of Origins in the Hebrew Bible and Eastern Mediterranean Literature*. The Biblical Encyclopaedia Library 35; Jerusalem: Bialik Institute 2018.

2 Largely but not completely lost: D. is excellent on what remains of Philo's *Phoenician History*.

Marco Santini's on shared strategies of political adaptation after the crisis of ca. 1200 BCE ('Rulership in the Making: Greece, Anatolia, and the Levant, 12th–6th centuries BC', PhD thesis, Princeton 2021). It is a pity that neither of these studies appeared in time to be considered here, since they might have helped the author bring into sharper focus a set of questions that currently hover just outside the edges of his argument: what exactly do we mean when we speak of the 'creation or establishment' of a new genealogical genre (p. 265)? What is the role of writing in this process, and should we accept that similar narratives circulated in oral form before they were written down? D. himself points to forerunners in the cuneiform literatures of 2nd-millennium Amorite states (p. 55) but seems reluctant to pursue this line of enquiry further.

A related question concerns the status of origin stories as a 'comprehensive' (p. 253) and/or 'unique' literary genre (p. 259 and elsewhere). While the author makes a good case for grouping Genesis with Philo's *Phoenician History* and the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*, these texts do of course differ in poetic form and narrative theme. Human-divine couplings, for example, play a central role in Hesiod but are mentioned only briefly in Genesis, and in a context that suggests thorough abbreviation of a more expansive older tradition. D. sees in the parallel another reason to think of these texts as belonging to the same genre (pp. 129–34). Others might argue that the author of Genesis precisely *refuses* to tell the story of the ancient 'men of renown' (אַנְשֵׁי הַשֵּׁם), thus implying a polemical stance vis-à-vis texts like the *Catalogue of Women* which do so at great length. Ultimately, what is at stake here is the broader question of what we can know about emic perspectives on ancient genres, and how much they matter to the author's argument. Further clarification of these points would have been welcome, especially in light of recent work in classics that has been grappling with similar issues.

Origin Stories is aimed at students of the Hebrew Bible (pp. 268–9), and it naturally gives pride of place to that text. Each chapter starts with a passage from Genesis, which is then set in dialogue with comparative readings from Greece and/or the Levant. That this procedure generates its own brand of confirmation bias should neither surprise nor overly alarm us: all interdisciplinary work must start from somewhere. Problems arise when discipline-specific assumptions sediment into claims that go beyond what seems heuristically warranted. D. sets aside Greek accounts of city foundation beyond what he calls the 'motherland' because they refer to 'the not too distant past' rather than 'myth' (p. 217). In fact, Greek texts can, and often do, backdate city foundations to a deep mythological past (p. 228), and there seems no reason in principle to distinguish between cities within the 'motherland' and outside it in this regard. One senses here a certain reluctance to allow the full range of 'ecotypification' (p. 268) in Mediterranean origin-telling, in contrast with the author's otherwise capacious approach.

D.'s background in Bible Studies also informs some of his hermeneutic commitments. Like many of his peers, he reads the text of Genesis in two versions, Priestly and non-Priestly, or more specifically Jahwist (pp. 14–26). As the argument progresses, reaching for these versions becomes something of a hermeneutic reflex that ends up obscuring the logic of the text as we have it. If, for example, it is true that the Priestly author 'refrains from narrating divine revelation' to patriarchal settlers whereas Yahwist narratives 'always begin with a divine command' (p. 209), what does it mean to combine the two? How exactly are they combined and to what effect? D. is capable of addressing such questions, and when he chooses to do so the results can be illuminating (e.g., p. 51, on the Priestly and Jahwistic Tables of Nations). One wishes he had done so more often.

D. is generous in his engagement with relevant scholarship across several disciplines, though there are exceptions. He seems unfamiliar with one of the more important recent treatments of the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* (Ormand, *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women*) and in matters of

cultural contact leans heavily on the work of Burkert and West, which has been shown to be methodologically problematic and is now outdated in several of its particulars. One regrets that more recent treatments are relegated to blanket footnote references (p. 34, n. 99 = p. 267, n. 20). Ultimately, though, these are details that do not diminish the considerable achievements of this book. *Stories of Origins* is a significant work of interdisciplinary scholarship from which classicists stand to benefit a great deal.

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Irad Malkin, Josine Blok, *Drawing Lots: From Egalitarianism to Democracy in Ancient Greece*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024. 536 pp. ISBN: 9780197753477.

Face à la crise de confiance que traversent aujourd'hui bon nombre de démocraties contemporaines, la question des modes de distribution du pouvoir paraît d'une actualité politique comme scientifique brûlante. C'est dans cette perspective qu'Irad Malkin et Josine Blok ont entrepris la rédaction de cet ouvrage, consacré à une pratique courante dans l'Antiquité mais peu employée aujourd'hui : le tirage au sort, jusqu'alors resté majoritairement à l'écart des préoccupations des historiens de la Grèce antique. On ne peut donc que se réjouir que le tirage au sort retrouve le devant de la scène, dont il avait été largement exclu depuis la dernière monographie qui lui avait été consacrée par James Headlam en 1891. Les auteurs défendent une ligne d'interprétation forte, celle d'un tirage au sort ancré profondément dans la vie sociale et politique quotidienne des Grecs, touchant dès la période archaïque à tous les aspects de la vie communautaire, à rebours du caractère transgressif qui lui est aujourd'hui associé. Le recours fréquent au hasard traduirait un état d'esprit égalitaire (*egalitarian mindset*), dans lequel la communauté est conçue horizontalement, entrant ainsi en compétition avec une vision élitiste des rapports sociaux et politiques dans la société grecque archaïque et classique.

Cet ouvrage prend la forme d'une enquête à quatre mains aux rôles bien nettement définis. Le propos est structuré en trois séquences successives qui mènent le lecteur du siège de Troie au tribunal athénien d'Aristote. Les deux premières parties du livre, dédiées à l'examen des pratiques religieuses archaïques et de la colonisation, sont l'œuvre de M., qui y dresse une liste des emplois du hasard qui se veut le plus exhaustif possible, de la répartition homérique du butin à l'attribution des terres destinées aux colons grecs. La troisième partie, consacrée à l'emploi du tirage au sort dans la gouvernance politique, est réservée à B., qui y explore davantage ses utilisations classiques, à Athènes bien sûr, mais aussi ailleurs. Les répétitions, voire divergences, induites par cette organisation binaire du propos sont assumées dès l'introduction de l'ouvrage, qui se présente donc moins comme le résultat d'un dialogue que comme deux lectures complémentaires guidées par des interrogations autonomes et indépendantes. On peut regretter ce cloisonnement, d'autant plus que le livre défend une continuité des pratiques entre période archaïque et classique. Les dissonances qui entourent certaines hypothèses – en particulier sur la question des origines du tirage au sort – auraient pu être dissipées par une section, ou au moins une conclusion, commune.

La première partie de l'ouvrage offre un aperçu de plusieurs emplois du tirage au sort dans la sphère rituelle. L'auteur réexamine, tout d'abord, la question de la répartition du butin dans les poèmes homériques : à l'image de la division du monde divin entre Zeus, Poséidon et Hadès, les guerriers de l'*Iliade* répartiraient le butin entre eux à parts égales, à l'aide du tirage au sort. Le