Herakles inside and outside the Church. From the first apologists to the end of the Quattrocento. Edited by Arlene Allan, Eva Anagnostou-Laoutides and Emma Stafford. (Metaforms, 18.) Pp. xx + 360 incl. 44 colour and black-and-white ills. Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2020. €139. 978 90 04 42152 3; 2212 9405

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This book explores the 'enduring popularity' (p. vii) of Herakles/Hercules beyond classical antiquity, from late antique Christianity to the Renaissance. It focuses upon the 'mutability' (p. 5) of the Herakles myth and its adaptability to different philosophical, political and religious contexts. From the Christian West to Byzantium, and as far as Buddhist Gandhara, the survival of the post-classical Herakles in verbal and visual sources marks the lasting potential of the ancient myth to convey new meaning.

Conceived within the AHRC funded Hercules Project – two other volumes on Herakles/Hercules appropriation up to modernity have been published in the meantime – the book is divided into four parts. Part I focuses on the earliest Christian encounters with Herakles's myth. Arlene Allan brings the discourse on Christian appropriations of Herakles directly to the New Testament. In a reader-response analysis of Revelation v, Allan argues that 'Christ-curious' (p. 21) Greek-speaking readers would have interpreted the vision of Jesus as the Lamb-Lion in Revelation through their previous knowledge of the myth of Herakles. Eva Anagnostou-Laoutides investigates Augustine's rejection of Herakles as a model of virtue. According to Anagnostou-Laoutides, stories about Herakles's choice of virtue over vice (Prodikos), or his Stoic *apatheia* and activism (Epictetus), would have sounded to Augustine dangerously close to Pelagian claims about the ability of humans to choose good and embrace virtue on their own initiative.

Part II continues the reflection on verbal appropriations of Herakles in late antique and medieval sources. Alexandra Eppinger investigates encomiastic literature in the fourth and fifth century. Having disappeared from public devotion, Eppinger argues, the late antique Hercules survives in panegyric literature as 'point of comparison' (p. 73) for Christian emperors and paradigm of military prowess. Brian Sowers focuses on verses originally devoted to Hercules and repurposed to new Christian use in late antique centos. This intertextual play, argues Sowers, exploits the similarities between Hercules and Jesus to further theological reflection on Christ's divine sonship and victory over Satan. Andrew Mellas turns to George of Pisidia's *Heraklias*, composed to celebrate Emperor Herakleios's expedition against the Persians. Following encomiastic conventions, Pisides creates a unique discourse, Mellas argues, in which the depiction of Herakles as a 'Christic conqueror' (p. 128) is functional to the representation of Herakleios as a quasi-divine saviour. Pisides, with Psellos and Plethon, is also the topic of Eva Anagnostou-Laoutides's chapter on Herakles in Platonic and Neoplatonic works in the Byzantine period. In spite of the enduring significance of the hero in philosophical discourses, Anagnostou-Laoutides argues, the tradition of the hero as a comedy character, a drunkard and an adulterer prevented a comprehensive philosophical appropriation of Herakles, who remains a 'controversial' (p. 147) figure in the later Byzantine tradition. Giampiero Scafoglio focuses instead on the appropriation of Hercules in Dante. Especially in the *Comedia*,

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argues Scafoglio, Dante's Hercules is a 'champion of good' (p. 163), turning almost into an abstract representation of God's salvific power.

Part III studies visual appropriations of Herakles/Hercules. Gail Tatham examines the presence of Hercules in the *hypogeum* of Via Dino Compagni in Rome. The mixed iconography (Christian and traditional non-Christian) of the *hypogeum*, argues Tatham, expresses the polysemous approach to funerary art of a society in transition, in which Hercules not only conveys traditional values, but can also be adapted to the needs of Christian observers. Ivana Čapeta Rakić focuses on two enigmatic reliefs on the western entrance of Split cathedral. She argues that the reliefs are representations of Hercules and stresses the 'medieval polysemy' (p. 206) by which the mythological Hercules is elevated to the status of cosmic saviour. Two reliefs depicting Hercules on the façade of San Marco prompt Lenia Kouneni's reflection on the role played by Hercules in the fabrication of a 'pre-Roman heritage' (p. 239) for Venice and in the creation of Venetian 'civic identity' (p. 240). Likewise, Thomas Sienkevicz shows how Hercules's image has been used in Florentine art to represent justice, fortitude and good government, as shown in the planning of the sculptures of the Piazza della Signoria in the sixteenth century. Giuseppe Capriotti instead focuses on the text and woodcuts of the 1497 first print edition of Bonsignori's fourteenth-century Italian translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The woodcuts follow Bonsignori's translation in adopting a euhemeristic approach and in removing from Hercules's stories details less palatable to a Christian readership. The result is a 'partially accomplished' (p. 286) Christianisation, in which Hercules is not a forerunner of Christ, but a model of virtue, compatible with Christian values.

The last part of the book analyses examples of appropriation outside the Church. Cary MacMahon studies the Herakles motif in textiles from late Roman Egypt. By '[w]earing Herakles', argues MacMahon, individuals asserted their 'affinity' (p. 310) with the hero and fended off evil, thanks to the apotropaic qualities of the images. Finally, Karl Galinsky investigates the appropriation of Herakles in Gandharan Buddhist art, where the hero appears as Vajrapani, companion and protector of Buddha. The adoption of Herakles's image in Gandhara, argues Galinsky, shows the familiarity of Gandharan Buddhists with the myth. Herakles's strength, his victories and taste for travelling, made of the hero a suitable companion for the Buddha, while his traditional association with kingship may have encouraged his adoption by the Kushan kings.

Arlene Allen's conclusion stresses how Christian adaptations did not completely reformulate Herakles's myth within the sole scopes of Christianity. But they contributed to disclosing the political significance of Herakles as a symbol of justice and virtuous government in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, in continuity with the philosophical tendency to interpret Herakles within a moralising frame.

The volume is coherent and thought-provoking. Chapters are successfully linked to each other, offering a highly interdisciplinary approach. The book has been edited to a very high standard with only few typos (regrettably the name of one of the contributors is misspelled at p. 301 n. 19) and minor editorial slipups (at p. 54 Pelagius is styled as a 'British bishop'). Together with the other

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research stemming from the Hercules Project, this book is a fundamental resource for everybody interested in the post-classical life of Herakles and, more widely, in the adoption of Greek and Roman myth in Christian art and literature.

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Scholies aux Psaumes (Psaumes 1–70). Évagre le Pontique. 2 vols. By Marie-Josèphe Rondeau, Paul Géhin and Matthieu Cassin. (Sources Chrétiennes, 614, 615.) Pp. 792 + 784. Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2021. €128. 978 2 204 14186 4; 978 2 204 14205 2

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Evagrius' fame hardly rests on his Psalms commentary. In fact, it took the best part of the last century to establish that he had written one. We know that he did thanks to cross-references to his well-known *Praktikos* in the Psalms commentary. So it is later than *Praktikos* and also *Kephalaia gnostica*, but prior to the Proverb *scholia* which reuses it – perhaps he worked in canonical order. As one who has tried to access Evagrius' *scholia* directly and been frustrated by their sporadic and disconnected nature, the editors' attempt to provide a systematic account in their introduction to these two volumes is incredibly helpful, and is what this review mainly covers.

In the introduction first comes a section on the composition of the *scholia*. There is an awareness that these were not sermon texts nor full commentaries but pithy *scholia*, as evidenced in *scholia* v on Psalm lxxxviii.9: 'the genre or law of scholias does not permit prolixity'. Every Psalm except the very short Psalm cxvi finds at least one gloss and Psalms cxxxv–cl have longer explanations. The gnomic nature of *scholia* is akin to Evagrius' ascetic chapters with its 'just as … so', and even a syllogistic flavour. The tone can be 'antirrhetic', speaking back to enemies, yet the target is wider than the demons. Although less marked than with Origen Evagrius was still able to offer two or more explanations of the same verse; for example, Psalm xxvi.9 receives four interpretations on 'how Satan "rules"'. Quite often another passage of Scripture is used to 'explain' a Psalm verse. There is a small amount of comment on verbal tenses.

Next comes a chapter-treatise on the exegesis in this work: there is a particular interest in moving from textual details (names, places) to the signified abstract notion, and (we are told) like Didymus, Evagrius was clearly not interested in history as such. Inanimate beings denote animate ones: so, mountains and forests or 'tribulations' in Psalm cxvii.143 really mean the people who cause these obstacles. Scripture that speaks figuratively (*tropikōs*) does not need to be allegorised. Commandments are clear, but law (which is spiritual) needs unveiling and explaining. *Scholia* xv on Psalm lxvi.21 borrows a pair of schemas from Clement: the first being historical/legislative/sacrificial/theological becoming with Evagrius ethics, physics, theology. The soul moves from one to another in a spiritual journey, reaching towards the spiritual reality, in some ways akin to Gregory of Nyssa's single-minded concern for the *skopos* of the text.

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