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Reviewed by Jacqueline Klooster, Universiteit van Amsterdam (j.j.h.klooster@uva.nl)

[Authors and titles are listed at the end of the review.]

Two defining characteristics of Hellenistic poetry singled out time and again by scholars are its learnedness and its emphatic "representation of the everyday, low and familiar"1 (often referred to as realism). The book under review, Nina Otto's (henceforth O.) revised doctoral thesis, concentrates on the second of these characteristics. It aims, if not to give a causal explanation for its occurrence in the poetry of the Hellenistic age, at least to shed light on it by pointing out parallel preoccupations in Hellenistic philosophy and literary criticism. She defines Hellenistic poetic realism as a striving for ἐνάργεια, usually translated in rhetorical contexts as "vividness". The book discusses this concept and the related one of φαντασία in Stoic and Epicurean physics and epistemology and their adaptation by Hellenistic and Roman literary critics. It ends with comparison of two passages from archaic poetry with their Hellenistic equivalents, to bring out the different treatment of realism and so illustrate how the mindset of Hellenistic poets echoes the "geistige Grundhaltung" expressed in Hellenistic philosophical and rhetorical treatises. The book contains an index locorum and an index of modern and ancient and modern authors cited, but regrettably no index rerum. Aimed at scholars of Hellenistic poetry and ancient literary criticism, O.'s clearly structured and well-written book offers a stimulating, thoughtful and innovative contribution to one of the ongoing debates about Hellenistic poetry. Her analyses of ancient philosophical and rhetorical texts are clear and her interpretations of poetry sensitive and enlightening. That being said, there are also some questions her approach raises but does not answer.

The introduction (Einleitung, 11-30) begins with a general discussion of the defining qualities of Alexandrian poetry,2 singling out "Realismus", which O. defines as "[die] Hinwendung zum besonderen, konkret Eigentümlichen und aufgrund seiner Alltäglichkeit Vertrauten der sinnlichen Einzelerscheinung" (p.17). She investigates two recent approaches to this phenomenon, by Bernd Effe and Graham Zanker. Ironically enough, both recognize the same quality in Hellenistic poetry, and attribute it to the distance--temporally and geographically--of Alexandrian poets to their Greek predecessors and the myths of ancient Greece, but they arrive at diametrically opposed conclusions about its function. Whereas Effe3 holds that Alexandrian poets emphasize the everyday and low to underline the "ironische Distanz" from outdated heroic myths, Zanker4 rather explains this kind of realism as an attempt to bridge the distance from these same myths. O. finds both explanations unsatisfactory and is unwilling to admit that the observed realism should always have the same function. She prefers to see it as a "Grundkonstante...die sich möglicherweise gar nicht so sehr bewusstem Gestaltungswillen, sondern vielmehr einer gewissen geistigen Grundhaltung verdankt, als deren Ausfluss sie in Erscheinung tritt." (p.28) Hence, she
proposes to turn to contemporary texts in which this "geistige Grundhaltung" is most clearly expressed, the treatises of the Stoa and the Kepos, which both treat "sinnliche Evidenz" (ἐνάργεια) in contexts of physics and epistemology. This term, ἐνάργεια, has been adopted by literary critics of the Hellenistic and Roman age to describe the stylistic virtue of vividness. For this reason O. announces that she will investigate continuities between philosophical and critical usage of the term and finally apply her findings to poetry. Of itself this reads like a sound proposal, but Hellenistic poetical realism is really more than just ἐνάργεια. It is also characterized by interest in science and the comically low. The first of these does not necessarily enrich a poem with vividness (think e.g. of the debated technical-anatomical description of where exactly Eros' arrow strikes Medea's neck in Arg. 3.762-765, relying upon medical findings rather than sensory experience). The second, lowness or banality (especially in heroic contexts), may well achieve ἐνάργεια, but this does not explain its near exclusivity to Hellenistic poetry. These are issues the book does not address.

Chapter II (Philosophie, p. 31-66) discusses physics of the Epicureans and the Stoa and the epistemology of both philosophical schools as well as that of the New Academy. As the Stoa and Kepos are essentially materialist philosophies, their confidence in the information we receive from our senses is no surprise. As O. shows, Epicurus initially introduced the term ἐνάργεια in a general sense to refer to sensory experience, but besides employs it in a more specific way to indicate that particular quality of sensory experience that makes us accept it as true: its **evidential** quality. Whereas Epicureans nevertheless express some qualms as to the ability of the human mind to draw true conclusions from such impressions, the Stoa seems confident that under the right circumstances, and unopposed by contrary indications (a caveat taken over from the Skeptics of the New Academy), sensory impressions practically always lead to true and inescapable images of reality (καταληκτικὴ φαντασία). What this (somewhat over-detailed) section of the book thus underlines is that the basic Hellenistic philosophical approach to sensory experiences is materialist: the evidence that our senses gather is accorded great importance and reliability.

Chapter III (Literaturkritik und Rhetorik) examines how the philosophical terms ἐνάργεια and φαντασία were adopted and adapted by ancient literary criticism. O. investigates (and discards) the possibility that ἐνάργεια in Aristotle's rhetorical works is a misreading of, or has completely the same meaning as ἐνάργεια. The main discussion concentrates on the Greek side on Demetrius' περὶ ἑρμενείας and Pseudo-Longinus' περὶ ὕψους, and on the Latin side on various works of Cicero (who is mainly discussed as the rhetorician who translates the Greek terms into Latin) and on Quintilian's *Institutiones oratoria*. Balancing manifold and formally different examples from these four authors, O. arrives at three criteria that define ἐνάργεια: Sinnenbezogenheit (relation to the senses); Detailfreudigkeit (love of detail) and Emotionalität (emotionality) (p.128-129). She concludes that ἐνάργεια's main function is making a story more convincing by giving the reader/hearer the impression that he is witnessing events (particularly important for rhetorical practice). Of course this fits well with the reliability accorded to sensory impressions in Hellenistic epistemology.

So far so good, but now for the connection with Hellenistic poetry. In this respect, the chapter is problematic. In the first place, it remains implicit what the discussion of Aristotle's use of ἐνάργεια/ἐνάργεια contributes to the argument. Is the point to be made that ἐνάργεια first occurs in Hellenistic critical texts, and thus is a typically Hellenistic preoccupation? Perhaps; however, as the discussion shows and O. herself admits, Aristotle, while using different phrasing, does address very similar issues. So, even if the word ἐνάργεια is not found before the Hellenistic era, this does not automatically mean that the phenomenon was not recognized and appreciated in poetry and rhetoric. O. herself seems aware of another, related problem, for she remarks:

Gegen die Behauptung, ἐνάργεια bezeichne das, was heute unter dem hellenistischen Realismus verstanden wird, könnte eingewandt werden dass die Beispiele, welche von den Literaturkritikern angeführt werden, nicht den hellenistischen Schriftstellern entstammen, sondern teils den Klassikern (wie...
etwa Homer und Pindar) entnommen sind, teils auch von persönlichem Geschmack zeugen. Dieser Einwand lässt sich meines Erachtens entkräften, wenn man in Rechnung stellt, dass die Literaturkritiker...die ältere Dichtung...als mustergültig und in diesem Sinne verpflichtend ansehen, gleichwohl aber, als Kinder ihrer Zeit, des Hellenismus, doch bestimmte, dem Zeitgeschmack entsprungene Vorlieben haben, welche sie an ältere Dichtung herantragen. (p.68)

Yet, this proposition is questionable. Longinus or Quintilian are perfectly able to name Hellenistic poets as examples of particular stylistic traits. Indeed, it is well-known--although O. neglects to mention it--that Longinus actually damns Apollonius and Theocritus with faint praise, comparing them negatively to Homer (περὶ ὕψους 33.4-5). He might therefore be looking for another kind of realism altogether, and thus Longinus might not be the right source by which to judge the stylistic preoccupations of early Hellenistic poets. Indeed, the question presents itself whether "the Hellenistic era" (which O. dates from Alexander to Actium) was a cultural and intellectual continuum to such a degree that a text that--depending on its dating--could be up to 400 years younger than the poets of the early third century BC may be used without any problems as evidence for the intellectual preoccupations of these poets.

We may moreover note that not all examples of ἐνάργεια quoted in the various treatises discussed in this chapter resemble the peculiar type of realism ("the everyday, low and familiar") that Hellenistic poetry incorporates. Longinus' examples from Euripides' Orestes 255-257 and Phaethon (fr. 779 Kannicht) for instance (pp. 97-99), illustrate how a poet should make his audience directly envisage the horrific (the Furies) and the miraculous (a ride in the chariot of the Sun), but their general effect is definitely not that of the everyday, familiar or low. Of course there are counterexamples. A passage strikingly akin to the realism found in Hellenistic poetry is discussed by Quintilian (Quint. inst. 6, 2, 32= Aeneis 9, 476): Euryalus' mother, after hearing of her son's death, drops her spindle, as if it were struck out of her hand (p.110-111). Although such different types of realism are quoted, the book leaves unanswered why the "everyday and the low" should be so prominent in Hellenistic poetry in contrast to what we mostly find in older poetry.

Chapter IV (Dichtung) compares by way of example two passages from Hellenistic poetry, Theocritus' Idyll 24 (Herakliskos) and Apollonius Arg. 1.721-768 (Jason's cloak), to what might be called their archaic counterparts, Pindar Nemean 1 and Iliad 18.468-608 (the Shield of Achilles) respectively. This is a very good chapter. O. demonstrates a great talent for interpretation, and her comparisons effectively bring to light that Theocritus and Apollonius are much more preoccupied with presenting an object or setting a scene in all its visual detail before the eyes of the readers than Pindar and Homer (in the passages she has selected). The fact that visualization of Achilles'shield as a realistic object is impossible is usefully contrasted with Apollonius' care to ensure that the pictorial program on Jason's cloak may be imagined in detail, including plausible division on the fabric. O.'s discussion of realism in Theocritus 24 is attractive and convincing. She sees the realism as highlighting and thus simultaneously making more miraculous and more real the superhuman qualities of what is otherwise convincingly represented as a ten-months-old infant. I would have liked to see more examples of O.'s interpretation of Hellenistic poetry; they might have strengthened her argument.

In the end, does the book achieve the goals that the author has set herself at the outset? That ἐνάργεια is a key feature of Hellenistic philosophy and of Hellenistic and Imperial literary criticism has indeed been shown. That this--to some extent--finds a parallel in the poetry of the early Hellenistic era seems plausible. But especially the question why the realism of the early Hellenistic poets so often concentrates in particular on the everyday low and familiar--or on the esoteric details of scientific findings--is in my view not satisfactorily answered. Ἐνάργεια can, as many examples quoted in chapter IIII show, also take entirely different forms. It seems a pity that the author has not wished to complicate her argument.
with an investigation of this issue, in what is otherwise an interesting and valuable contribution to Hellenistic scholarship.

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Notes:

2. O. prefers this to "Hellenistic"; of itself this is unproblematic, but what did puzzle me was the fact that she states that "alexandrinisch" (and "Alexandrian") derives from Alexander the monarch rather than from Alexandria the city (p. 11, again p.13). The latter would seem to be the normal derivation, see e.g. *Der Neue Pauly s.v. alexandrinisch*.