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Publication

Homer on Kithairon : Negotiating Narrative and Dramatic Representation in Euripides' Bacchae

JournalArticle (Originalarbeit in einer wissenschaftlichen Zeitschrift)

ID 1547720

Author(s) Lämmle, Rebecca; Scheidegger Lämmle, Cédric

Author(s) at UniBasel [Scheidegger Lämmle, Cédric](#) ; [Lämmle, Rebecca](#) ;

Year 2013

Title Homer on Kithairon : Negotiating Narrative and Dramatic Representation in Euripides' Bacchae

Journal The classical journal

Volume 108

Number 2

Pages / Article-Number 129-158

This paper analyzes the Bacchae against the backdrop of ancient poetic theory which has recognized the close relations between tragedy and Homeric epic and singled out tragic messenger-speeches as the prime point of contact between them. The second messenger-speech, we argue, explores the tension between dramatic and narrative representation: highly dramatic in its structure, it encompasses complex allusions to Iliad 14 and Odyssey 6 which serve specific purposes but also epitomize the whole of Homeric epic. Thus, Euripides puts on display both the Homeric pedigree of tragedy and the interdependence of acting and telling in drama.

Publisher University of Chicago Press

ISSN/ISBN 0009-8353

edoc-URL <http://edoc.unibas.ch/dok/A6083541>

Full Text on edoc No;

Digital Object Identifier DOI 10.5184/classicalj.108.2.0129

ISI-Number WOS:000209809900001

Document type (ISI) Article