

OPPIAN'S *HALIEUTICA*

Oppian's *Halieutica* is a dazzling five-book Greek didactic poem about the sea and its wily, chaotic inhabitants. This book offers the first sustained reading of the poem as a didactic epic that meditates on the place of human beings within the cosmos at large, and on the lessons we can learn from fish. Using a combination of close reading and wider interpretative lenses, this book examines the literary texture and cultural relevance of the *Halieutica* by analysing its sophisticated refraction of earlier literary-critical theories and hexameter traditions, its commentary on human–animal relations, and its contribution to imperial Greek literary, political, and cultural debates. The book demonstrates the importance and cultural centrality of this understudied Greek didactic epic; it is written for students and scholars of imperial Greek literature and culture (including the ancient novel), ancient heroic and didactic epics, and those interested in human–animal relations in the ancient world.

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Charting a Didactic Epic

EMILY KNEEBONE

University of Nottingham



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The world is a Sea in many respects and assimilations . . . It is a Sea, if we consider the Inhabitants. In the Sea, the greater fish devoure the lesse; and so doe the men of this world too.

John Donne, sermon preached at The Hague
(19 December 1619)

There isn't any symbolism. The sea is the sea. The old man is an old man. The boy is a boy and the fish is a fish. The sharks are all sharks no better and no worse. All the symbolism that people say is shit. What goes beyond is what you see beyond when you know. A writer should always know too much.

Ernest Hemingway, letter to Bernard Berenson on
The Old Man and the Sea
(13 September 1952)

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[More Information](#)

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>page xi</i>
Introduction: On Fishing	I
PART I DIDACTIC POETRY	23
1 Didactic Epic	25
2 Knowledge and Pleasure	44
3 Mapping the Sea	83
PART II MORALITY AT SEA	111
4 Guile	113
5 Greed	145
6 Lust	167
PART III HUMANS AND ANIMALS	207
7 Epic Similes	209
8 Analogical Animals	252
9 Humans and Other Animals	300

x	<i>Contents</i>	
PART IV THE WORLD IS A SEA		343
IO Locating Monsters		345
II An Empire of Fish		388
<i>Bibliography</i>		412
<i>Subject Index</i>		450
<i>Index Locorum</i>		454

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