



Homer and the Politics of Authority in Renaissance France (Classical Presences)

Marc Bizer

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At a time when the French monarchy traced its origins back to ancient Troy, Homeric epic was fated to play a significant political role. Homer came to Renaissance France packaged with an ancient interpretive tradition that made him an authority on all matters but also distinctly separate from Virgil and the *Aeneid*, rival Italy's foundational myth. Thus, once French humanists learned to read Homer in Greek, they quickly began putting him in the service of their king in order to teach him prudence and amplify his authority.

Homer and the Politics of Authority in Renaissance France provides a stimulating perspective on how Homeric authority went from being used by humanists in the role of royal counselors to being exploited by both monarchical and anti-monarchical forces in the service of ideologies, most especially in the Wars of Religion (1562-1598). In turn, French writers of the period transitioned from being monarchical advisors to stirring crowds as actors on the larger political stage. In this study, Marc Bizer not only analyzes a number of works by key authors and humanists—including Michel de Montaigne, Joachim du Bellay, Guillaume Budé, and Jean Dorat, among others—but also examines their poetry, art, pamphlets, and plays. Although there have been several studies of the Homeric legacy in western literature and even in early modern French literature, none has analyzed the political role that Homer played in sixteenth-century France for this circle of important writers. The captivating results of this approach to the post-classical usage of Homer will appeal not only to historians and literary scholars, but also to political scientists, classicists, and art historians.



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