

**REVIEWS**

**8.R.6 (2007): Kadri NOVIKOV**

Hägg, Tomas (2004) *Parthenope: selected studies in Ancient Greek fiction (1969-2004)*. Edited by Lars Boje Mortensen & Tormod Eide. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press. 493 p. ISBN 87-7289-907-7.

This collection of articles consists of a memoir, where Tomas Hägg gives an overview about his research topics in the field of Greek literature and language, 16 articles dealing with different aspects of ancient Greek fiction, and seven reviews of books related to this subject.

Under the section *A Hellenistic Philosophical Novel*, the *Life of Aesop* as a contemporary confirmation of conventional values of the fourth century BC and of the early imperial period is discussed, especially the part of Aesop as a slave of a philosopher, Xanthus. An interesting conclusion is that Xanthus' favourable attitude toward women may reflect the common mentality in the Hellenistic world, because Xanthus and his wife do not conform to the literary-conventional roles played by the philosopher and his wife, and their affectionate feelings toward each other are not necessary for the plot. The parody of intellectuals and philosophers may reflect the opinion of ordinary people about the subjects of deliberation among philosophers or sophists. Hägg also proposes that this part of the *Life* must have been written by an educated man probably to the more simple-minded audience, but not necessarily for slaves. For a person less acquainted with this work, it was quite interesting to learn about the composition of the book – which parts can be ascribed as legendary material, which parts have been added later, which literary examples have been used (e.g. the Assyrian *Book of Ahiqar*, New Comedy), etc.

Chariton's *Callirhoe* as an early ideal novel is examined from four different points of view. First, Hägg discusses the historicity of the novel. As there is still no "authoritative definition" of the term *historical novel*, he offers his own definition: The typical historical novel "is set in a period at least one or two generations anterior to that of the author, communicating a sense of the past as past; it is centered on fictitious characters, but puts on stage as well, mingling with these, one or several figures known from history; enacted in a realistic geographical setting, it describes the effects upon the fortunes of the characters of (a succession of) real historical events; it is – or gives the impression of being – true, as far as the historical framework is concerned" (p. 81). Trying to fit several ancient works into this definition, he finds that Chariton's *Callirhoe* and the romance of *Parthenope* are the best candidates. Analyzing other "ideal novels," Hägg concludes that only Heliodorus' *Aithiopica* seeks the historical probability but cannot be called "historical".

One of the most interesting articles in this collection concerns orality, literacy, and readership of the early Greek novels. In Hägg's opinion, the ideal Greek novel is a typical product of a literate society. On the basis of the works by Xenophon of Ephesus and Chariton, he infers that the authors must have known other authors, quoting and imitating their style as if writing with another book in front of them. As for the readership, Hägg seems to concur

with B. E. Perry's opinion that the novel in late Hellenism filled the place of mystery cults and moral philosophy within the literary system. The readers for this new genre should be searched from the clergymen and tradesmen, the *nouveaux riches*, and particularly among the literate women of this next-to-elite class. Hägg discusses in length the possibilities that the novels were actually meant for broader audience than those who could read (i.e. for lower social classes for reading out loud). Chariton could have had several audiences in mind, as the novel could have been enjoyed both by highly literate readers and by illiterate listeners. Analyzing evidence of the actual readership (references in other authors, papyrus fragments, role of the heroines in novels, the narrative technique), Hägg shows the probability of male as well as female readership and supports the fact that novels also were delivered orally.

Two other articles on Chariton's novel concern different ways of introducing characters into action and the usage, role, and interpretation of epiphany in Greek novels, especially in Chariton's *Callirhoe* — these are used mainly to bring out the divine beauty of heroines (as already in Homeric epics), or to anticipate the future events; the heroines are believed to be goddesses mainly by people belonging to the lower social classes.

In the first article about the *Ephesiaca* of Xenophon Ephesius, Hägg quite convincingly confutes most of the arguments brought by K. Bürger in favour of the hypothesis that the extant novel is really an epitome — a shortened version of the original work. He gives explanations of his own for the peculiarities of the narrative style of Xenophon and the division into books. He also discusses the possibilities of abbreviation in other ancient fictitious texts / texts of ancient popular fiction.

In the second article of this section, Hägg has researched at length the possible background of naming the characters in Xenophon's novel. Most of the names used in this novel are uncommon or even non-existent in the epigraphical material and are supposedly used rather to describe persons by appearance or character (except for the most frequently used names, which might have lost the etymological meaning and are used because they were near at hand). It seems that Xenophon took no mythological or historical figures as an example for his names; only the name of a physician, Eudoxos, could have been taken over from a real historical physician. Xenophon's names are not unrealistic, though — all his names were used in daily life (some of them as geographical names!). Only the most important characters have a significant name; other names seem to have been chosen quite randomly, probably for the purpose to make the impression of realism upon the audience.

In the fourth part of the collection, Hägg discusses the *Parthenope Romance* and the oriental reception of the ideal novel. First, he compares some of the Christian martyrdoms with Greek novels, concluding that they have similar motifs especially with the early non-sophistic novels (like Chariton's). More thoroughly he analyzes the Coptic martyr story about a young maiden Parthenope (Bartānūbā in Arabic) and the remains of an early novel called *Parthenope and Metiochus* (or *Parthenope Romance*). There seem to be great similarities between those two stories (starting with the name of the heroine), which indicate that the author of the Parthenope martyrdom had this particular Greek novel before his eyes.

The next two articles are related to an 11th-century Persian verse-romance *Vāmiq and 'Adharā*. Hägg deliberates over the possibilities of reconstructing part of the *Parthenope Romance* (next to historical facts) after a scene in the Persian version, concluding that we may get information about the content and events of the original Greek romance, but we cannot get any help restoring the text word-by-word. The Persian verse-romance *Vāmiq and 'Adharā* also indicates the possible translations of the *Parthenope Romance* — it appeared in Persian after Pahlavi and Arabic, maybe also Syriac versions (as most of the Greek literature passed into Arabic through Syriac versions). It is possible that the Persian version is also an adaptation of the above-mentioned Christian martyrdom. The influence of Greek novels (regarding narrative pattern, topics, style, rhetorical devices), particularly the early non-sophistic novels, can be seen for instance also in the *Arabian Nights*.

The last article of this section compares the traditional version of the myth about Hermes as the inventor of the lyre (as in the Homeric *Hymn to Hermes*) and the version in the *Vāmiq and 'Adharā*. The latter version differs from the “orthodox” one, although following it quite closely, in three aspects: Hermes is depicted as a grown-up; he finds a dead tortoise or its shell with sinews (instead of killing or sacrificing it); and he gets help from a mortal. This version seems more logical, and Hägg suggests it may have been older than the one in the *Hymn*, which tries to combine two myths, the story of the birth of Hermes and the invention of the lyre.

The collection also contains an article on the *Aithiopica* of Heliodorus, where Hägg has analyzed the description of Meroe (what we today call Nubia, contemporary Sudan) in the novel, discussing the reflection of reality (although Heliodorus has filled most of the novel with fictitious descriptions, he finds traces of some of the customs and historical facts known about this region) and trying to detect the literary and historical sources of the author.

The last section of articles deals with the afterlife of Philostratos' work *Life of Apollonios of Tyana*. First, Hägg examines the different uses of Apollonios, a Pythagorean sage, in the work of Philostratos and in the lost pamphlet of Sossianus Hierocles, who was one of the leaders of the “Great Persecution” of Christians in the 4th-century Roman Empire. Hierocles elevated Apollonios to the status of counter-Christ, providing an example for posterity.

In the second article in this part, Hägg discusses the work *Contra Hieroclem* (i.e. against Sossianus Hierocles mentioned above) ascribed to Eusebios. He deliberates over the title of the work and, after viewing the problems with date and style, proposes the possibility that it is actually not Eusebios' work at all.

The third article takes *The Life of Apollonios* as a proof of Photius' working style while composing *Bibliotheca*. Hägg reaches the plausible conclusion that although Photius wrote the summaries of other works relying to his memory, he could not have given the exact stylistic examples from memory but rather copied them directly from another book.

The final article reveals four pages of Richard Bentley's unfinished edition of Apollonios and discusses why he left it unpublished.

This collection of articles is an excellent example of the great contribution Tomas Hägg has made to the studies of Greek literature and language (also seen from the long list of publications given at the end of his *Memoir*). He is a good example of a classical scholar who has not confined himself with the primary interest in the narrative technique of Greek novels, but has had volition to also investigate other branches of classical studies. Hence, he has been able to discuss thoroughly the ancient Greek fiction from so many different aspects in articles filled with thoroughly considered and logically reasoned arguments.