

GENDER IN THE NOVEL

K. HAYNES: *Fashioning the Feminine in the Greek Novel*. Pp. viii + 214. London and New York: Routledge, 2003. Paper, £15.99. ISBN: 0-415-26210-0 (0-415-26209-7 hbk).

There is much to admire in H.'s book. Noting that little has been written on women and the feminine in the Greek novel since Egger's groundbreaking dissertation (1990), H. embarks on a systematic study of the construction of the feminine in the novels. What distinguishes H.'s book from other scholarship is her approach, which she calls 'eclectic pluralism, with an often implicit emphasis on historicist methodologies' (p. 10). What this means is that H. starts with the modernist perspective that acknowledges that the complexity of any given topic makes it difficult to comprehend through one theoretical perspective alone (which approach tends to characterize much of classical scholarship). H. cautiously rejects the postmodern position that there is no meta-narrative, no overall 'point' to be made, and seeks to provide a dimensional analysis of the feminine by approaching her topic from a number of perspectives, such as feminist, psychoanalytical, anthropological, psychological, socio-historical, and literary critical. H.'s interdisciplinary orientation provides stimulating reading but is predictably difficult for her to maintain evenly. Nevertheless, this book is the new standard against which scholars in the future will pitch their ideas.

Working from a position analogous to the anthropological one that gender is socially constructed, wherein gender categories are mutually constituted, H. contends that a thorough study of the feminine in the Greek novel demands attention to male as well as female characters. She structures her book accordingly. In Chapter 1, after arguing that the novels were not primarily written for a female readership, H. then aims to 'relate gender patterns to larger social structures' taking into account ethnicity, class and sexual orientation. In deploying her theoretical arsenal, H. conscientiously observes contextual propriety. For instance, H. is wary of the feminist strategy that seeks to uncover women's true experience, given that the novel texts are male authored and (mostly) male directed. H. resists interpretations that posit a singular insight applied systematically, and instead shows how such readings reveal only partial truths.

In her second chapter, to situate the Greek novel in its literary context, H. traces through classical literature Zeitlin's observation that women in ancient literature seldom act for themselves, suggesting that literary representations of women may say more about male self-positioning and self-definition than about reality experienced by women. H. then asserts that novelistic heroines' social agility signifies not the end of the status quo but a subtle shifting of emphasis from social to personal, a very astute observation. In Chapter 3 she develops this last idea, that the feminine is 'emblematic of the concerns of the dominant social group'. Thus chastity and any power associated with it are abstracted from the female body and attached instead to the sign of femininity. Therefore she perceptively suggests that the debate on readership be recast in terms of 'the competing claims of patriarchal and personal values', a struggle embodied by the heroine.

In Chapter 4 H. notes the general inferiority and weakness of the hero in comparison with the heroine in terms of aggressiveness, use of rhetoric, emotional force, and viability in social situations. She explains this phenomenon variously, discerning a general unease in representation of the hero, and acknowledges that the strength of the heroine problematizes the hero's masculinity. In Chapter 5 H. seeks to

enrich her study by looking for ‘normative attitudes to female behavioral patterns’ in the portrayals of minor female characters with respect to age, class and nationality. What she finds supports her suspicion that Greek novels were not designed for a female readership: their negative or unattractive depictions bespeak male anxieties about female power. H.’s analysis of the portrayal of minor male characters in Chapter 6 complements her previous findings. In these minor characters the primacy of the reasoned, mature, intelligent male suggests the persona of the upper class male. H. closes this chapter with an intriguing suggestion, that hostile male groups such as brigands and pirates symbolize the Romans.

In conclusion, H. examines the phenomena of marriage and romantic love as both maintenance and subversion of the social order. *Gamos* is privileged over *autoekdosis*, though the heroines clearly are stronger than heroes and are responsible for holding relationships together. As a parting idea, H. proposes that gender relations in the Greek novel reflect the Greek élite’s sense of cultural superiority to Romans and its antagonism toward the Roman occupation, wherein the Greek heroine represents her people and her victory over barbarian assaults, the survival of Greek culture.

Though I liked this book very much, bringing the discussion of gender in the Greek novel forward thirteen years in a single bound has its flaws. H.’s methodology is very refreshing and ambitious; she wields her theories dexterously and is articulate about their utility and limitations. Nevertheless she creates for herself an arena of conflicting and competing approaches in which she constantly feels the need to qualify her statements and redefine her assumptions, to the point of tedium. Because she employs so many theories and draws comparisons from all of classical literature as well as Victorian novels in only 160 pages of text, H. tends to be thin on examples and on developing her own theoretical insights—for instance, on p. 148 the discussion shifts from Freudian to sociological to literary-critical analysis. That said, her study is conceptually more complete than those of Perkins (1994) and Cooper (1996). The reader is left wanting more, but this demonstrates the fertility of this field of inquiry.

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THE RECEPTION OF SEXTUS

L. FLORIDI: *Sextus Empiricus. The Transmission and Recovery of Pyrrhonism*. Pp. xvi + 150. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. Cased, £35. ISBN: 0-19-514671-9.

This is, in truth, a rather odd book, though by no means without interest. The oddness is explained by its author in the preface. It developed originally, it seems, out of a volume that had been commissioned on Sextus Empiricus by the editorial board of the *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum*, which thus would properly involve just a ‘catalogue raisonné’ of the translations of, and commentaries on, Sextus in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. This project was abandoned by the board for reasons left obscure, and, happily, taken up by the editorial board for monographs of the American Philological Association, which has accordingly published it in association with OUP.

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