

AITKEN (E.B.) and MACLEAN (J.K.B.) *Eds.*  
**Philostratus's *Heroikos*. Religion and Cultural Identity in the Third Century C.E.** (Writings from the Greco-Roman World 6). Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004. Pp xxxiv + 408. \$49.95 (pbk: SBL), 1589830911; \$139/€187 (hbk: Brill), 9004130902.

Philostratus' short dialogue *Heroikos* has finally obtained the degree of scholarly interest it deserves. This volume brings together 18 papers on various aspects of this work. Most of them originated in a 2001 conference at Harvard Divinity School; two papers had previously been published. Space does not permit me to summarize all the contributions here; I will concentrate on what I found most noteworthy.

Philostratus's dialogue is a curious mixture: on the one hand, it is a clever text typical of the Second Sophistic, replete with literary quotations and allusions and preoccupied with matters of culture and tradition. On the other hand, it seems to convey a serious religious and moral message by narrating the story of a conversion. Hence, scholars have wondered, in T. Whitmarsh's words, 'Is this text a pious homage, or a sophistic joke?' (249). Most interpreters have opted for one side, and either disregarded the religious implications or concentrated on them exclusively. This volume marks an important step because it brings together papers from both perspectives.

From the 'religious' side, a number of papers analyse the Classical antecedents of hero cult and hero worship as described in the *Heroikos*. C.O. Pache (3-24) shows that Philostratus uses the terminology and concepts of the Classical period to describe the cult of Protesilaos. C. Dué and G. Nagy (49-73) present their attempt to use the *Heroikos* as a textbook for an introductory course on Greek heroes. Burkert's article (99-123; first published in *CQ* (1970) and reprinted in 2000, so it is hard to see why it had to be reprinted again) highlights the connections between the Lemnian fire ritual described in *Her.* 53.5-7 and myth, and it is a good illustration of the dangers of this anthropological approach: there is hardly a paragraph without its share of 'must have', 'possibly' or 'surely'.

Other contributions set Philostratus in the religious context of his own period, especially in relation to emerging Christianity. J.K.B. Maclean (195-218) argues that there are significant parallels between Christianity as it is depicted in the gospel of John and hero cult as described in the *Heroikos*. J.C. Skedros (181-93) analyses parallels between popular Christian practices of the third and fourth centuries and the cult of Protesilaos. S.E. Alcock, in a refreshing paper (159-68), demonstrates that the *Heroikos* belongs to a period where reconstructions of Classical cult and culture were taking place everywhere.

Other scholars concentrate on the historical setting and the literary technique of the dialogue. The papers by S. Follet (221-35) and T. Whitmarsh (237-49) can be

read as companion pieces: Follet gives a thorough review of the epigraphical and geographical reality behind Philostratus' text; Whitmarsh focuses on its imaginary landscape and its construction of space and marginality as a repository of identity. E. Aitken (267-84) and M.R. Shayegan (285-315) look at the historical context of the dialogue. Aitken claims that the dubious status of the Phoenician interlocutor can be traced back to the fact that the Severan dynasty was considered, at least by some contemporaries, to be Phoenician. Shayegan reads the *Heroikos* as a literary space to negotiate the tensions between Severus Alexander's claim to be Alexander the Great's successor and his defensive military policy in the East, and he makes a convincing argument for saying that the text was probably written after the emperor's death, as a posthumous justification. F. Mestre (127-41) and J. Rusten (143-58) explore the ways in which Philostratus engages with the literary tradition: Mestre shows that the dialogue's 'corrections' of the Homeric epics do not undermine Homer's authority; Rusten analyses the relation between the *Heroikos* and Pausanias.

Overall, the book could have been a good deal shorter. There is rather too much plot summary, and a number of articles recapitulate the results of previous scholarship at great length. The article by H.D. Betz is summarized several times despite the fact that it is reprinted in the volume. Fortunately, the editors have provided a consolidated bibliography for all contributions and two indices. Production standards are high; I have spotted only a few insignificant misprints. My only quibble: the Greek typeface is an eyesore.

In the end, then, a somewhat mixed appraisal: while it is true that scholars with different backgrounds and different methodologies worked together for the conference and for the volume under review, one gets the impression that no real exchange took place; both 'religious' and 'literary' interpreters remained entrenched in their respective camps. Which side of the debate readers find more fruitful will largely be a matter of taste. However, I had the distinct impression that the 'literary' and historical analyses were more willing to come to grips with the text's multifaceted, Protean, sometimes ambiguous nature.

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MORALES (H.) **Vision and Narrative in Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon*.** Cambridge UP, 2004. Pp. xiii + 270, illus. £45. 0521642647.

This book is an important contribution to our understanding not only of *Leucippe and Clitophon* but also of ancient Greek novels in general, whose narrative strategies can be linked to, and decoded from, a complex visualistic discourse both within and outside the texts. Key elements of this poetics of vision and the novels' sophisticated design are ekphrastic descriptions,

theatrical scenes, modes of viewing, and the visual impact of the female heroine, which M. discusses in four chapters. All of them contain a series of stimulating close readings combined with a critical discussion of previous narratological approaches to the text, especially those by Stephen Nimis and Shady Bartsch.

After a short introduction to the problems of authorship and chronology of the novel, ch.1 starts with an overview of ancient concepts of vision and visuality focusing on the art (Antioch-mosaic) and literature (Plutarch and Lucian) of the Second Sophistic. A brief treatment of modern theories on visuality (29-35) mainly serves to show how they differ from ancient visual concepts, and to highlight their characteristics. In ch.2, entitled 'Readers and reading', different modes of intratextual exegetic readings are discussed, focusing particularly on their potential or intended impact on the reader. M.'s analysis begins with the introductory ekphrasis of the Europa-painting, which she takes as proleptic not so much in terms of content but rather in terms of interpretative modes: the different approaches to this painting presented in the two 'readings' of the unnamed first narrator and Clitophon (1.4.2-3) indicate its inherent ambivalence and thus point to the instability of the text as a whole, which is polyphonic insofar as it tells different stories at the same time to different readers both within and outside the text. Similarly, other potential 'programmatic' markers, such as the allusions to Plato's *Phaedrus*, do not pave the way for a specific philosophical reading, but are part of a 'swarm of narratives' (60) and do not serve as coherent ideologies.

Ch.3 mainly tackles the question of digressions. With regard to visual digressions such as Clitophon's 'impressionistic' (102) description of Alexandria at the beginning of Book 5 (1.1-5), M. stresses the importance of the viewer's personal characterization as a romantic and emotionally unsatisfied spectator. Furthermore, digressions become a means of foreshadowing suspense since they force the reader to pause unwillingly – as is the case with the many *sententiae* – or provoke his/her desire to learn what comes next and thus generate questions (mainly about emotional and sexual aspects) which the text deliberately does not answer. Hence, certain parts of the untold erotic narrative are left for the reader to speculate about or to supplement. The novel's abrupt and somewhat open ending – we do not learn how and why Clitophon left Byzantium and met the unnamed first narrator in Sidon – offers M. the final proof of the intended 'lack of closure' (148) or 'pattern of frustrated knowledge' (229) that the novel imposes on its readers. However, as too much frustration could also lead to an abrupt ending of the process of reading itself, M. should have given more weight to the question of whether the reader distances him/herself from such a narrator as well as to the strategies of keeping him/her reading. The most obvious strategy is surely the circular structure of the novel, which – read chronologically – ends exactly where it started, namely with the

encounter of the two narrators in Sidon. Thus, the reader is invited to re-read *Leucippe and Clitophon*. The second reading, however, will be dominated by the desire to fill in the gaps in his/her own imagination encountered in the first reading.

In her final chapter, M. expands on her observation of the gendering function of the *sententiae*, through which 'androcentric' values and norms are expressed. In addition, gaze and speech are presented as important means of constructing gender: whereas the male characters actively and deliberately control their gaze and language, the female heroine remains passive and is frequently violated in speech and through vision. What prevents M. from a misogynous overall reading of the text, and what opens the door for feminism, is the figure of Melite, who herself is looking at male beauty and who has been looked at carefully in this first and thought-provoking monograph on Achilles Tatius.

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JAMES (A.) *Trans. and ed. Quintus of Smyrna. The Trojan Epic. Posthomeric.* Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 2004. Pp. xl + 365. £33.50. 0801879655.

Quintus' *Trojan Epic*, which covers in Homerizing style the events set between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, has long been overlooked as a derivative and imitative work. The recent rise of scholarly interest in later Greek literature and issues of reception and imitation calls for lesser known works to be made accessible to a wider readership. This is what James has accomplished in this important contribution, which comprises the following sections: introduction with select bibliography (xi-xl); verse translation (3-237); critical summary (239-65); commentary (267-347); and index of names (349-65).

In an informative introduction J. offers background material for the lost Cycle and the Homeric epics before assigning a place, date and context for Quintus' *Trojan Epic*. He discusses Quintus' debt to Homer for technical and literary aspects of the epic, and deals with criticism directed against its episodic nature. The vexed question of influence from Latin literature is not raised here, as J. refers the readers to the commentary for Quintus' use of sources. The introduction initially assumes little background knowledge of Homeric studies and the epic tradition; it becomes more demanding with the intricate problem of Quintus' dates. (J. opts for the second half of the third century AD (xxi) after the arguments presented in his joint commentary with the late Kevin Lee on Book 5 (Leiden 2000).)

Unlike the two previous English translations of the *Trojan Epic* – Way's Loeb blank verse translation (1913) and Combellack's prose translation (Oklahoma 1968), which is out of print – J. relies on Vian's authoritative text (Paris 1963-9), comparing, when necessary,