

BOOK REVIEW

The Romance Between Greece and the East. Edited by TIM WHITMARSH AND STUART THOMSON. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013. Pp. xiv + 396. Hardcover, \$110.00. ISBN 978-1-107-03824-0.

This collection of 20 essays examines the development of romantic prose, or “novel-like texts”, and their relationship to various eastern cultures. Tim Whitmarsh opens with an introductory essay reviewing past scholarship on the origins of the Greek novel dating back the 19th C and the seminal work of Erwin Rohde.

Part I consists of five papers examining the connections between Greek Romance and Egyptian literature. Ian Rutherford discusses the possible influences of Egyptian prose narratives on the origins of the novel, giving an overview of the relevant texts from the 3rd millennium up to the Hellenistic and Roman periods. He surveys the various attempts by modern scholars to uncover and analyze any possible links between the two bodies of material and argues that influence may have run in both directions, although ultimately concluding that any relationship between the two remains unclear.

John Dillery analyzes Manetho’s use of Greek and Egyptian elements in his *Aegyptiaca*, including the blending of Egyptian-style chronography and Herodotean narrative. He pays particular attention to the story of Sethos and Harmais (FGrH 609 F9) and the two Hyskos narratives (F8 and F10), the latter for their use of Egyptian *Königsnovelle* and *Chaosbeschreibung*. Kim Ryholt offers a fascinating paper on the *imitatio* of Alexander in Egyptian literature of the Hellenistic and Roman periods. His analysis of the *Bentresh Story* is particularly appealing.

Stephanie West examines the relationship between the Demotic text of *Myth of the Sun’s Eye* and its Greek translation, considering its additional connections to fables found in Aesop. Susan Stephens rounds out the section with a paper on Egyptian representation in Greek fiction, drawing on a large selection of materials such as Apuleus, Plutarch, Josephus, and the *Alexander Romance*.

Part II covers the literature of Mesopotamia and Iran. Johannes Haubold argues that Berossus reacted to Greek prose fiction and ‘strategically employed

romance-like registers to engage his Greek audience' (106). He astutely notes that Berossus was confronting his Greek predecessors, particularly Ctesias, while serving his Greek readership's preconceptions about the East.

Stephanie Dalley provides an intriguing paper on the historical foundations for the Greek romances on Semiramis, particularly the fragmentary novel *Ninus and Semiramis*, and how the stories with an Assyrian background differed in the novels of the Hellenistic/Roman periods from the earlier traditions of the Classical period. Josef Wiesehöfer, in a revised version of an earlier paper (2011), focuses on Ctesias' romantic description of a Persian court, namely that of Artaxerxes II, wrought with intrigue, gossip, and betrayal, and addresses several recent debates regarding both the author himself and the nature of his work. In what (to this reviewer) is perhaps the best paper of the collection, Daniel Selden looks at the Iranian sources on Alexander (Iskander). Among other important contributions, Selden provides a fine overview of the Avesta with a particular view to sovereignty in order to place Alexander in his Iranian historical context. The index to critical editions of Pahlavi sources is a welcome addition.

Part III consists of four papers covering the Jewish and Phoenician influences on Greek Romance. Examining Josephus' account of the Book of Esther in *Antiquities* II, Emily Kneebone emphasizes the motif of Jewish diaspora in this work and argues that the Jewish concern with *nomos* is a result of the separation from their homeland. She also discusses the motif's relevancy to Josephus, who was himself a diaspora Jew living in Rome.

Jennie Barbour analyzes the Greek topos of the decadent Eastern king in Jewish fictional writings of the late Biblical period. She points out the similarities between kings found in Jewish books such as the Greek Daniel, Esther, and especially Qohelet (Ecclesiastes) to those found in Herodotus' *Histories* and other Greek works. Karen Ní Mheallaigh provides a valuable insight into the relationship between the *Journal of Dictys of Crete* and the Homeric Epics and the ways in which the former promotes itself as a superior source for the Trojan Wars. Rounding out the section, Stephen Harrison shows how Punic elements are almost totally absent in the writings of Apuleius, despite this author's Carthaginian heritage.

Part IV is the shortest section of the collection (only two papers), and deals with Anatolian material. Aldo Tagliabue claims that the multifaceted portrayal of Ephesus in the *Ephesiaca* of Xenophon reflects specific points in the narrative rather than historical reality. Thus Ephesus is variously shown as the ideal Classical polis based on Athens, the holy city of Artemis, a den of sex and debauchery,

and a land of “families and everlasting love” reminiscent of Homer’s Ithaca. Ewen Bowie looks at a number of questions surrounding the Milesian tale genre, with particular attention to the work of Aristides. He attempts to trace the structure and content of the texts (most of which is lost) that fall under this category, though he concludes that little can be ascertained with certainty.

Part V—the final section of the book—is devoted to transmission and reception. Pavlos Avlamiis focuses on the interplay between the marvelous and the mundane in the *Life of Aesop* and how these interactions appear in Late Antique translations of the work into Syriac and Uyghur. He prefaces his essay with a fascinating overview on the technical development of translating the mundane between languages during the 20th century. Ruth Webb details the relationship between the lovers’ *topoi* found in mime and the novel. She gives special attention to Heliodorus, Achilles Tatius, and the adulterous wives from Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*, as well as mime texts such as the papyrus fragment of the *Jealous Mistress* (P.Oxy 413).

While the commonalities of the Greco-Roman novels with other cultures are well established throughout this volume, Lawrence Kim attempts to examine just how the cross-cultural transmission took place. By looking at a broad range of fictional narratives from the Hellenistic and Imperial periods, he astutely shows that the many aspects of these writings were likely adapted from contemporary oral traditions. Phiroze Vasunia discusses the treatise on romance by 17th C scholar Pierre-Daniel Huet, placing it in its historical and literary context as a defense of romantic literature.

Overall this is a fine collection of essays that will make a valid contribution to the field of narrative studies. The papers are addressed to an academic audience but will be useful to those new to the field as they outline their topics quite well and for the most part adequately discuss previous scholarship. It is refreshing to see often overlooked topics and authors given a thorough analysis. The book is well edited with few typos (although in the Introduction Dillery’s name twice appears as ‘Dillon’ [9; 12]).

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