

KOEN DE TEMMERMAN, *Crafting Characters: Heroes and Heroines in the ancient Greek novel*, Oxford: OUP, 2014, 432 pp. ISBN 978-01-9968-614-8.

This attractive book has originated from Koen de Temmerman's (hereby KDT) doctoral dissertation which was awarded the *Triennial Prize for Humanities* in 2008 by the Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium for Science and the Arts. The main topic is the understudied topic of characterization of the novelistic protagonists. In it, KDT succeeds in questioning and challenging some ongoing scholarly assumptions about the supposedly ideal, typical, symmetrical, and static portrayal of the heroes and heroines of the ancient Greek novels<sup>1</sup>. KDT approaches each novel separately following the recent scholarly tendency.<sup>2</sup> In what follows, I will give a summary of each of the five chapters and selectively discuss some characteristic examples of analysis.

The Introductory Chapter: Greek *ethos*, KDT rightly argues, does not altogether translate the modern term 'character'. KDT broadly follows Christopher Gill's distinction between 'objective' conceptions of characters, which were intended as social moral exempla, and modern notions of 'personality', notions of 'idiosyncratic self' (p. 9-11). KDT yet attempts to demonstrate that, albeit less notably, the protagonists of the Greek novels display some trends of idiosyncratic treatment. KDT's methodology relies on narratological approaches that examine characterization as focalized through the narrators and/or focalizers but also considers the reader's gradual deciphering of the characters through the plot (pp. 28-29). Then KDT turns to the *progymnasmata* to extract a list of techniques of characterization that would have been familiar to the novelists and their readers: e.g. name giving; direct characterization; indirect, i.e. metaphorical *exempla*; metonymical, such as emotions, social context, actions, speech, appearance; setting (p. 41). He thus opens his analysis with an interesting blend of modern structural narratology and intertextual theory with ancient terminology.

In the first chapter, Callirhoe's *sophrosyne* is analyzed alongside the mythical *exempla* of Penelope and Helen and notably focalized through Chaereas. KDT follows the heroine as she develops from an inexperienced noble girl to a woman who craftily controls her interpersonal relationships.

<sup>1</sup>Mainly voiced by M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four essays*. Ed. M. Holquist, transl C. Emerson and M. Holquist, Texas 1981. E.g. J. Morgan.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. T. Whitmarsh, *Narrative and identity in the ancient Greek novel*, Cambridge 2011; S. Montiglio, *Love and Providence*, Oxford 2012.

In the second part we follow Chaereas' heroic transformation, military deeds and rhetorical performance, that are patterned on mythical exempla such as Achilles, Odysseus, Diomedes, and Agamemnon. Most intriguing, is KDT's analysis of Callirhoe's moral dilemmas and of her internal conflict (pp. 61-63), which becomes characteristic of her 'personality' (p. 65). Equally fascinating are the intratextual<sup>3</sup> symmetries between the Plangon and the Artaxates incident (pp. 71-73) as well as the comparison of Chaereas' 'life' with the (admittedly postdating) Plutarchan *exemplum* of Themistocles and Alcibiades. Chaereas 'abrupt change', the author argues, was later used for depicting Callisthenes' behaviour in Achilles Tatius.

The second chapter studies Xenophon's *Ephesiaca* as a test-case of *apheleia*, namely of stylistic simplicity, which is effected through indirect characterization. The model here is Xenophon of Athens and the theoretical framework may be found in Ps.-Aristeides' *Ars Rhetorica*. The novel presents two contrasting protagonists: Anthia, who behaves rationally when Habrocomes reacts emotionally (p. 136). KDT reads closely the Cyno episode as an intratextual parallel of the Manto one to highlight the change in Habrocomes' reaction, from impulse to moderation. Less convincing are the downplay of the Hippolytean metaphorical analogue and the questioning of the Odysseus-Penelope model for the couple the Hippolytean metaphorical analogue for the hero that he limits to the opening scene and the Odysseus-Penelope one for the couple (p. 142-143), on which previous scholarship has extensively focused. Unlike Chariton, Xenophon who writes within a (depending on the dating) more or less established tradition does not make thorough use of the mythical *exempla* because these were already a well-embedded part of the novelistic narrative.

Among the most interesting analysis of KDT is the discussion of Achilles Tatius. The novel, notoriously, focuses primarily in the homodiegetic embedded narrator, Clitophon. The 'multiple signalling of possible narratorial unreliability' (p. 157) of the Phoenician narrator challenges the readerly interpretations. KTD invites us to read Clitophon's tale as a fictionalized and/or 'mythologized' version of the true story rather than a myth-like true story (p. 161). Clitophon's subversive *sophrosyne* is once more revisited here but the author adds an interesting comparison of Clitophon with Habrocomes and Ninus (pp. 163-166). The most exciting part of this analysis is the intertextual study of Clitophon's self-fashioning and his focalization of Leucippe as an 'ideal' novelistic heroine through generic formulas of gnomic wisdom rather than his own.

The Longus chapter discusses how the novel gives a description of the *physis* of the two young protagonists and how it is further developed and complicated by the 'cultural norms regarding sexual and social matters' (p.

<sup>3</sup> See A. Sharrock, and H. Morales, *Intratextuality*, Oxford 2000.

206). KTD examines the erotic development and metamorphosis of Chloe into a 'giver of life' (p. 212), and her gradual effacement which opposes her dynamic, for the plot, desire, that opens the novel. Contrarily, the reader is prompted to follow Daphnis' increased control over erotic, social, and rhetorical matters. The novel, KDT argues, although attempts a psychological description of the protagonists it does not describe their individual personalities but casts their individuation behind the broader literary and socio-cultural categories of 'youth' and 'rustic upbringing'. Like Chaereas, Daphnis' itinerary to adulthood is described in 'realistic' and not 'ideal' terms (p. 243). More controversial is the study of the 'apple episode' (p. 243), a demonstration of Daphnis' rhetorical skills, which KDT does not relate to his earlier argument about Daphnis' formal *paideia* (p. 208) that would have endowed him with such a mythological background. Equally implausible in my view is Chloe's metamorphosis into a harmonious *locus amoenus* that supposedly reflects the harmony that dominates the end of the aetiological myths (p. 212). Indeed Chloe's eagerness to learn about *eros* contrasts her to the tragic ends of mythical virgins but has been interpreted as an indication of 'Longus' control over his own fictional world' as argued by John Morgan.<sup>4</sup>

KDT's attempt to follow the characters as they evolve during the plotting finds its most successful articulation in the analysis of Heliodorus' protagonists. The author demonstrates how the novel's opening depicts the hero and the heroine as ideal protagonists through a 'stock of novelistic motifs', well-known to the reader (p. 249) and how the retrospective zooming into the characters' pasts maps the path towards this idealization. For example, Charicleia's rejection of marriage when at Delphi and her Penelopean *sophrosyne* displayed at the Thyamis event illustrates her gradual understanding and reshaping of the notion of chastity, from virginity to faithful monogamy. Then KDT explores the rhetorical articulation of *sophrosyne* and shows how Calasiris teaches Charicleia, who then teaches Theagenes, how to avoid direct confrontation with potentially dangerous rivals through careful witty speech. We would like to see more in depth how Calasiris and Charicleia exemplify the teacher/philosopher-pupil relationship attested in the statesmen's biographies, noted by KDT, but only briefly discussed (p. 267-268). The chapter closes with an interesting overview of body language and rhetorical performance during the protagonists' recognition at Meroe and with a deconstruction of the Achilles and Andromeda paradigms for Theagenes and Charicleia respectively.

A few additional comments: I sometimes found it difficult to follow the application of the extensive theoretical background presented in the Introduction throughout the chapters. In the partial analyses it is not always easy to see how each protagonist is studied according to each of

<sup>4</sup> J. R. Morgan, *Daphnis and Chloe*, Oxford 2004, p. 172.

the direct/indirect introductory categories, e.g. Daphnis' and Chloe's names are only explored in a footnote (p. 228 note 62) although 'naming' is an important ancient tool for characterization (see Intro. 41). This incongruity is probably due to KDT's decision to follow the characters' development as each plot evolves rather than classifying their characteristics *a posteriori*. Also unannounced comes the otherwise interesting theme of *apheleia* in Xenophon. Occasionally the author repeats extensively previously well-analyzed passages, such as Callirhoe's association with Penelope and/or Helen or Chloe's virginity, whereas he condenses more innovative and interesting topics that the reader expects and hopes to be analyzed further, such as the comparison of Chaereas with Plutarch's *Lives* and biography. Furthermore, some interpretative jewels such as the analogue of Phoenix's and Charicleia's limited rhetorical performance (pp. 297-298) are often hidden under an overload of close-text analysis and would probably deserve to be developed fully elsewhere. Finally, probably due to the book's length, the author often summarizes or paraphrased most of the discussed passages and gives the Greek in brackets within his text epigrammatically, making it thus more difficult for the uninitiated reader of the Greek novel reader to follow the text and the argument, e.g. Theagenes' Achillean description (pp. 282-293).

Typos and spelling mistakes are extremely rare: e.g. τὸ εὐρημα p. 228, n. 62.

The book's greatest strength is that it offers an engaging close reading of the novelistic characters and a plethora of interesting intratextual and intertextual (especially between the novels) observations. This kind of detailed approach requires that the reader is familiar with the plot of each of the Greek novels and the relevant scholarship, discussed in the rich footnotes and up-to-date literature. Although this kind of scrutinized reading makes the book more demanding for the broader, non-specialized public, it is a valuable addition to the scholarly analysis of the Greek novels and will provide an inspirational point of reference for future studies on ancient Greek characterization

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