

Michael PASCHALIS & Stelios PANAYOTAKIS (Ed.), *The Construction of the Real and the Ideal in the Ancient Novel*. Groningen, Barkhuis, 2013. 1 vol. 17,5 x 24,5 cm, XVI-312 p., ill. (ANCIENT NARRATIVE SUPPL., 17). Prix : 84,80 €. ISBN 978-9-491-43125-8.

This volume of the *Ancient Narrative Supplementum* series brings together thirteen of the fifteen papers presented at the fifth Rethymnon International Conference on the Ancient Novel (RICAN), held at the University of Crete in May 2009. All but one of the contributions focus on the construction of the real and the ideal in the traditional corpus of the Greek and Roman novel, often in conjunction with other classical works. – In *The Political Economy of Romance in Late Period Egypt* (p. 1-40), Daniel Selden does not confine himself to the traditional corpus of the novel. His paper deals with prose fiction within the field of Egyptian cultural production and covers a time span from the 6th century BC to the 7th century AD. Selden examines four texts that were either written in Egypt or widely read there (the Old Aramaic *Life of Ahikar*, the Bentresh Stele in Ptolemaic hieroglyphs, Chariton's *Callirhoe* and the Coptic *Kambyses Romance*). He argues that each of these fictions reflects the increasingly marginalized position of Egypt within the Levantine-Mediterranean world system. Selden's contribution complements the picture of the ancient novels in interesting ways, particularly by encompassing a subject matter that scholars of the novel are probably less acquainted with. The extensive bibliography of 11 pages is helpful. In *But there is a difference in the ends... Brigands and Teleology in the Ancient Novel* (p. 41-59), Ken Dowden deals with the presence of brigands in ideal fiction. After providing an overview of the terminology of brigandage with a view to defining his subject, Dowden discusses both individual brigands as well as brigand groups in the different novels. He contends that brigands in the novels are not just entertainment: they also constitute a counterpoint to civilized or ideal society. Froma Zeitlin's paper *Landscapes and Portraits: Signs of the Uncanny and Illusions of the Real* (p. 60-87) treats the power of ekphrastic descriptions to blur boundaries between reality and illusion. Zeitlin discusses garden descriptions in Achilles Tatius and portraiture in Heliodorus to illustrate this "illusion of breaking the frame": the boundary that separates the viewer from the object is breached. She underpins her thesis by providing illustrations of frescoes that have come down to us. Tim Whitmarsh handles ekphrastic descriptions as well in both Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus in his contribution *The Erotics of mimēsis: Gendered Aesthetics in Greek Theory and Fiction* (p. 275-292). Drawing on the mimetic theory of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Whitmarsh argues that women in the Greek novels should be understood both as objects of the gaze and as embodiments of the genre's creativity. Gianpiero Rosati, in *The Loves of the Gods: Literature as Construction of a Space of Pleasure* (p. 89-103), focuses on instances of divine love and how these divine paradigms both legitimize and stimulate human desire in the ancient novel. Mythological tales as paradigms for humans, more specifically young and inexperienced lovers, are also discussed by Françoise Létoublon in her contribution *Mythological Paradigms in the Greek Novels* (p. 127-145). In *Comedy in Heliodorus' Aithiopika* (p. 105-126), Margaret Doody tackles the construction of comicality in Heliodorus' novel through the use of dissonances. By exploring the possibilities of anachronisms, among others, Heliodorus

questions the traditional forms of comedy and tragedy. In *His eyes stood as though of horn or steel: Odysseus' Fortitude and Moral Ideals in the Greek Novels* (p. 147-159), Silvia Montiglio contends that the novelistic heroes and heroines display endurance comparable to that of Odysseus, but do not give evidence of Odysseus' remarkable self-control: in the novels, a moral ideal that values expressions of emotions prevails. Montiglio analyzes Dionysius' and Hydaspes' display of emotions in the novels of Chariton and Heliodorus respectively. In *The Basic Plot of Callirhoe: History, Myth, and Aristotelian Poetics* (p. 161-177), Michael Paschalis tackles the problem of Chariton's novel being both ideal and not-ideal. Drawing on Aristotle's *Poetics* and observations by Ben Edwin Perry, he underlines that it is likely that real events served as precedents for the basic plot of Chariton's novel. Paschalis also suggests that the *Iliad* may have inspired Chariton to embrace an instance of human anger as the triggering event of his story. Ewen Bowie in *Caging Grasshoppers: Longus' Materials for Weaving "Reality"* (p. 179-197) argues that Longus' construction of reality is different from that in the other Greek novels. Whereas the other Greek novels are in some sense realistic by reason of their setting, this is not the case for Longus as he draws on literary texts that present a fictional or semi-fictional world. Bowie illustrates his thesis by comparing episodes of Longus' novel to fragments of Theocritus and Sappho. The three remaining essays focus on the Roman novel. In *Tarde, immo iam sero intellexi: the Real as a Puzzle in Petronius' Satyricon* (p. 199-217), Mario Labate draws on Vincenzo Caffi's observation that the mechanism of the trap functions as the main narrative structure in the *Satyricon*. Labate identifies the protagonists' impossibility to understand reality and foresee development as the force that draws them into the trap and closes the trap behind them. In his essay *Landscape and Reality in Apuleius' Metamorphoses* (p. 219-241), Jason König distinguishes two ways to approach landscape in the *Metamorphoses*: a rhetorical, fantastic conception of landscape and a more realistic, physical representation which highlights the way in which landscape impinges on the body. Yet in book 11, König argues, both approaches prove inadequate as Lucius understands that his conception of the world has been erroneous. Robert H. F. Carver's contribution *Between Photis and Isis: Fiction, Reality and the Ideal in the Golden Ass of Apuleius* (p. 243-274), collates three female characters from the *Metamorphoses*, namely Photis, Isis and the Corinthian *matrona*, and contends that apparent polarities in Apuleius' world tend to collapse into identities. – As stated in the introduction, the organizers of the conference intended to allow the contributors the freedom to use their skills to examine the real and the ideal within the genre. This freedom yielded a richness in approaches to the theme and resulted in a volume that draws attention to the complexities involved. As the papers of this volume clearly indicate, the construction of the real and the ideal in the ancient novel goes beyond the traditional dichotomy between the "ideal" Greek novel and the "comic-realistic" Roman one.

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