

T. HÄGG: *Parthenope: Selected Studies in Ancient Greek Fiction (1969–2004)*. Ed. L. Boje Mortensen and T. Eide  
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When I first saw this book, the years in its subtitle coincided with my life-span; this made me feel acutely that Hägg's *Parthenope* was truly a selection from a lifetime of studies on the novel. When I finished reading it, I felt even more awe. It is a handy collection of excellent, relentlessly truth-seeking and broadly conceived scholarship, and, together with Hägg's publication (with B. Utas) of *The Virgin and her Lover: Fragments of an Ancient Greek Novel and a Persian Epic Poem* (Leiden, 2003), it constitutes an excellent presentation of this distinguished scholar of the ancient novel. The arguments in *Parthenope* are logical and full of wise judgement, and part of their success is their consistent interest in history and their insistence on keeping fact and fiction apart. I am not that kind of scholar, but I have done my best to read independently of theoretical biases, since I am convinced that we can understand each other over the boundaries of our "-isms". If, as I discuss the different analyses collected here, I occasionally suggest the possibility of another approach, then this, it seems to me, is just as it should be.

In the first pages of this book, the articles proper are preceded by an autobiographical sketch, "Forty Years in and out of the Greek Novel – A Memoir", and the complete bibliography of Hägg's (hereafter H.) writings, compiled by the editors of the volume, Lars Boje Mortensen and Tormod Eide. The "Memoir" offers witty, refreshing reading for colleagues and non-specialists alike: we can all admire the ever-curious, young-at-heart scholar depicted here. Particularly enjoyable is the account of how an article written "to order" for F. Moretti's study *Il romanzo*, developed into a theory on the birth of the novel – a thesis that H. did not know he had in him! (It is a pity that, for copyright reasons, the article in question did not make it into this volume; instead, readers are directed to Moretti's collection, listed in the bibliography.)

After the "Memoir" and the bibliography, the book is arranged in seven sections, six thematical and one offering a sample of H.'s reviews of other scholarship on the Greek novel. The thematic sections vary in scope and

time of composition, stretching from the text of Xenophon of Ephesus, the first ancient novel to induce H. into analysis, to a previously unpublished paper on the afterlife of Apollonius of Tyana. Let me now describe the articles in the order of their presentation, section by section.

The first part, entitled “A Hellenistic Philosophical Novel?”, comprises one article on the *Life of Aesop*, an understudied specimen of Hellenistic fiction, composed in many layers, with the last version (uncertainly) dated to between the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. The topic is not typical either of this book or the best-known ‘Schwerpunkte’ in H.’s novelistic studies, and the paper has perhaps been chosen by the editors with an eye to its attractive title: “The Professor and his Slave”. As the subtitle indicates, the question addressed is whether actual Greek conventions and values are mirrored in the *Life*, and here, in the approach and manner of the investigation, the reader encounters what is typical of H.’s scholarly style. While throwing light on several other pertinent issues, such as the dating and readership of the text, H. traces his main problem throughout in a lucid, detailed, and logical line. The *Life* emerges as a text playing on the comic possibilities of an atypical slave (Aesop) in typical servile conditions, illuminating, in the process, what must have been conventional values about slaves, intellectuals (Aesop’s master is a professor), and gender rôles (the relationship between the slave owner and his wife).

The section on “Chariton and the Early Ideal Novel” contains three articles focused on the technical characteristics of the pre-Sophistic novels, and one on the readership of this kind of Greek novel. The first piece asks whether Chariton’s *Callirhoe* and the fragmentary *Parthenope Romance* may be described, using a technical literary term, as “historical novels”. H. begins by a much-needed review of the definitions, half-definitions, and misuses of the term “historical novel”, and it then turns out (not for the first time) that our colleagues in the field of the modern novel are content with vague and partial explanations, agreeing mainly on the point that the “historical novel” is a modern *genus*, beginning with Walter Scott. H. then resorts to accumulating a minimum-requirement definition, enumerating such features as a setting in a historical past, a mixture of historical and fictional characters, and a degree of probability in the narration. Given some caveats, the main of which is that H. regards the “historical novel” as but a tributary to the great stream of the novel, H. decides that the label can be applied to *Callirhoe* and to *Parthenope*. This leads to some illuminating comparisons, such as that

between the use of a nostalgic past in Scott's *Ivanhoe* (the Middle Ages) and in the Hellenistic authors (Ancient Greece).

The next article takes a closer look at the details of characterisation in Chariton, and reaches the conclusion that his introductions and later mentions of various personages are, above all, functional, and never allowed to interfere with the narrative flow. Nevertheless, the author has paid some attention to this aspect of his novel: so in direct speech, for instance, the way in which a character is addressed varies according to speaker, situation, and the relationship – at that point – between speaker and addressee.

In “Epiphany in the Greek Novels: the emplotment of a metaphor” H. turns to the epiphany motif, again mainly focusing on *Callirhoe*, but also adding a comparative discussion of Longus' *Daphnis and Chloë*. The question posed is whether or not the novelists actually believe in the epiphanies as spiritual revelations. On its way, the discussion also sheds light on such aspects as *at which point* in the narrative the epiphanies occur, *who* sees/reports them, and *how* they are described. In the case of Chariton, the epiphanies (mostly consisting of people mistaking the heroine for Aphrodite) are found to be experienced by simple personages and not “endorsed” by the author, but used at important points in the narrative in order to propel the plot forward. In the case of Longus, the appearance of Eros in Book 2 is said to be a “largely ornamental play with the concept” (p. 152). H. rounds off with a brief treatment of Karl Kerényi's claim that the gods in the Greek novels reflect divine myths; H. reasonably dismisses Kerényi's fragmentary arguments in favour of what he calls a “secular-literary interpretation” (p. 153). While it is easy to agree that these epiphanies are not reflections of real cults embraced by religious authors, H.'s use of the concept of “emplotment” is less exciting than it could have been. There are other alternatives available than a believing author on the one hand, and insignificant verbal beautification on the other: the ideological-emotional universe of these works is relevant. The personages in Chariton may not “really” see Aphrodite when they see Callirhoe, but surely Aphrodite's power is present in the novel as a ruling principle, and especially as protection and inspiration for the female lead. The “emplotment” of Aphrodite could be deeper still – she may be seen as the Muse of the novel, invoked at crucial points, a double-levelled presence reminding both characters (within the plot) and readers (viewing the plot from outside) of the essence of the story. Such a view also applies, I believe, to Eros' appearance in Longus, where the epiphany has metamorphosed into

an idyllic vision with a tricky game of identification embedded in it. While H. sees Philetas' vision as largely irrelevant to Eros' role in the rest of the novel (p. 152), I would say that Longus' novel is precisely about this – tricky Eros hidden in the idyllic vision.

A very rewarding piece in this section is the major article on the “readership” of the earlier, popular kind of Greek novel – with “readership” in inverted commas, because one of the theses is that these readers may well have started out as listeners. Through the unavoidable quirks of a volume of this kind, this essay is more introductory and circumstantial than the ones before it, yet it holds rich rewards not only for the eager beginner, the *lector gulosus*, but also for the jaded *lector scrupulosus*. This is also the gist of the first part of the article's argument: a work such as Chariton's, H. persuasively argues, had it in it to please different audiences. Arguing especially from the internal evidence of the early novels themselves, H. concludes that the “narrative suspense, the emotional impact, the escapist function were there for all, the rhetorical and classicising embellishment for some” (p. 119). He then proceeds to an arresting consideration of, as it were, *oral* traits in these novels, such as retrospective recapitulations of larger parts of the narrative and their counterpart in foreshadowings (an old epic phenomenon, H. points out), and other features that create redundancy and predictability in the plot. In order to evaluate adequately the audience of the non-Sophistic novels, H. says, we must free ourselves from the literacy/illiteracy dichotomy, and rather think of the pair ‘true literacy’ and ‘orality’. A good part of the audience in this case is best described as “quasi-literates” and “listeners [who] may have turned into readers because these texts were in some ways adapted for what might most properly be called ‘the aural mind’” (p. 135). Thus, this article is fascinating also because it shows how the study of the novel can open up new views on more general problems, such as the question of readership in antiquity.

The next section consists of two articles on Xenophon's *Ephesian Story*, on which H. first wrote when he was a postgraduate in the 1960s. One of these articles describes Xenophon's manner of naming his characters, and bears witness to the minute argumentation of Hägg as a young scholar. The main question asked here is *what kind* of names Xenophon employs, seeing that he is a novelist who is unusually lavish with proper names as a means of identification. H. shows that, although Xenophon uses his share of etymologically significant and literary names, his preference is for realistic ones. A

comparison with relevant epigraphical material proves that he does not invent quite unrealistic names even among the significant ones (which are not, anyway, deeply symbolic), whereas the realistic names are decidedly common. Hence H.'s cautious conclusion is that the contemporary audience encountering Xenophon's character-naming would have had an impression of realism rather than literary fancy.

The paper entitled "The *Ephesiaca* of Xenophon Ephesius – Original or Epitome?" was originally composed in 1966, in German, and has now been translated and bibliographically updated for this collection. It is thus, in a nice ring-composition, both the earliest and one of the latest pieces in the volume. H. presents in detail the hypothesis that the *Ephesiaca* is an epitome of a lost longer work, concentrating on Bürger's version of this argument, and authoritatively refutes it along the lines that seven bad arguments do not make one good. At the time when this article first appeared, the *communis opinio* was with Bürger, as H. states in the article's introduction. H.'s refutation turned the tide, and even for those not convinced, it exposed the shaky foundation of their theory-building, which is one of the noblest tasks careful scholarship can accomplish. It only remains to be said that it is good to see this early bold statement being brushed up and placed near the centre of this collection – having changed its dress of language, this classic – shines as brightly as ever.

If the important early piece on Xenophon is used as a step-up to the centre, the centre proper of the collection is held by a section on H.'s latest occupation in the field of the ancient novel: the *Parthenope Romance* (*PR*) and its afterlife. H.'s work in this field has recently been crowned by the major edition-cum-study *The Virgin and Her Lover* (2003). In this book H. and the Orientalist Bo Utas presented the public with editions of the Greek fragments of *PR* and of the eleventh-century Persian verse romance which they have shown to be *PR*'s descendant, as well as with studies commenting on these texts. It is only, perhaps, the temporal closeness between the appearance of that study and the collection under discussion that makes the *Parthenope* material in the latter volume somewhat less stunning than it would otherwise have been. Still, stunning it is in its essence, and the editors of the present volume have marked the priority of this section by choosing *Parthenope* as the overall title. The section's four articles offer different perspectives of the topic and combine to illuminate the variation in H.'s approach.

The first of these articles, “The *Parthenope Romance* Decapitated?”, sets out to prove that the Coptic tale of the martyr S. Parthenope, extant in an Arabic version and a Coptic fragment, ultimately goes back to the *PR* – the martyrdom is, so to speak, a decapitated version of the Greek novel, provided with a new, Christian head. Starting from the shared name of the Christian and the pagan heroine, H. unravels a plethora of novelistic traits in the martyrdom; first, novelistic features in general, then, circling in on the particular ‘Vorlage’, minute but precise echoes of the *PR*. The resulting strong case for the basic identity of the martyrdom and the novel will, says H., explain the unusual plot of the former, and add another figure in the carpet for the study of the latter. The paper ends with a postscript which, in this edition, reads as a piece of almost novelistic foreshadowing: “when the article was already in press”, we are told, H. made the “surprising discovery that Metiochus and Parthenope did in fact enjoy a prosperous *Nachleben* in the east”, as his attention was called to the Persian verse romance *Vāmiq and ‘Adhrā* (p. 260). This was in 1984, and we the readers know the happy ending of this scholarly adventure, published in 2003.

Another paper takes us to Polycrates’ court, the setting of the one overlapping episode extant in both the Greek *PR* fragments and the Persian *Vāmiq and ‘Adhrā*. The main aim is to compare the two versions in order to understand how far the Persian romance may help us to recover the Greek “original”, but we also learn about other things on the way, e.g. about the historicity of the *PR*. The author of this novel seems to have been a classicist at heart and tried to follow his Herodotus, but he admitted some confusions: by mixing up two similar names, for instance, he made the hero Metiochus a distant relative of Polycrates, the father of the heroine Parthenope. In answer to his overall question H. tentatively concludes from his discussion that the study of *Vāmiq and ‘Adhrā* will advance the knowledge of the general traits of the *PR*, such as setting and plot, but will not substantially help the actual restoration of the Greek text. Nevertheless, he ends by some examples of such possible restorations, the last of which is particularly noteworthy, reattributing an utterance about “τὸν σὸν οἶκον” (lines 23f.) to Polycrates, who is now assumed to say it in welcome to Metiochus. This attractive restoration makes use of the recovered common descent of Polycrates and his addressee, and so happily uses the plot to fine-tune the reference of the words (‘οἶκος’ meaning both ‘house’ and ‘family’).

The article entitled “Hermes and the Invention of the Lyre: an unorthodox version” takes its beginning from the Persian novel *Vāmiq and ‘Adhrā* and its (disguised) version of Hermes’ instrument invention. Unlike the case in the Homeric *Hymn to Hermes*, the inventor here is an adult, and the other essential divergence is that, rather than killing a tortoise and making a lyre of its shell, this ‘Hermes’ finds a dead tortoise whose dried sinews emit music when touched by the wind, and eventually manages to make a lyre in imitation of this phenomenon. By close consideration of these and other Greek and Roman versions of the story, H. is able to reconstruct what the story looked like in the *PR*, and to suggest some consequences, both for this Greek novel, and for the Hermes myth, whose totality (in our knowledge) is slightly modified by this new-found version. The suggested consequences for *Parthenope* are most interesting, in particular the observation that the novelist’s inclusion of this elaborate myth brings him “closer than previously suspected to Achilles Tatius, who among the extant novelists takes a special delight in such material” (p. 338).

The Persian verse novel, the martyrdom of S. Parthenope, and the *PR* all come together in “The Oriental Reception of Greek Novels: a survey with some preliminary considerations”, the crown piece of the collection. To me, as perhaps to some other readers as well, this is new ground, and H.’s expert guidance is all the more welcome. Over the three subtitles ‘translations’, ‘adaptations’, and ‘creative borrowing’ H. investigates by which ways such “light literature” as the pre-sophistic Greek novel managed to by-pass the stern selection for translation into Arabic (from the eighth to the eleventh century), generally ruled by a preference for “usable” subjects such as medicine or philosophy. Under ‘translations’, the focus is on how the Greek *PR* eventually reached 11<sup>th</sup> century Iran and the form of ‘Unṣurī’s verse romance. Under ‘adaptations’, the Coptic martyrdom, that decapitated version of *Parthenope*, with its long Christian Oriental afterlife is the primary example. From the last, most elusive category of ‘creative borrowing’ H. chooses to look at those stories in the *Arabian Nights* that have been identified as owing their heritage, ultimately, to some Hellenistic novel. H. strengthens the argument of this identification by some further observations, and then ends on an unusually playful note, contemplating the frame story of one of these Arabian tales as a possible fictional reflection of a Greeks novel’s wandering to an Oriental milieu. This article is exciting, eye-opening read-

ing, which, through the vagaries of history, also gives echoes in contemporary sensibilities with its discussion of cultural routes to Baghdad.

The following article, “The Black Land of the Sun: Meroe in Heliodorus’ Romantic fiction”, which constitutes a section of its own, is careful to steer clear of any contemporary political debates. The thesis is that, if we only allow for Heliodorus’ references to be to his contemporary reality rather than to the Classical era he purports to describe, his descriptions will not be so fanciful and biased after all. During this journey through the Meroe of fact and fiction H. introduces us to his interest in Nubian ‘Realien’, but winds up the last point of his discussion, that about the colour of the heroine, in a rather Spartan fashion with the statement that Heliodorus would not even have considered the alternative of making her black.

The last of the thematic sections presents four articles on the obscure figure of Apollonius of Tyana, known to us through Philostratus’ biographical novel on him (composed at the beginning of the third century AD), through Hierocles’ anti-Christian treatise, where Apollonius is compared to Christ (c. 300 AD), and through (ps-)Eusebios’ answer to Hierocles (?beginning of fourth century AD). H.’s first article in this section is “Apollonius of Tyana – Magician, Philosopher, Counter-Christ: the metamorphoses of a life”; apart from the “Memoir”, this is the only article in the volume which has not been previously published in its present form. In it H. tries to look for the “real” Apollonius, the historical figure behind the various philosophical/ religious constructions of him by the abovementioned authors. He finds that there is a factual kernel for both Apollonius’ quality as a “holy man” and his quality as a philosopher – both qualities that he was later fully invested with in the writings about him – but that he was never as exciting a personage as later biography and mythology made him. In this case, perhaps, the sober and Positivist approach does not do full justice to the material. While H. criticises modern scholars for creating still more constructions of Apollonius’ life in addition to Philostratus’ and Hierocles’ versions, it may be asked whether his own dissolving reading of fictions to find facts behind them, does not dismiss too much of the stories in the process.

H.’s sensible and sceptical approach is exactly right for the other papers in the section. In “Hierocles the Lover of Truth and Eusebius the Sophist” it is persuasively argued that Eusebius of Caesarea was not in fact the author of *Contra Hieroclem* – a hypothesis that solves a number of difficulties about the text. Next, in “Photius at Work: evidence from the text of the *Biblio-*



*theca*”, H. uses the example of Photius’ treatment of *Vita Appollonii* to argue that Photius did not compose his elephantine work from memory – this small article may truly be used to teach how an argument should ideally be couched. The last article in the book, “Bentley, Philostratus, and the German Printers”, is a piece of philological detective work unravelling the secrets of a Philostratus copy with the shelf-mark 679.g.13, and, as they write about movies, the less you know in advance, the better!

The seventh section, which consists of reviews written by H., again pays tribute to the broad expertise of this scholar in the spectrum of the books under review, from critical editions to modern theory.

In conclusion, something about the edition as a whole. The editors are to be praised for offering a representative and diverse selection of articles, and for producing a handsome and typographically all but flawless book. Its usefulness is enhanced by a short general index at the end, but there is no cumulative bibliography. As regards readership, this book of course faces the problem of all collections of ‘Kleine Schriften’: since the individual articles were conceived for different publications, they presuppose different readers – some articles introduce their topics, while others zoom in directly on a very specific problem. But the common problem has a common solution: it will be read by different people. It is perhaps not a book best consumed from cover to cover, but one to be read, re-read, and consulted, as the well of learning and instruction it is.