how in the early books Nonnus adheres to the scheme of mythology preserved in Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca* (p. 49) and proposes a new interpretation of Nonnus' relationship to Pisander of Laranda (third century), whose sixty-two-book *Heroic Theogamies* may have been eclipsed by the *Dionysiaca*, as Pisander himself probably eclipsed the epic cycle. The scant surviving fragments of Pisander suggest linguistic anticipation of Nonnus (N. Hopkinson, *Studies in the Dionysiaca of Nonnus* [Cambridge, 1994], pp. 125–6), but S.'s view of the *Dionysiaca* as encompassing the whole cycle of mythology leads him to challenge Vian's criticism that Nonnus deals with a single world era as opposed to Pisander's universal history (p. 109). On Ovid and Nonnus, however, S. remains a traditionalist of the 'unproven' school, despite a conviction of fundamental similarities (e.g. p. 113), and notwithstanding Alan Cameron's persuasive mapping of fifth-century Egyptian *grammatici*-poets learned in Latin ('Wandering Poets', *Historia* 14 [1965], 470–509, esp. 494–6).

Building on work in Latin poetry, Chapter 3 (pp. 113–205) explores metapoetic parallelism between the growth of Dionysus and Nonnus' own artistic development. Books 1–12 provide both a failed model of the poet, Typhon, reiterated in Aphrodite (Book 24) and Phaethon (Book 38), and also a successful pastoral solution in Cadmus. Dionysus' affair with Ampelus briefly diverts him from epic aspirations, but the invention of wine in Book 12 produces a new image for the Dionysiac poetic (pp. 132–7). The impact of Dionysus' wine is explored in a range of contexts in Books 13–24, and allusions to chariots, water, and weaving (e.g. pp. 122–3, 164–6, 169–70) given a metapoetic slant, more or less convincingly. In the central Indiad (Books 13–40) confrontation between Nonnus and Homer is paramount, signalled by the Shield in Book 25. In this context S. identifies an obsession with the theme of fathers and sons (e.g. pp. 174, 176, 181–3) which suggests an interpretation of Nonnus' puzzling reference to Oedipus (25.14–17). In the final octad Nonnus, liberated from Homer, explores other genres, the novel and tragedy (*Bacchae*), subverting expectation of an Odyssean sequel. This chapter includes some good observations (e.g. links with Cyrus of Panopolis and Callimachus' *Hecale*, pp. 144–52), but sometimes loses sight of its theme or presses it beyond plausibility (e.g. p. 129).

Chaper 4 is a brief, perhaps not altogether serious, coda in which the impact of Nonnus' poem on the reader is likened to that of Dionysus' wine.

S. does not engage with textual, philological, or metrical issues, except to adduce linguistic echoes—where his case is most cogent. The generally reliable but sometimes quaint translation of Rouse is used throughout but, alack, the first line of Moschus' *Europa* is mistranslated (p. 34). S.'s strength is to tread lightly in pursuit of his Great Idea through this huge poem with the exuberance of his chosen author, but his reading is necessarily selective, as he himself recognizes (e.g. pp. 49–50). Hypotheses may not always convince, but his approach, building on the best recent scholarship (Vian, Hopkinson, Harries, Hollis) and using tools from Latin literary criticism, lays important groundwork for renewed attention to the overall conception of the *Dionysiaca*.

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GREEK POPULAR LITERATURE

W. HANSEN (ed.): *Anthology of Ancient Greek Popular Literature*. Pp. xi + 349. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998.

One-eyed Ambrosia from Athens scoffed at the testimonials of miracles in the

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healing sanctuary of Asclepius at Epidaurus. She ridiculed them, William Hansen reports in *Anthology of Ancient Greek Popular Literature*, 'for their apparent simple-minded credulity' (p. xxv). Hansen does not scoff at the stories he has collected, including Xenophon of Ephesus's *An Ephesian Tale*, Pseudo-Callisthenes' *The Alexander Romance*, and *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*, but he does confine them to what he conceives as their proper, 'lower' place. His introduction defines these works as somehow lower, lighter, or more simple-minded than the Greek works more familiar to most readers—works by Homer or Plato, for example—that are typically accorded the status of 'high' Greek literature. Ambrosia, H. should remember, repented of her mockery and wrote as penance her own simple testimonial after the god healed her eye. If H., like Ambrosia, has disparaged the intellectual depth of the stories or the self-reflective capacities of their authors, we, like the gentle god, should forgive him and bless him for performing his own penance in collecting in English some regrettably neglected Greek literature.

H. expands the field of 'popular' literature beyond the usual temporal boundary of the invention of the printing press. He does this by collecting eleven texts written in Greek during the first four centuries C.E. and grouping them into four categories: popular fiction, popular compilations, popular handbooks, and popular literature found in public places—like Ambrosia's temple testimonial. Previously, ten of these translations were available in separate books, but one is new, the first English translation of *The Oracles of Astrampsychus*, which is one of the most complete examples of divinatory writing to survive from antiquity.

In the well-written introduction, H. explores much of the literature concerned with organizing and categorizing folk and popular literatures in order to expand the historical and intellectual range of the idea of 'popular literature'. He rejects accounts of 'popular' that define it by reference to author or audience since readers and authors switch between 'high' and 'low' literature. Adopting and modifying the accounts of Russel Nye in *The Unembarrassed Muse: the Popular Arts in America* (New York, 1971), and of Pierre Bourdieu in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, MA, 1984), H. defines 'popular literature' as writing that does not attempt to provide an aesthetic experience or intellectual challenge for the reader. This lack of 'depth' and the little self-examination required of the reader creates, he claims, the aesthetic experience that makes up 'popular' culture (p. xvi). 'The popular aesthetic, as expressed in literature', he affirms, 'manifests itself typically as writing that is easy to read, quickly and continually engaging, and replete with action and sensation' (p. xvii).

According to H., fluidity characterizes this literature. Over time, redactors freely changed many elements in the texts to such an extent that now many variants appear to be valid and legitimate versions. In one interesting example of revision, a religious version of *The Oracles of Astrampsychus* changed the oracular question from 'Will I be reconciled to my girlfriend?' to the less problematic but equally revealing 'Will I become Bishop?'—the bride of Christ indeed (p. xxi). Popular literature also displays, H. claims, a high level of disjointedness; that is, it appears more as a collection of episodes and less as an organic whole.

All the points of distinction that H. thoughtfully organizes to help define the popular—including level of engagement, subtlety, escapism, fluidity, and relaxation the text produces—could just as easily apply, and have been applied, to 'high' literature. Fluidity seems to be a characteristic of ancient texts in general, Homer and the Bible being two of the most prominent and redacted examples. Engagement, escape, and sensation are all experienced when reading 'higher' literature. Action and sensation

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dominate the *Iliad*. As for the disjointedness associated with popular texts, this is exactly what Erich Auerbach claimed for Christian texts more generally, and the *Song of Roland* in particular, when he wrote in *Mimesis* (New York, 1953) that 'Anything like the flow of discourse does not arise . . . Every line marks a new start, every stanza represents a new approach . . . as though sticks or spears of equal length and with similar points were bundled together' (p. 92). Furthermore, these terms of distinction rely on indecipherable responses by the reader—sensations that are difficult to describe and distinguish in ourselves, let alone in others who may experience reading very differently. What does 'escape' feel like when reading? The use of words that refer to human experience is so closely constrained by historical context that to apply them in any but the loosest way to distant readers places too great an Aristotelian faith that historical categories of human experience remain stable across time.

A greater degree of historicism is needed in H.'s account concerning many of the elements in the stories, in the methodology of explanation, and in accounts of human characteristics. The historical distinction between 'high' literature and 'popular' literature has its own history; that is, our idea of 'popular' is contingent on a range of historical events that happened well after these books were written. Some events, however, occurred contemporaneously with many of the writings collected here and could have provided background for a history of the idea of popular literature. For example, H.'s distinction echoes the contrast between *scriptor classicus* and *scriptor proletarius* used in the second century C.E. by the grammarian Aulus Gellius. Gellius borrowed this distinction from Roman tax law—in which *classicus* defined the first of the five tax classes founded by Servius Tullius—to distinguish between writing for the many, *scriptor proletarius*, and writing for the few of the first order, *scriptor classicus*. A historical view of this distinction might make clearer its economic basis.

The collected writings themselves are fantastic—wide ranging, varied products of lively imaginations that demonstrate the historical fluctuation of important terms and ideas, reminding readers about the historical transformation of the facts of human nature. They also offer their own conceptions of history and change. Reading ancient texts reminds us of the historical construction of our own assumed truths. Our beliefs about desire, marriage, friendship, sex, leadership, love, and order refract and break apart in the light of historical contingency.

Men were objects of desire, much more pervasively and centrally than for us. In Xenophon of Ephesus's *An Ephesian Tale*, Habrocomes is 'a prodigy of beauty unrivaled in Ionia or elsewhere', a description that would sound strange for more current male protagonists (p. 7). 'Whatever the world counted beautiful he despised as inferior and indeed negligible in comparison with himself. Nothing that the world had to show or tell did Habrocomes deem worthy of himself' (p. 8). Habrocomes, of course, receives a long come-uppance, but this pride of beauty is not the pride that modern male characters would experience concerning themselves.

Even at such a late date (the story is from the first or second century C.E.) *Ephesian Tale* does not distinguish sexual attraction between men from sexual attraction between women and men (virtually nothing speaks of attraction between women). Habrocomes' best friend throughout his tribulations was Hippothoos. On their first meeting, their friendship develops through the sharing of stories concerning their lost loves. Habrocomes lost the beautiful Anthia, and Hippothoos lost 'a native boy, and his name was Hyperanthes' (p. 26). 'The first stages of love were kisses and fondlings', Hippothoos says, 'and (on my part) abundant tears. Finally, we seized an opportunity to be alone together; our equal age obviated suspicion' (p. 26). Habrocomes and Hippothoos tell each other parallel narratives of love lost. The sex of the object of

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desire did not make a significant difference in the theme or style of the narratives. The examples of love and desire found in these stories illustrate histories of desire not regulated according to the sex of the participants—a regulation which contemporary readers would generally expect in stories of sexual desire—and such stories can demonstrate for modern readers the historical construction of their belief in the naturalness of our conceptions of sexual desire.

According to *Ephesian Tale*, vision made the lover an object of attention. When Habrocomes sees Anthia she 'uncovered as much of her person as she could for Habrocomes to see. And Habrocomes gave himself wholly to the sight; the god's bound prisoner was he' (p. 9). Interestingly, in the anonymous Christian novella *The Acts of Paul and Thecla* desire was not created by vision but by language. Thecla first desires Paul when she hears him speak, 'for she had not yet seen Paul in person, but only heard his word' (p. 56). Thecla was 'gripped by a new desire and a fearful passion; for the maiden hangs upon the things he says, and is taken captive' (pp. 56–7). This transformation in the language of desire suggests interesting connections with the eloquent first line of the *Gospel of John*, a Greek work written in the city of Ephesus *c*. 150 C.E.: 'In the beginning was the word'. Perhaps Christianity contains under-exploited elements to dislodge the hegemony of vision in desire.

H., like Thecla, was taken captive by the power of words to create their object of reference, in this case, the linguistic difference between 'popular' and 'élite' literature. In one priceless moment found in pseudo-Callisthenes' *The Alexander Romance*, Alexander writes to his mother and Aristotle describing his defeat of Darius. In an example from the battle, Alexander describes, in what has to be a little joke against his teacher, how he used sensual deception to win the battle—undercutting in at least a small degree Aristotle's accounts of the validity of the senses. Alexander tied torches to the horns of goats to make his army appear much larger than it was in reality. When Darius and his troops saw what they perceived to be a much larger army, they lost the will to win.

This book is an excellent collection. H. has done a very careful and thoughtful job in collecting and discussing the work. Only a greater suspicion of the historical consistency of categories such as desire (or 'high' and 'low') could have improved his account. A little closer attention to Alexander's jibe at Aristotle should have served as a reminder to H. that just because appearance tells you one thing, it does not mean that you know what is there. 'Low' literature is, like Alexander's goat-soldiers, possibly not what it appears to be: it could easily be much more complex or 'high' than even very watchful readers suspect.

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PERSONIFIED VIRTUES

E. STAFFORD: *Worshipping Virtues. Personification and the Divine in Ancient Greece*. Pp. xiv + 274, ills. London: Duckworth, 2001.Cased, £40. ISBN: 0-7156-3044-X.

This book identifies a significant aspect in the study of ancient Greek religious thought for which there has been a pressing need for fresh, updated approaches. S. provides a useful critical review of the scholarship up to date, challenges earlier views and interpretations, and attempts to present new insights into the theme, par-

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