

I.J.F. DE JONG , R. NÜNLIST (eds.): *Time in Ancient Literature Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative. Volume 2*
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Time in Ancient Literature is the second volume of the series *Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative*. It is an ambitious and important project that assembles seventeen eminent scholars to examine temporal structures and their uses in eight genres. The articles focus on the manner in which time functions as an organizing principle in the works of more than thirty ancient authors spanning twelve centuries from Homer to Heliodorus. The volume is divided into eight parts, dealing with epic (de Jong, Nünlist and Klooster), elegiac poetry (Klooster), historiography (Rood, Hidber, van Henten and Huitink), choral lyric (Nünlist), drama (Barret, de Jong, Lloyd, and Bowie), oratory (Edwards), philosophy (K. A. Morgan), biography (Beck and Whitmarsh), and the novel (J. R. Morgan). The chapters offer a panoramic view of Greek literature, which pretty much covers the range of materials in the *Cambridge History of Greek Literature*. In this context, however, the reason for the omission of the genre of love lyric poetry and specifically of Sappho is unclear, given the intimate connection between time, the experience of love, and the way in which the lyric poets create their own fictions of the self.

While reading this volume I kept wondering about its own temporal and generic premises. How do the editors conceive of the relation between the diachronic presentation of this study and the structuralist methodology which regulates it? Is the chronological framework of the volume meant to open up a discussion that goes beyond a mapping of temporal strategies? Should the volume be read as an attempt to delineate a history of the experience of time in ancient Greek literature? My impression is that *Time in Ancient Greek Literature* is encyclopedic at heart and, in this sense, fails to tell us a story and thus to endorse a linear reading of the volume. Furthermore, the silence regarding the impact of the canonical works of Bakhtin, Auerbach and Ricoeur on the relation between time and narrative is telling. Similarly, the epilogue's overview of the project does not go beyond a technical summary of "the manifold ways in which the Greeks mark rhythms, cut up time into individual units, create chains of events." (p. 522) The editors seem to concentrate on time in its materiality, in the ways in which it functions as an

instrument, ready to be divided and cut by the ancient narrative makers. This statement of intentions, however, does not reflect the studies of those contributors who took the opportunity to investigate the ways in which narratology interacts with various notions of time in different discourses.

In the useful Introduction, Irene J. F. de Jong describes the central narratological terms, providing the reader with the basic tools for identifying the relationship between fictional devices and different aspects of time. Setting out the book's conceptual framework, the Introduction explains clearly and concisely the implications of modes of 'temporalization' for the analysis of the grammar of narrative. De Jong makes use of Bal's terminology (*Narratology* 1985) and Genette's systematic theory of narrative (*Narrative Discourse* 1980 [Paris 1972]); as she explains, it is in a temporal perspective that the complex relationship between a *text's story* and a *text's fabula* manifests itself: this is the relationship between the unique order of the narrated events and the actual chronology of events – the underlying ground of the story – as reconstructed by the reader. Against the background of Bal's three-layer model, de Jong elaborates the mechanism in which the text construes its *order* of events through the strategies of chronology, namely *prolepsis* and *analepsis*. *Prolepsis* and *analepsis* are the figures that mark how time shifts to future and past events, that is, events that take place before or after the point in the story where the reader is situated. The collected *prolepses* and *analepses* analyzed in this volume might inspire, for example, an investigation of the psychological implications of foreshadowing events or of the narration of events in retrospect. De Jong meticulously examines two other criteria central to our study of time awareness in ancient literature: *rhythm*, which defines the narrative's speed and duration, and *frequency*, which takes account of "singulative" and repetitive accounts.

In equipping the reader with these narratological tools and demonstrating in the analyses of specific texts how they may be put into practice, the volume accomplishes what it promises. The contributors' essays not only reflect their fine-tuned narratological skills, but also provide a good example of collaborative work. And yet, at times, the methodological distinctiveness of the volume appears as a limitation. Thinking of time through the prism of a text's narratological devices inevitably simplifies the temporal dimension of the ancient literary text. Can a discussion of the *prolepsis* in Penelope's visionary dream, for example, open for us a perspective that is broad enough to consider the temporality of unconscious desires? Can an investigation of *analepsis* at the moment when Helen reviews her life as she stands on

Priam's tower lead to an understanding of the significance of the retrospective for the narration of the self?

Furthermore, while making extensive use of Bal's terms, *story* and *fabula*, the volume rarely brings the significance of the third element in Bal's model: *text*. *Story* and *fabula* are aspects of the literary *text*. Narratives are products of literary texts. But the reader remains unclear as to how the editors understand the notion of *text* and its relation to *story* and *fabula*. The problem in framing time as a mere narratological device runs the risk of the reader losing sight of the cardinal role played by temporality in the unfolding of a *text's* meaning.

Take for example one of the main narratological problems with which Homeric research is engaged: how does the *story* of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* sustain "the whole picture"? (p. 19) For de Jong, "the whole picture" refers to the *fabula's* time-frame, the ten years of the Trojan war and Odysseus' twenty years of absence from Ithaca. But, as pointed out in the Introduction, the "series of logically and chronologically related events", of which the *fabula* consists, is not necessarily equivalent to the totality of events and modes of time that are part of the narration's horizon. In the Homeric epics, such modes of time as the remote past, the circularity and repetition of nature's omnitemporality, the identification between the heroic future of the epic warriors and the reader's present created by the notion of the everlasting *kleos*, are all manifestations of what remains outside the scope of the *fabula*. What, then, is the meaning of "the whole picture" for the Homeric epic? What is the relationship between the manifold chronologies of lives and the various aspects of time depicted by the Homeric narrator? Can we say, for example, that the distinctiveness of the epic's temporal experience has to do with the constant resonance of a temporal whole that transcends the fragmentary character of human knowledge and the vagueness of human memory?

Indeed, the inseparability of the Homeric and the Hesiodic epics from oral culture may serve as a reminder of the intricate manner in which questions of time, memory, and narrative are interwoven in these texts. Hence, while the Homeric poet, for example, laments his inability to sing in ten tongues and voices – vis-à-vis the Muses – his inspired language nevertheless enables his narrative to transcend the ordinary bounds of human memory. Similarly, the temporal framework of Hesiod's work cannot be understood independently of the distinction between divine song and human poetry. Whereas human poetry addresses the past and the future (*Th.* 32), the Muses are capable of singing about the present as well. What can the tempo-

ral difference between these two kinds of songs tell us about Hesiod's understanding of the relationship between time and narrative, his own narrative?

In Rene Nünlist's discussion of Hesiod's *Theogony* such themes are completely missing. This might be connected to Nünlist's observation that "the narrator's [Hesiod's] goal is not to maintain a rigid chronology." (p. 41) And yet can we simply ignore the significance that the notion of progression, so essential to cosmological narratives, carries for Hesiod's *Theogony*? That is, even if we agree that the *Theogony* does not have "a rigid chronology," the question we need to ask is: what exactly *is* the chronological structure of *Theogony*? It is only when we ask such questions that the complexity of this work opens up for us. Hence, for example, we may begin by noticing that in *Theogony* there is a relatively straightforward linearity that manifests itself in the history leading to Zeus's hegemony. In this respect, Zeus's ascendance to the throne on Olympus and its commemoration (lines 492-506) seem to be a natural place for the narrative to end. However, instead of ending here, the story continues with a long intermezzo on the conflict between Zeus and Prometheus, culminating in the creation of the first woman (507-616). The second half of the poem (617-1022) includes the battle between the Olympians and the Titans, as well as the episode of Zeus's final victory over Typhoeus. Both episodes are forms of *analepses* as they recount events leading to the supremacy of Zeus, already established earlier in the poem. In identifying these crucial episodes as *analepses*, the chronology of the narrative becomes clearer, with the exception of the Pandora episode, which is hard to map onto the general chronological order. How should we understand this temporal complexity? How and why is the disruption of the cosmic development tied to the creation of the first woman? These questions are, in my view, crucial. They invite us to recognize the intrinsic relationship between the text's meaning(s) and the forms of temporality which the text exhibits. To put this more directly, I believe that the pertinent question for us as readers of the ancient text is not whether or not Hesiod's *Theogony* exemplifies a proper chronology, but rather how Hesiod's work with time, his manipulation and subversion of standard chronologies, is tied to his understanding of what a textual unity is.

I briefly mention here a few chapters which illustrate how narratology can ask fascinating questions regarding time and its role in shaping textual meanings. J. J. H. Klooster examines the notion of time in Apollonius' *Argonautica* through the figure of the descriptive narrator. Apollonius, according to Klooster, "includes a great number of heterodiegetic external analepses and prolepses" (p. 66), aspiring thus to create continuity with the mythologi-

cal past. Klooster shows that, for Apollonius, telling about a remote past is in itself metonymically a proleptic act. Apollonius' depiction of the past typically evokes the presence of the narrator's own time, and mythical time is thereby integrated into a world history. Contributions dealing with philosophical and historiographical discourses, for which time is a central key concept, raise some intriguing issues. K. A. Morgan, in her stimulating essays, asks how Plato's sensible and metaphysical realms presuppose different notions of time, and how in Xenophon's philosophical biographies of Socrates the didactic genre constructs memory through the discursive flow of remarkable conversations, unforgettable sayings and statements. T. J. G. Whitmarsh discusses the temporal complexity in Philostratus's *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*. Whitmarsh introduces the notion of the politics of time, arguing that, "whereas Rome is the site of development and change, Greece is dominated by cyclical repetition." (p. 416) His essay is a contribution to the study of time in the multicultural world of antiquity. How, for example, does Apollonius's mystical, oriental, and ritual sense of time coexist with his experience of the dynamics of Roman political time? Philostratus's complex notion of time can be perhaps best illustrated by the image of Proteus, which, as Whitmarsh points out, plays a significant role in shaping the connection between Proteus, Apollonius, and the narrator on the basis of their shared powers of prognosis. (p. 428) In Episode 1.4, Philostratus narrates how Proteus appeared in a dream of Apollonius' mother, prophesying that she would give birth to a new Proteus. One cannot ignore the significance of the visionary appearance of Proteus at the beginning of the book, announcing that Apollonius will be born as his human embodiment. And yet it is not only Proteus's prophetic faculties, as Whitmarsh argues, that make Proteus a central image for the text's sense of temporality. Proteus's metamorphic nature as a river god is a fruitful image too, which for Heraclitus, for example, captures the ever-flowing change of time.

J. R. Morgan's essays provide a magisterial overview of time in the novels of Chariton, Xenophon of Ephesus, Longus, and Heliodorus. He provides a systematic and comparative analysis of the various categories of *analepses* and *prolepses* which are at work in these novels. Chariton, for example, introduces Aphrodite, Eros and Tyche as divinities who take control over the plot in their concern for the future. Omens, oracles, and dreams foretell events or plant in the present the seeds that will germinate in the future. However, in addition to this, as Morgan shows, the exploitation of intertextual parallels, especially from the *Odyssey*, let the reader recognize implicit *prolepses* of the story's ending. What can we infer from the various intertexts

exploited by the ancient novelists about their notion of time, and about the protagonists' experience of time? In this respect, one might wonder whether Helen's, Penelope's and Callirhoe's sense of time is identical simply because Helen, Penelope, and Callirhoe share similar narrative patterns of return and reunion. A beautiful example of an actual pause in Xenophon's novel (1.8) brings into play an important narratological element, the ecphrasis, which is quite neglected in this volume, along with its implicit significance for gender relations. Detailed descriptions of objects of art are worth examining as a way of considering modes of temporality in the reading experience. More specifically, how does the reader's visual experience, as his or her imaginary gaze rests on the described work of art, help us to decipher the text's erotic dimensions?

Time in Ancient Greek Literature is an important contribution to the study of narratology; in using time as a theoretical lens, it offers a fresh review of Greek literature. It is recommended for readers interested in the ancient authors and genres treated, and also for those who wish to enrich their perspective on the history of ancient narrative.