

Beneker, in arguing that character development is more clearly seen through a lens like *eros* and that ‘an exploration of the confluence of *eros* and politics, and of the private and public spheres in general, is crucial to the historical-ethical reconstructions that form the basis of the *Parallell Lives*’ (225), adds a fresh perspective to ongoing work on Plutarch’s literary technique.

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JONES (M.) **Playing the Man: Performing Masculinities in the Ancient Greek Novel** (Oxford Studies in Classical Literature and Gender Theory). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. Pp. 303. £55. 9780199570089.

doi:10.1017/S0075426914001633

This highly interesting book can be seen as a major contribution in combining the fields of classics and gender studies. Jones has chosen to analyse ‘what are commonly referred to as the five “ideal” Greek novels – those of Chariton, Xenophon of Ephesus, Achilles Tatius, Longus and Heliodorus’; this seems to be an adequate selection with which to analyse the construction of masculinities in the Greek novel. The book’s analysis also focuses on the social norms and practices of the period; as Jones writes, the men in the novels ‘reflect real concerns experienced by real men in the real world’.

The book’s first two chapters focus on two Greek terms, *paideia* and *andreia*, which might feel comfortable for a classicist but slightly unfamiliar for gender researchers. Jones takes the reader by the hand and explains the terms with various examples from different novels, so that the terms are understandable for a non-classicist. This is done while focusing on different areas of importance for the construction of masculinities. It is exemplary that Jones also discusses the two terms in regard to females.

The third chapter takes a different approach and deals with the complicated issue of sexuality and male same-sex sexuality. In a very short space (174–79) Jones introduces the reader to the discourse of sexuality and antiquity. Jones also clearly explains why she tries to avoid terms like homosexual(ity) and heterosexual(ity), which I would consider most helpful for the non-classicist. Again, Jones takes the reader by the hand and helps them to understand different aspects

regarding male same-sex sexuality by using quotations from the novels and explaining the novels’ importance for the construction of masculinities.

Jones’ brief conclusion (265–73) opens with a statement about the three major problems she faces: firstly, masculinity is not something fixed; secondly, the ‘shortfall between reality and representation in literature’; and, thirdly, that it is not possible to be comprehensive in one’s treatment of the novels and masculinities. These problems were hinted at in the introduction; it might have helped the reader to understand better why Jones made her selections of topics for analysing the novels if this discussion was included in the introduction.

In her writing, Jones shows that she has a great knowledge both of ancient literature and of the field of critical studies regarding men and masculinities, and clearly demonstrates how they can be combined. Sometimes the book might feel overloaded with quotations and references to other scholars and researchers that drown Jones’ own voice. It would also have been interesting to include a discussion of R.W. Connell’s theory of hegemonic masculinity, since all the areas Jones discusses could be connected to it.

Overall, this book has the possibility to open up the debate for researchers not only in classics but also in gender studies, especially those focusing on critical studies regarding men and masculinities. It is a book that not only explores aspects of constructions of masculinities during the imperial period, and maybe even before, but it can in many ways also be used as a sourcebook for constructions of masculinities in classical literature. It is a book that has succeeded in its purpose to be accessible for classicists, gender researchers and a broader public, and to introduce them to the topic of ‘performing masculinities in the ancient Greek novel’.

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LEITAO (D.D.) **The Pregnant Male as Myth and Metaphor in Classical Greek Literature**. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Pp. xii + 307. £60/\$95. 9781107017283.

doi:10.1017/S0075426914001645

Leitao’s book is an extremely useful re-examination of the ‘thought as giving birth’ motif, famously seen in Plato. The author’s engagement with the idea stems from Platonic discourse, but his intention is to trace the emergence of the

theory prior to Plato. The timeframe is 470–350 BC and he manages to deliver an engaging, thoroughly-researched account of the metaphor, starting with Anaxagoras and the Pre-Socratics, through tragedy, comedy and the sophists, and ending, appropriately, with Plato.

In the 'Introduction', Leitao places himself within the scholarly discussion of the subject. He distances himself both from psychoanalytical discourse and feminist theory, stating that his intention is to focus on rhetoric and the discourse within which these texts exist, rather than on attempting to reconstruct intent or limit his analysis in discussions of sex and gender and the idea of sexual conflict within the metaphor.

Chapter 2 looks at the development of Anaxagoras' 'masculinist embryology' or one-seed theory. Through his analysis of Archaic notions of reproduction as well as Anaxagoras' theory, and its reception and development by his three successors, he convincingly argues that the theory is mainly metaphysical rather than a tool to promote gender discourse and male over female domination, although he is careful to admit that it eventually came to be linked to the latter as well. The chapter ends with three examples taken from Attic tragedy, showing the possible influence of the new embryological theory emerging in the fifth century.

Chapter 3 focuses on the miraculous thigh birth of Dionysus. Leitao makes a close connection to Pericles' citizenship law and discussions of legitimacy in the fifth century. His perspective from the point of view of cultural history offers a plausible explanation to the relatively late emergence of details of Dionysus' birth by linking it primarily with socio-political discussions of the time.

In chapter 4 Leitao moves on to the issue of male pregnancy as a metaphor for poetic/intellectual creation first emerging in the early years of the Peloponnesian War. He examines cosmogonic theories relating to creation through thought and then turns to the way the sophists made use of the pregnancy metaphor as a teaching tool for virtue and knowledge, to finally concentrate on the employment of the metaphor in dramatic texts. Once more, Leitao points out that issues of gender struggle are not in play here, but rather, it is a tool to establish full ownership of the authors' poetic creations, especially when in doubt.

The importance of the pedagogical function of the metaphor as a central reason for its survival is underlined in chapter 5 and Blepyrus' turd-child in *Ecclesiazusae*. Interestingly, here the author is more willing to allow gender power-games to

enter the discussion alongside rhetoric than in previous chapters, linking Blepyrus' scene with the birth of Athena from Zeus' head and discerning in those two scenes the struggle between matriarchy and patriarchal values as well as the effort to establish the boundaries of masculinity.

Chapter 6 is dedicated to the *Symposium* and offers an insightful analysis of the paradox in Platonic thought that every philosopher should become – and remain – pregnant with his own virtue without being impregnated by a sophist.

Finally, chapter 7 offers an analysis of the metaphor as it evolved in the *Theaetetus*, where the Socratic method is explicitly compared to the work of a midwife, thus marking the shift in Platonic thought from the pregnant philosopher to the philosopher as a midwife.

The book ends with two appendices. The first examines the idea of female seed before Democritus, only to conclude – and rightly so – that the relevant passages in Parmenides, Empedocles and Alcmaeon are problematic at best. Appendix II offers an insightful analysis on the gender-specific use of the verb *τίκτω* in the *Symposium*: employed primarily by women, it becomes an appropriate term for men only in passages where the discussion becomes more abstract.

One could argue that Leitao's refutation of gender nuance is sometimes difficult to accept, given the prominence of male versus female elements in literature. Overall, however, the contribution of Leitao's book to the discussion of the male pregnancy metaphor is indubitable; it adds a new perspective to existing scholarship and makes for a compelling, thought-provoking monograph.

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**DOVA (S.) Greek Heroes in and out of Hades.**

Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2012, Pp. 242.  
\$70. 9780739144978.

doi:10.1017/S0075426914001657

This intriguingly-titled book discusses how the heroic legacy and status of mythic figures were developed through encounters with the afterlife. In the 'Preface', Dova describes her initial interest as 'heroism and "death in transition"', which led her to a group of texts from epic, lyric and tragic poetry that have characters who experience '*katábasis* ("descent to the underworld"), foreknowledge of death and self-sacrifice' (xi).