

along the way are rounded and believable and there is a wealth of detail about their lives and hopes. The maps at the beginning of the novel are helpful in tracing the route taken and descriptions of the towns and cities are detailed and clear. This is important in the later parts of the novel – spoilers! This is an accessible novel for people of all levels of knowledge of the ancient world, but teachers might want to keep it for the slightly older age-groups as there are a couple of scenes of a sexual nature and some fairly gory deaths. That aside, I would recommend it as background reading as Sidebottom's evident scholarship and ability to write a gripping story shine through.

Note

1 The Old Oligarch, Pseudo-Xenophon's *Constitution of Athens* LACTOR 2

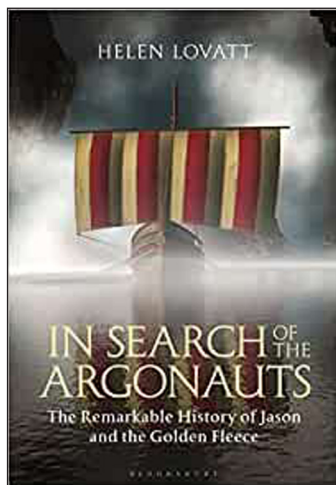
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In Search of the Argonauts. The Remarkable History of Jason and the Golden Fleece

Lovatt (H.) Pp. xvi + 255, ills. London: Bloomsbury Academic 2021. Paper, £22.99.
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Alison Henshaw

Independent Scholar
alison@henshaws.me



The Trojan War stories are very familiar to most of us, but the adventures of Jason perhaps less so, and they deserve to be better known as they include an extensive range of topic and theme particularly relevant to today's questioning society. Lovatt traces the development of the story through 'eight landmark versions' (p. 9), but covers many others, and includes the expected Classical authors, tragedy and epic, modern European authors, children's literature, opera and art (the

book is well illustrated). There are full notes and a list of versions/texts (xi–xv). Lovatt has a clear focus, and the detailed discussion is evidence of her extensive research.

Lovatt discusses (chapter 2, Femininity and Sexuality) such figures as Atalanta, a disturbing female presence among the male Argonauts, Hylas (was Heracles' love erotic or parental?), and Medea, by far the best known and written about of the characters. From where did she derive her power? Was she a strong woman or just a witch, a saviour or a traitor, an object of desire or fear, of sympathy or hatred? Successive authors seem almost to compete in their presentation of this powerful figure. How do we view the all-female society of Lemnos, as a society turned inside out, a

threat in a male-dominated society or a glance back to some golden age of a matriarchal society, as survivors or murderers? The answers may depend on the perspective or gender of the reader.

Chapter 3, Masculinity and Leadership, asks what makes a hero – special powers or skills, parentage or outstanding virtue. Can a woman be a hero, what makes an ordinary person (like us) a hero, does divine help or a magic power detract from one's heroism? What makes a good leader? Is Jason a good leader if he is reactive rather than proactive? How do you treat your team; do you bond or seek to control? How do you cope with a rival leader like Heracles (leave him behind), and what do you do when he is gone? What makes a villain, savagery or merely difference, and how can a villain be a worthy opponent? What is the relative value of brain vs brawn? Should you treat an enemy, like Amycus, with mercy or just kill him? Again, these questions are ones we ask today.

Chapter 4, Entertainment and the Marvellous, covers the role of the gods, incongruous figures in the 21st century except perhaps in children's literature. They have been viewed as both 'psychological allegory' (p. 108, cf Virgil *Aeneid* 9.185) or as explanations of natural phenomena. Are the human characters players or pawns in the game of life? Monsters like Talos, who can be seen as extremes or distortions of humanity, can evoke both fear and sympathy.

How do we treat others, strangers and foreigners, in general? Do they attract or repel us? Do we judge them or try to learn from them, impose our own ways on them in the name of 'civilisation', or simply destroy them? Our generation is not the first to debate these issues. Should we attempt to rationalise the tension between the geographical Mediterranean setting and the presence of exotic marvels, mythical beings, barbaric foreigners? (Chapter 5, Ethnicity and Otherness)

A hero's adventures (Chapter 6, Heroism and Betrayal) may include a journey, a quest, heroic feats (fighting a dragon), a (distracting) woman, near-death situations, success and failure, a time for self-development, a 'coming of age', moral choices. Is the cost of glory worth it? Is it more reprehensible to kill a child or an adult (Absyrtus)? Is it easier to identify with a hero like Jason who is flawed?

Chapter 7, Quest and Fleece, examines interpretations of 'myth'. 'Myth is by definition multiple' (p. 202), and is constantly being reshaped. Each new retelling uses, adapts or ignores its predecessors to suit its context, its audience's perspective or its author's agenda. There is no canonical Argonautica; Apollonius is a starting point, not definitive (p. 5). Valerius Flaccus' Roman *Argonautica*, for instance, views the story from a first century imperial perspective with a cosmic dimension. Few versions apart from his include Hercules' rescue of Hesione. How 'true' is any myth, a question discussed by Diodorus Siculus (4.44.4–6 see p. 91) which continues to exercise Christian theologians today.

Chapter 8, Findings and Endings, sums up and looks to the future. Lovatt's detailed discussion has shown how a familiar myth can be adapted to suit its context and how each generation can add new meanings and perspectives to the narrative. The voyage of the Argonauts includes all the aspects of a good story: entertainment, a gripping plot, timeless appeal, the starting point for discussion, and elements of the exotic and fantastic, but it is more than this. Many questions are raised and explored in their context, but the final answers are left to us the readers to reflect on and judge. Lovatt's approach has particular relevance today with our interest in the power and role of women, in diversity, race and

identity, in gender roles and reversal, in celebrities, in youth vs experience. It is a safe environment in which to explore such issues and to understand how our different perspectives may affect our point of view.

The book will appeal to Classical scholars and students of reception studies, and to anyone who loves a quest, literal or metaphorical, and wants a starting point for a discussion of any of the issues covered in it. It may prompt you to look out your childhood copy of Charles Kingsley, or track down the 1978 Dr Who series *Underworld*. It may make you see James Bond or Phileas Fogg with new eyes. Perhaps we all have our own golden fleece. If this is you, this book is only the start of your journey.

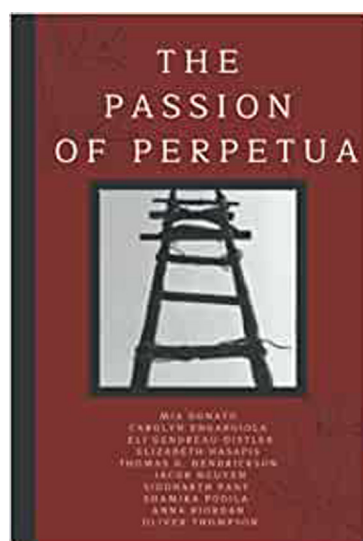
doi: 10.1017/S2058631022000083

The Passion of Perpetua

Donato (M.), Engargliola (C.), Gendreau-Distler (E.), Hasapis (E.), Hendrickson (T.G.), Nguyen (J.), Pant (S.), Podila (S.), Riordan (A.) and Thompson (O.) (edd.) Pp. x+93 Cambridge: Pixelia Publishing, 2021. Paper, £6.33 ISBN: 978-1-7370330-0-4

Charlotte Goddard

Head of Classics, Ampleforth College, UK
cpg@ampleforth.org.uk



For teachers and students wishing to read beyond the Classical authors typically prescribed in schools, and who have the time to do so, for students of Church history, and for the self-directed learner, *The Passion of Perpetua* is a welcome and accessible edition of a text which is little-known in schools.

This is a new student edition of the third century text, *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, by different authors, including, principally, the voice of Perpetua herself. As a

narrative, it is readable, economical, edifying and engaging, a lively choice for the classroom. It tells of Perpetua's alienation from her father, her miraculous visions, her trial and imprisonment with fellow Christians and her eventual voluntary martyrdom in the gladiatorial arena, standing united with her devoted slave, Felicity. The work involves extensive collaboration (ten joint authors are acknowledged and still more contributed). What is particularly exciting is that students from Stanford Online High School each took ownership of a section of text, and peer-reviewed the sections of others.

Later Latin is ideal for a school text: it has the advantage over Classical Latin of using simpler syntactical structure and shorter sentences. At the same time, it gives students a taste of 'real' Latin, composed in antiquity, an authentic text, offering eyewitness insight into the later Roman Empire.

The text is presented in a reader-friendly format, each short section following a very brief English introduction. The Latin is presented with macrons, and a thorough running vocabulary and linguistic commentary on each page, aiding fluency; a complete glossary is at the back. Hendrickson's introduction is generous (longer than the text itself) and supports the reader with an historical, cultural and linguistic context. Assuming an elementary understanding of Latin grammar (for example, in the British system the reader would ideally be post-GCSE but need not be much more advanced), Hendrickson explains departures from the Classical grammar and lexis with which the typical school reader will be familiar. He also gives the most accessible explanation of textual transmission that I have ever seen, and a bibliography which invites further study.

While mainstream Classical authors continue to dominate school curricula (if only because the exam specifications require it), schools today often actively seek to embrace texts which lie outside the mainstream. *The Passion of Perpetua* certainly fits the bill, and not just because it is a later text. In the introduction, Hendrickson writes: 'Perpetua's narrative provides an ideal jumping-off point for discussions about gender, class, religion, race and social order in the Roman world' (p.2). Doubtless the 'diversity boxes' it ticks will be part of its appeal for some. As the story of a woman, and one of African origin, it would for those reasons alone attract readers. That she is a strong woman in a man's world, for example fighting in gladiatorial combat (she describes herself at one point as *facta ... masculus*), makes her a character of particular interest, though Hendrickson's suggestion that 'she was a woman with a complex gender identity' is stretching a point. The speculation that Perpetua's relationship with Felicity may have been a lesbian one, which is occasionally aired, though unsubstantiated, is mentioned in a footnote.

The text will particularly attract Christian educators and theologians because Perpetua and Felicity are saints of the Roman Canon and therefore significant figures of the early Church. But Hendrickson makes no concessions to hagiography, neither acknowledging Perpetua as a canonical saint (although he notes that she and Felicity share a Saints Day) nor describing her with any sense of reverence. His emphasis is more on presenting her as she would have been received in her day, a member of an obscure religious cult, and a woman of exceptionally determined character. From the title of the original text, *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, it is not just Felicity's name which is omitted from the title of this edition; *sanctarum* has also disappeared. Another omission which Christian educators might note with surprise is reference to the significance of *passio* in a Christian context. But most surprising of all is Hendrickson's choice of the word 'radicalized' to describe Perpetua after her conversion to Christianity. The connotations of this word in today's world make this an audacious, even a provocative, choice. Here too there is surely a jumping-off point for discussion.

This is the first publication from the new Experrecta series, which is dedicated to publishing Latin texts by female authors for student readership. The series' name Experrecta, a quote from Perpetua (whose accounts of her visions end with her waking up, *experrecta sum*), singles out this text as something of a forerunner. We can look forward to further texts to follow.

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