

retellings of classical myth appears to grow longer by the year, Natalie Haynes stands out as the preeminent and exceptional pen amongst some very fine volumes.

In her latest work, she sheds new light on one of the most enduring, famous and feared characters of the ancient world. Haynes' subject is Medusa: born a mortal, though of divine parentage, Medusa is both human and beautiful. The only echo of her divine ancestry is betrayed by the wings on her otherwise human feet and her immortal sisters, the

Gorgons, Stheno and Euryale. Although known to many readers as the 'monster' slain by Perseus, son of Zeus, and depicted in films such as the 1981 *Clash of the Titans*, or the 2010 reboot of the same name, this book offers us a different interpretation. The basic premise is the same as the mythical tales: Medusa is raped by Poseidon but as the act happened in the temple of Athena, the goddess of wisdom takes vengeance on Medusa for an act which was not her fault. Medusa is transformed by the goddess into a Gorgon. Gorgons were considered terrifying creatures, with tusks, scales and wings. At once, instinct would tell us that Medusa is now viewed as the 'monster' we have come to know from other cultural depictions, and this is where Haynes' narrative genius appears most strikingly.

In most iterations, it is Perseus, son of Zeus, who is depicted as the hero, who must save his mother from a terrible marriage by capturing the head of a Gorgon and Medusa, as his fearsome, inhuman adversary. In this manner, *Stone Blind* destroys this narrative and rebuilds it anew. Medusa is a victim of circumstance, who displays kindness, courage and generosity, who loves her sisters even though their appearance terrifies others, while Perseus is a spoilt, whiny and vindictive bore. The way in which Haynes elegantly portrays this code switch is through the use of chapters told from different points of view. Each chapter in the narrative is dedicated to the perspective of a mortal, immortal or mythical being. Most of the characters in the work are female and this lends a fresh and engaging narrative to the 'Perseus-centred' perspectives of old.

The narrative's most informed and interesting point of view, entitled *Gorgoneion*, is told from the point of view of Medusa's disembodied head. Playing brilliantly with the established narrative, it offers the reader the chance to see Perseus from Medusa's point of view. On the first page, we are asked to consider that Perseus is not all we have been led to believe: 'But it is enough. Enough to know that the hero isn't the one who's kind and brave or loyal. Sometimes – not always, but sometimes – he is monstrous.'

As the question of whether Perseus is the villain has been posed, it is at the feet of the narrative to prove this charge and this it does brilliantly. Before Perseus acquires the Gorgon's head, he is self-centred and petulant. This is mainly played out in acerbic and often witty dialogue between Athena and Hermes (who are sent by Zeus to aid Perseus) and their semi-divine relation.

Once Perseus acquires the head of Medusa, however, he becomes petty and vengeful. As the *Gorgoneion* grants its owner the

power to turn anything or anyone to stone, Perseus now possesses a powerful weapon and wastes no time in deploying its phenomenal power. In one instance, he turns a shepherd to stone for refusing to give him shelter for the night. Later he turns the Titan Atlas to stone, because he is turned away from his palace.

At the end of the work, Perseus rescues the princess Andromeda. When he asks to marry her, it is telling that Haynes has Andromeda's parents, Cepheus, and his wife, Cassiopeia, express their deep unease about the match, calling Perseus both vain and dangerous.

Overall, the narrative ends where it should, Perseus shows his character by settling a quarrel at his wedding to Andromeda by turning her uncle Phineas and his followers to stone. At the insistence of the other gods, Zeus allows Athena to take the *Gorgoneion* from Perseus before he does any more irreparable damage. The narrative ends with the head of Medusa as part of the armour of Athena, victim and aggressor bound together. Ultimately *Stone Blind* reveals that the manner in which we apportion praise and status can often be no more than the reflection of the author. Haynes notes that 'as the story is always told, she [Medusa] is the monster. We'll see about that', and she is correct, as *Stone Blind* shows Perseus to be a cruel, vicious and self-serving creature, while Athena is petty, vain and jealous, despite her immortality. The narrative suggests that it isn't always the characters that shape a narrative but the angle from which you view them which matters most. Haynes' newest narrative proves this brilliantly.

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## A Greek Reader. A Companion to A Primer of Biblical Greek

Jeong (M.) Pp. xii + 180. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2022. Paper, US\$19. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7991-2.

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This Greek reader is designed to accompany Clayton Croy's *A Primer of Biblical Greek* (Croy, 2007). To the extent that it focuses on Koine Greek, therefore, its use as practice is limited for a typical British Classics audience; there is, however, much to admire and consider in how the book is conceived and executed.

Unlike most Koine textbooks I have encountered, in this one Jeong makes explicit reference to Greek teaching in Classics, citing Robert Patrick in this very journal on comprehensible input (Patrick, 2019). I am glad to see crossover between the areas, and hope this is a sign of the potential for future collaboration. Jeong claims to be taking a lead from Krashen in trying to write comprehensible and compelling stories which will carry second language learners along. By comprehensible, he means in keeping with Croy's sequence of presenting grammar and vocabulary. He leaves the reader to decide how compelling the Greek is. Titling it

*A Greek Reader*, in presenting it as a companion to Croy, he is locating this as a book dealing with Koine Greek, expressed as 'biblical'. This split between 'biblical' (which could include the Septuagint), 'Koine' (which need not be Christian), and 'New Testament' (as many textbooks describe themselves) is a tension felt throughout Christian Greek textbooks, but not one Jeong mentions. I discuss this in a forthcoming article (Ryan, [forthcoming](#)).

The links with the primer are evident throughout. On p. 86, for example, there is a note tying the lessons to effective use within the semester system, emphasising the American market as a target audience. This can be easily ignored, and the book adapted for other groups. In the introduction, Jeong lists three key activities: translating the text, reading the text together, and listening to stories. This sequence reflects his teaching methodology. Teachers may want to develop further options, in order to get the most out of the book, particularly if not using Croy's primer.

To the extent that this is designed to complement Croy's primer, it will always be a supplement, rather than a method in its own right. Given that this book is a supplement, however, it also works well to supplement other things. Teachers in a UK setting, Classical or Koine, may find it useful for enhancing reading, stretching students, consolidating learning, and building fluency. It demonstrates how existing grammar-focused resources can be adapted to different teaching methods, converting something aimed at grammar-translation into an extended reading approach.

The exercises themselves may provide good supplementary reading for students of Classical Greek; the level of support given in the notes and vocabulary is such that any major Koine differences will be explained, and the easy flow of the Greek will enable students to follow along regardless of these differences. The lack of vocabulary list at the back may frustrate those who want to look things up, but this is indicative of Jeong's approach. He has taken care to make each lesson's notes and vocabulary as comprehensive as possible, so that the reading experience is not disrupted by students having to flip through different resources.

The Greek is clearly printed, although a slightly larger font size and better line spacing would have made this even better. Accents are used throughout, but not commented on in particular. Vocabulary is given with simple, single terms, rather than any depth or range of lexical possibilities, which may speed up reading, but does direct interpretation in particular ways, and teachers may find students benefit from some further vocabulary discussions to understand more about the variety of meanings for more complex words.

In summary, this is a useful book for Koine Greek students, and may have a role to play in supporting Classical Greek students in improving fluency and range. It is unusual in employing methods based in Krashen's theories to Greek, and may be extremely helpful in paving the way for more pedagogical support in doing this, and in bridging gaps between Classics and Theology teaching methods and resources.

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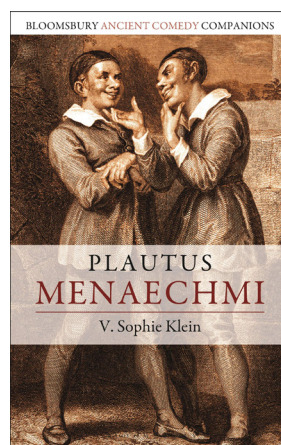
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## Plautus: Menaechmi

Klein (V.S.) Pp. x + 179. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022. Paper, £17.99. ISBN: 978-1-350-09272-3.

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This is the second volume from this series that I have reviewed and I notice the same breezy scholarship and knowing lightness of touch as I did in Franko's *Mostellaria*. To recap: these 'Companions' are aimed at the general, informed reader who is interested in drama.

We start with a general introduction to Plautus, Roman Comedy and this play. This is comprehensive without being overwhelming and Klein's sense of fun can be seen in the titling (*TWIN*roduction....), the puns and the wordplay which pepper the text throughout the book.

The second section (*Persons and Places of TWIN*terest....) introduces the mechanics of a singular plot and the relevance of Rome vs. Epidamnus. However, most of this section deals with the specifics of the different characters, not merely the two (or one?) protagonists. There is much nuanced and informative comment. Studying this will enhance the reading of other Roman comedies, as well as lead to an understanding of their Greek forerunners.

In the third section (*TWIN*terplay....) Klein deals with Comic Language and Stage Business, but this evolves into a disquisition on the mistaken identity bit, wherein – remarkably – the two Menaechmi only meet at the denouement of the plot. Klein also deals with metatheatrical and Plautine language, both in wondrous and informative detail.

As is, I think, typical of these Companions, Klein's fourth section (*TWIN*fluence....) delves into the considerable later transmission of the play and its central plot device; unsurprisingly, it is by far the longest chapter. An early Italian translation and three other dramatic progeny are covered: Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* is examined in fascinating detail. I was glad to be introduced to *Les Ménechmes* of J-F Regnard whose own life story reads like the plot of a comedy. Goldoni's *Venetian Twins* deserves to be better known. The 1938 Rodgers & Hart extravaganza, *The Boys from Syracuse*, merits only ten pages, although the scholarship on display is just as impressive.

There is an Appendix, detailing the works covered, useful Notes on the text and a Bibliography, both extensive, and a *TWIN*dex (!); the book repays re-reading and I cannot recommend it highly enough.

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