While I admit to taking up The Faces of the Goddess already convinced that the Great Mother represents an important archetype of the modern Western psyche more than any putative matriarchy held by women honored for their sexual generativity, I was further persuaded of that view by Motz’s careful and culturally specific treatments of the actual and mythological roles of and attitudes toward women within each context. By the end of the book, you may also be persuaded that the reduction of the female image to its reproductive and nurturing capacities, while perhaps seductive as a pathway leading out of patriarchy, is insufficient for an understanding of its complexity. Establishing images of feminine power and authority in the social and religious consciousness of today’s peoples is essential to curing our patriarchal dis-ease, but it comes at the price of allowing ourselves to realize that this is not an act of restoration, but of hope.


Adrienne Mayor

Folklorists familiar with classical Greek myth will be surprised to learn of the existence of an obscure but rich body of lesser-known popular materials from ancient Greece. Available now for the first time in one collection—some material never before translated into English—these novels, fables, nuggets of wisdom, jokes, fortune-telling manuals, cemetery verses, and compilations of natural marvels have been generally ignored as unpolished sensationalism, “light reading” unworthy of serious study. In presenting this wide range of examples of what he terms “ancient Greek popular literature,” William Hansen has done a signal service for scholars interested in what interested the reading public of antiquity. Since many of the texts in this volume circulated in several languages up through the Middle Ages, Hansen’s anthology is a treasure for medievalists as well as classicists, ancient historians, scholars of European popular culture, and folklorists.

Hansen’s thought provoking introduction relates ancient popular literature to modern counterparts and traces similarities and differences to formulate a valuable definition of the genre of the ancient popular aesthetic, as opposed to the traditional elite aesthetic. Popular literature of antiquity offered readers what Pierre Bourdieu called the primacy of content over form—straightforward engagement of the audience, rather than subtle,
intellectually challenging detachment. Modern mass-market media can thus be seen as the commercial development of a kind of literature that first flourished in the earliest centuries of our era.

Hansen covers issues of authorship, intent, audience, circulation, and other important questions raised by this emerging field of study. Ancient popular literature manifests typical traits. Most of the works, for example, are of unknown authorship. In addition, the writings are subject to "textual fluidity," meaning that the anonymous works were freely abridged, expanded, and altered by subsequent authors. Finally, the composition is "non-organic," that is, plot sequences and logic can seem arbitrary rather than carefully orchestrated.

Hansen's selections are grouped into four categories. Each section opens with a discussion of the historical context and literary parameters of the genre, and each selection is prefaced with an introductory note. The first section, on popular fiction, includes a romantic novel, a Christian novel, a comic novel, an historical novel about Alexander the Great, a humorous biography of Aesop, and an example of wisdom literature in which a philosopher offers pithy replies to a series of questions such as "What is a friend?" and "What is death?" The earliest example of extended prose fiction is the "charming" Ephesian Tale (first century A.D.). The romance, featuring the adventures of lost lovers reunited, appealed to a demotic audience as well as sophisticated readers who enjoyed escape literature. The Christian novella, Acts of Paul and Thecla, was extremely popular, translated into Latin, Syriac, Coptic, Arabic, and Slavic in antiquity. But it was also controversial, raising feminist issues among the early Church fathers.

A jokebook, a book of wonders, and a collection of fables make up the second section, "Popular Compilations." The ancient "numskull" jokes are amazing counterparts to twentieth-century, vaudeville-inspired one-liners, while the natural wonders about live centaurs and monstrous births are uncannily similar to today's supermarket tabloid headlines.

The third section is a handbook for fortune telling, apparently intended for marketplace vendors. For ninety-two personal questions (such as "Will I inherit money?", "Will I win my case in court?", and "Will I marry the woman I love?") there are ten possible negative and positive answers. The book offers an intriguing glimpse of the concerns of everyday people in the second century A.D.

The final section, "Popular Literature in Public Places," translates a series of verses and sentiments inscribed on tombstones. The themes illustrate both formalistic and creative epitaphs from the first through fourth centuries A.D. in Italy, Greece, Anatolia, and Egypt.
The ancient best sellers in *Anthology of Ancient Greek Popular Literature* cannot fail to engage modern readers. This is a fascinating collection of rare social documents revealing the hopes, dreams, anxieties, daily life, moral values, and popular beliefs of individuals of the ancient Mediterranean world.


Tom Mould

The collection of Nez Perce Coyote tales that Deward E. Walker, Jr. and Daniel N. Matthews amass in this book—originally published in hard cover as *Blood of the Monster: The Nez Perce Coyote Cycle*—fits neatly within the tradition of such collections of Native American narrative where the text is the thing. Walker and Matthews are explicit about their focus: “This book was conceived primarily as a collection of stories rather than a study of the theoretical controversies surrounding how anthropologists interpret myth” (xi). Happily, the authors hold to this dictum only in the presentation of the texts themselves. Part Two of the book is a “Descriptive Interpretation of Coyote’s Character,” in which Walker and Matthews address many of the questions raised implicitly by the texts. In doing so, they provide a culturally specific picture of this trickster figure that challenges past assumptions of this slippery and complex character.

Walker and Matthews’s motivation for eschewing a scholastic presentation is partially an attempt to provide the Nez Perce people with texts in a form they would most appreciate. “We have been informed by the Nez Perce that there is virtue in the relative simplicity of our presentation, quite unlike the confusion they sometimes feel when reviewing other more theoretical presentations” (xii). However, Walker and Matthews truthfully acknowledge that they were not completely successful, noting that both tribal and academic colleagues have “tended not to favor our focus on only one character of the myths, the Coyote” (xii). The suggestion is that by isolating Coyote tales from the rest of Nez Perce myth, one risks misinterpretation of the tales themselves, not to mention Nez Perce mythology in general. Such a risk seems particularly evident when reading the tale “Killer Mosquito,” for example, in which Coyote is a minor character.

It is the picture of Coyote as a unique Nez Perce construction and unique trickster figure, rather than an amalgamation from various cultures, that is one of Walker and Matthews’s greatest accomplishments in this book. This is no small achievement. Although Paul Radin’s seminal book *The