
Though a great deal has been written about Greek abstract personifications, especially studies of their philosophical significance, their literary function, and their visual iconography (including a monograph by this reviewer), this is the first full-length study I am aware of that focusses on the religious identity and cults of personified divinities. A revised version of the author’s London University PhD dissertation, the book is an admirable example of the interdisciplinary nature of the modern study of Greek religion, drawing in almost equal measure on evidence that is literary and philological, epigraphical, archaeological and art-historical. Stafford seems to be completely at home in all these fields (remarkably so for a first book) and is consistently able to weave together the various strands of evidence into a plausible reconstruction of cults that have been debated for many years.

The book opens with a succinct account of the fundamental issues that have long attended the study of Greek personifications: what is a personification, as defined in antiquity and in modern scholarship? What is allegory? Stafford goes on to survey the range of personifications found in the various literary genres—poetry, drama, oratory—as well as in the visual arts, then comes to what is for her the heart of the matter, the ‘theology of personifications’ and theories of what special role the worship of personifications played in a polytheistic religious system that could accommodate such a wide variety of cults. A particularly strong section of this introductory chapter is on the ‘gender question,’ essentially, why is it that the personifications we hear about in texts and see in Greek art are overwhelmingly female? Stafford is not content to leave it at the simple observation that most of the words that become personified are grammatically feminine and presents a good, critical review of the problem that goes beyond any in the previous scholarship.

The body of the book is composed of six ‘case studies’ of major personifications for whom cults, usually in several parts of the Greek world, are attested. This is a clever strategy. It means the book will not function as a directory of personifications with cults: for that we have F. W. Hamdorf, *Griechische Kultpersonifikationen der vorhellenistischen*
Zeit (Mainz, 1964), which is thin on analysis but thorough in cataloguing sources and representations. But, at the same time, the six—Themis, Nemesis, Peitho, Hygieia, Eirene, and Eleos—comprise a significant portion of the most interesting and best-attested personifications, and the treatment of each is comprehensive enough to form a kind of self-contained mini-monograph. They also represent the full range of personifications, in several different ways. They range from those on the verge of being fully-fledged goddesses, with mythology and genealogy of their own (Themis) to purely allegorical figures who exist only to personify their name (Eirene). In between are personifications who are originally so closely associated with a single divinity (as Peitho with Aphrodite, Hygieia with Athena) that it is debated whether they are simply one aspect of that Olympian.

The period that mainly interests Stafford is, broadly speaking, the Classical, from the later sixth through the fourth centuries. But the literary and epigraphical evidence she draws on is much broader, including anything from the Hellenistic and Roman periods that might preserve information relevant to the origins and early flourishing of the cults. This is both one of the greatest strengths of the book and also a potential danger, constantly posing the question how reliable are late sources for reconstructing cult practice hundreds of years earlier. It is a danger that Stafford confronts by carefully evaluating the relevance of each individual source. The iconographical sources, by contrast, are virtually all of the fifth and fourth centuries (mainly vases), only a small selection illustrated here but well chosen. Although they fall into the period of greatest interest, Stafford is often loath to give them much weight as evidence of cult, preferring to see in them clues to the figure’s ‘character’ (e.g. 160 on Hygieia).

There is space here only to mention a few highlights for this reader: the plan of the Akropolis with hypothetical locations of various shrines (64) making good use of inscriptions such as those from the Theatre of Dionysos; the discussion of the cult of Peitho on Thasos, with the intriguing suggestion that it was imported there from Athens in the 420s (113-115); and the complex analysis of the thorny problem of the ‘Altar of Pity’, with the conclusion that Eleos was never a real god, but only ‘within the confines of rhetoric’ (221).
In a book that draws on such an extraordinarily broad cross-section of the scholarly literature, Stafford seems to have missed almost nothing and is quite up-to-date. Since she makes extensive use of this reviewer’s work, sometimes critically but always fairly, I may take the liberty of a few remarks. On the play *Nemesis* by Kratinos, Stafford might have profited from my paper in Robin Hägg (ed.), *Ancient Greek Hero Cult* (Stockholm, 1999) 99-107, with other references more current than Godolphin in 1931. My suggestion of a political interpretation of Aponia (‘freedom from toil’), cited on 163 and n.65, is now obviated by the discovery that the one inscribed representation is a phantom (see Gloria Ferrari, in *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 30, 1995, 17-18). For the statue group of Eirene and Ploutos depicted on Panathenaic amphoras (178-180) Stafford seems to have missed the two most important discussions: Panos Valavanis, Παναθηναϊκοί Αμφορείς από την Ερέτρια (Athens, 1991) and N. Eschbach, *Statuen auf panathenaischen Preisamphoren des 4. Jhs. v. Chr.* (Mainz, 1986).

This is a book that will be most useful to a wide range of scholars and advanced students. Stafford’s lively and readable style gives off no whiff of the dissertation, and her thorough and thoughtful discussions are those of a mature scholar. She has found a way into the study of Greek personifications that, while dealing with problems that have been wrestled with for two centuries, manages to make the subject fresh and fascinating.

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