

The final chapter ('Epilogue: Philosophical Debate and Normative Theory') turns once again to the question of theory and practice, noting Cicero's own interest in the 'tension between a conception of philosophy and of philosophical ethics as in its very nature a debate, and the idea that the point of doing philosophy is to find and advocate a sound basis for living our lives' (229–30). This is, of course, a question that remains central to modern ethics and political philosophy. Schofield suggests that Cicero is willing to suspend his Academic commitments for the sake of undertaking 'a practical project in applied political theory'. In the end, for Cicero, philosophy is of value when it serves to defend the *res publica*. This is a masterful and lively study, which will be of value to all those with an interest in ancient political philosophy, and, indeed, Republican politics and history.

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Reception

From Oxford University Press's 'Classical Presences' series, Carol Dougherty's *Travel and Home in Homer's Odyssey and Contemporary Literature*¹ places Homer's *Odyssey* in dialogue with five twentieth- and twenty-first-century novels which all deal in some way with the ideas of home or travel.² The author focuses on novels which, on the whole, do not respond overtly to the *Odyssey*, but which instead share key themes – such as transience, reunion, nostalgia, or family relationships – with the Homeric poem. The conversations which she initiates between the ancient epic and the modern novels inspire us to rethink previously held assumptions about the *Odyssey*. For example, Dougherty's exploration of Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* (1918), in which a veteran returns from the First World War with no memory of his wife, prompts her reader to consider Odysseus' stay with Calypso as 'a kind of nostalgic amnesia, a necessary break that enables rather than an obstacle that impedes his return' (111). As 'an experiment in improvisatory criticism' (16), this book yields rich rewards for the reader who is already familiar with the *Odyssey*, as well as for those whose point of entry is one of the five modern novels. The framework applied – in which each chapter presents a reading of a relevant section of the *Odyssey* before setting out an analysis of the contemporary novel with which it is paired – is perhaps more familiar from comparative literary studies than from classical reception scholarship, yet Dougherty's approach is one which stimulates fresh thought about how we as readers (re-)interpret and 'receive' ancient texts based on the contexts in which we encounter them.

¹ *Travel and Home in Homer's Odyssey and Contemporary Literature. Critical Encounters and Nostalgic Returns*. By Carol Dougherty. Classical Presences. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019. Pp. vii + 164. Hardback £63, ISBN: 978-0-19-881401-6.

² The selected novels, each of which is the focus of a single chapter, are: Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* (1992); Marilynne Robinson's *Housekeeping* (1980); Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006); Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* (1918); and Toni Morrison's *Home* (2012).

Also new from the ‘Classical Presences’ series is Judith Fletcher’s wide-ranging *Myths of the Underworld in Contemporary Culture*,³ an examination of nine contemporary works which engage with myths of descent to the underworld. Drawing on a variety of genres – including short stories, comics, novels, children’s fiction, and a cinematic adaptation – Fletcher explores the relationship of these receptions with their ancient predecessors (including, pleasingly, Near Eastern underworld narratives alongside those found in Greek and Latin texts), as well as with earlier postclassical adaptations of these myths. Her study draws on contemporary works which evoke the underworld metaphorically (as, for example, a border crossing in Elena Ferrante’s novels, or in narratives of displacement and immigration in the work of Salman Rushdie), as well as those whose plots feature an actual underworld descent (these include John Barth’s *Lost in the Funhouse* and the *Sandman* series by Neil Gaiman). Along the way she touches on the relationship of these versions to key theoretical concepts: postmodernism, postcolonialism, and feminism. As Fletcher acknowledges, the underworld descent is ‘a myth that has seemingly infinite possibilities for adaptation’ (12); this absorbing and original study tackles an impressive range of those adaptations.

Meanwhile Brill’s ‘Metaforms’ series has brought us the first edited volume in a series of four which will be dedicated to the character of Herakles/Hercules. *Herakles Inside and Outside the Church*⁴ focuses on the mythical hero’s reception within the predominantly Christian cultures of Europe in the Middle Ages. This collection well illustrates both the diversity of relevant source material and the variety of critical approaches which can be applied to the reception of a single character. It is particularly noteworthy for bringing to the reader’s attention several modes of reception which rarely (if ever) feature in classical reception studies; Arlene Allan’s opening chapter, for example, considers how an early ‘Christ-curious’ native Greek speaker may have drawn connections between the figures of Herakles and Jesus when listening to the biblical Book of Revelation. In this vein, Cary MacMahon’s piece also stands out – she unearths the evidence for representations of Hercules as woven decoration on tunics from Egypt in the second to sixth centuries CE. The collection as a whole is especially strong on visual receptions, with other essays examining Herakles/Hercules’ appearance on church architecture and public buildings, and a delightful chapter by Giuseppe Capriotti focusing on the woodcut illustrations accompanying the 1497 edition of Giovanni dei Bonsignori’s translation of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. The full-colour images are a welcome addition here. Given the tenacity and geographical reach of Herakles/Hercules, the four-volume project of which this is the first part is an ambitious one. Already the series promises to become a valuable contribution to our understanding of the afterlives of this mythical figure, albeit one whose unnervingly high price tag means that most readers will only be able to access it via an academic library.

³ *Myths of the Underworld in Contemporary Culture. The Backward Gaze*. By Judith Fletcher. Classical Presences. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019. Pp. viii + 224. Hardback £63, ISBN: 978-0-19-876709-1.

⁴ *Herakles Inside and Outside the Church. From the First Apologists to the End of the Quattrocento*. Edited by Arlene Allan, Eva Anagnostou-Laoutides, and Emma Stafford. Metaforms 18. Leiden and Boston, MA, Brill, 2019. Pp. xix + 356. Hardback €139/\$168, ISBN: 978-90-04-42152-3.

New from Bloomsbury's 'Imagines' series, Filippo Carlà-Uhink's *Representations of Classical Greece in Theme Parks*⁵ also focuses on a mode of reception which has as yet received little attention from classical reception scholars, despite the growth in interest in theme park studies in other academic disciplines. The material discussed in this volume covers a broad geographical span and a range of sites including, for example, Happy Valley Beijing, Parc Astérix in France, the Disney parks in the US, and Europa-Park in Rust, Germany. This is no mere sightseeing tour, however. Meticulous description of the attractions in question is accompanied by detailed explication of the factors which influence the ways in which ancient Greece – and in particular Greek history and myth – is represented in theme parks. These observations on local (and sometimes global) contexts which have influenced specific receptions are underpinned by a clear explication of relevant theoretical approaches. What results is an enjoyable study of both the cultural phenomenon of the theme park and the ways in which the idea of 'ancient Greece' finds its way into contemporary visual culture.

Volumes of ancient texts edited by classicists are a familiar sight, yet it is far rarer to find reception texts which have been edited by a scholar who specializes in classical reception studies. A new Methuen Drama edition of Luis Alfaro's Greek/*Griego* plays, edited by Rosa Andújar,⁶ will therefore be a welcome addition to the bookshelves of those with an interest in the afterlives of Athenian tragedy. This volume brings together for the first time as a trilogy Alfaro's *Electricidad* (inspired by Sophocles' *Electra*), *Oedipus El Rey*, and *Mojada* (a version of *Medea* set in Los Angeles). Set in twenty-first-century New York and Los Angeles, the plays explore issues affecting the Chicanx and wider Latinx communities. Andújar, like Alfaro, is attuned to the nuances of Chicanx and Latinx cultural and ethnic identities. This is especially apparent in her engaging introductory essay which contextualizes the plays in the light of Alfaro's own identity as 'a queer Chicanx from a working-class background' (1), his wider body of work (as theatre practitioner, educator, and activist), the performance history of Greek tragedy in North American urban theatre, and Chicanx and Latinx theatre. Each play is then prefaced by a short essay illuminating its relationship with the ancient texts from which it takes inspiration. A comprehensive production history is also provided for each text, including links to press coverage and reviews. The inclusion of the transcript of an interview with Alfaro, conducted by Andújar, will be of particular interest for readers seeking to examine practitioners' own reflections on their creative process. The volume as a whole exemplifies the way in which collaboration between academics and practitioners enhances classical reception studies: this reviewer would be delighted to see more contemporary classical reception texts being given similar treatment.

If you were wondering what might sit well on the bookshelf beside the Alfaro trilogy, why not try *Greeks and Romans on the Latin American Stage*?⁷ In this volume, Andújar

⁵ *Representations of Classical Greece in Theme Parks*. By Filippo Carlà-Uhink. Imagines: Classical Reception in the Visual and Performing Arts. London and New York, Bloomsbury, 2020. Pp. x + 263. 24 b/w illustrations. Hardback £76.50, ISBN: 978-1-4742-9786-8.

⁶ *The Greek Trilogy of Luis Alfaro. Electricidad; Oedipus El Rey; Mojada*. Edited by Rosa Andújar. London and New York, Bloomsbury, 2020. Pp. vii + 295. Hardback £75, ISBN: 978-1-3501-5539-8; paperback £24.99, ISBN: 978-1-3501-5540-4.

⁷ *Greeks and Romans on the Latin American Stage*. Edited by Rosa Andújar and K. P. Nikoloutsos. Bloomsbury Studies in Classical Reception. London and New York, Bloomsbury, 2020. Pp. xii + 296. 12 b/w illustrations. Hardback £95, ISBN: 978-1-3501-2561-2.

and her co-editor, Konstantinos Nikoloutsos, have gathered together chapters that ‘illustrate a variety of case studies that not only engage with the classical in distinct ways but also correspond to particular moments of crisis and foundational junctures in modern Latin American societies’ (15). The case studies address, in three sections, plays engaging with Greek and Roman drama which were performed in the Southern Cone of South America (Argentina and Chile); Brazil; and the Caribbean and North America. The book focuses predominantly on the twentieth century, although Chapter 2 looks at Juan Cruz Varela’s *Dido* (1823) and the final two chapters examine the twenty-first-century performances of Feliks Moriso-Lewa’s *Antigòn*, Luis Alfaro, and Perla de la Rosa. Before you get to the case studies, the editors provide an introduction fizzing with helpful social and historical contextualization for a readership less familiar with the issues and complexities surrounding these diverse ‘Latin’ American receptions. The methodological and theoretical discussion is recommended for anyone interested in twentieth-century and postcolonial receptions, and will be usefully read alongside the introduction of *The Oxford Handbook of Greek Drama in the Americas* (2015, edited by Kathryn Bosher *et al.*). Andújar and Nikoloutsos creatively modify existing reception models and stress the importance of a flexible approach, responsive to local/regional political and cultural experience. It is excellent to see scholarly treatments of American classical receptions extending now from Canada to the Cape, but, as both studies attest, there remains much to be done.

*Classics and Irish Politics, 1916–2016*⁸ is a weighty and wide-ranging volume from OUP’s ‘Classical Presences’ series. Its twenty-one chapters are arranged in six sections, after an introduction in which the editors set out the motivation for the volume: that is, to ‘reframe our understanding of classical influences in the last hundred years of Irish culture along sociopolitical lines and from fresh perspectives’ (2). Torrence and O’Rourke invite the parallel with postcolonial appropriations of the classics, before claiming that twentieth-century Irish reception offers a unique case, insofar as it is ‘the only postcolonial culture with native precolonial experience in classical languages and literature dating back to the sixth century’ (1). This long and deep association with the classical languages and literature, as well as Ireland’s continuing political, religious, and linguistic divisions and relative proximity (both cultural and geospatial) to its former colonizer certainly makes for a particularly complex and contested blend of post-colonial classics. While Roman culture and the Latin language became associated with the ‘SPQR mentality’ (35) of British imperialism and elitism, as discussed by Declan Kiberd, ancient Greece – ever fending off those colonizing Persians – appears to have become a more attractive proposition for the Irish. Exceptions abound, of course, with the Northern Irish poetic receptions of the Roman elegists, discussed by O’Rourke (Chapter 15), and Patrick Dineen’s engagements with Virgil, discussed by Fiachra Mac Góráin (Chapter 7). Chapters are contributed by a formidable cast of scholars from several disciplines. They cover a wide range of Irish literary and material cultural engagements with the Greek and Roman classics.

⁸ *Classics and Irish Politics, 1916–2016*. By Isabelle Torrence and Donncha O’Rourke. Classical Presences. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. xviii + 472. Illustrated. Hardback £90, ISBN: 978-0-19-886448-6.

Such an authoritative account of Irish reception and its political connotations would pair up well with *Seamus Heaney and the Classics*,⁹ which offers the first full examination of the Irish poet's rich contribution to the field of classical reception. Heaney, whose celebrated translation of Book 6 of Virgil's *Aeneid* was published in 2016, three years after his death, engaged with the classics throughout his illustrious career. Chapters 2–9 focus on Heaney's interactions with Greek texts and culture, and 10–15 on those with Latin texts and Rome, especially the poetry of Virgil. This rich volume provides an excellent handbook for the teaching of Heaney's classical receptions, and a welcome stimulus for further research.

Never too far from the surface of both volumes on Irish reception are the complex interrelations of classical and Celtic influence. For a deep dive into this subject, the reader should look no further than Francesca and Rhys Kaminski-Jones's volume *Celts, Romans, Britons*.¹⁰ This book operates on the rugged intersection between Celtic and classical reception studies, encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration in a hybrid field that requires a high degree of interdisciplinary expertise. After an opening chapter which offers an instructive, learned, but also admirably gentle introduction to the long history of Celtic–classical interrelations, chapters are arranged chronologically, from Brutus of Troy to Brexit Britain. They all engage at some level with the concept of British identity and how 'Celticism' and 'classicism' (both well contextualized as problematic terms in the introduction) have been employed in debates surrounding national identity formation, from late antiquity to the present.

So many of the books that have passed across our desk this season have been enriched by deeply informed discussion of the political, historical, and cultural contexts. Keen attention has also been paid to interdisciplinary collaboration, especially in the edited volumes. The publications reviewed above reveal a classical reception studies in full voice and undaunted by complex topics. It is encouraging and exciting to see just how diverse and omnivorous the subject becomes.

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⁹ *Seamus Heaney and the Classics. Bann Valley Muses*. Edited by Stephen Harrison, Fiona Macintosh, and Helen Eastman. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019. Pp. xii + 288. 4 colour illustrations. Hardback £70, ISBN: 978-0-19-880565-6.

¹⁰ *Celts, Romans, Britons. Classical and Celtic Influence in the Construction of British Identities*. Edited by Francesca Kaminski-Jones and Rhys Kaminski-Jones. Classical Presences. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. x + 266. 9 illustrations. Hardback £100, ISBN: 978-0-19-886307-6.