

cage, does more than mark amorous mischief: he is part of ‘the Roman habituation to physical brutality’ (173), a society in which the torture and degradation of slaves was routine.

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Reception

It might seem unduly cautious to consider reception as still an ‘emerging’ sub-discipline within Classics, but a selection of publications from recent years provides evidence of its continuous development and diversification. Edited volumes (the preferred format in reception studies’ infancy) are still very much in evidence, but, as this subject review indicates, an increasing number of monographs bear witness to the confidence and rigour of new work in the field.

We begin with two very different works on the modern reception of Homer. Marc Bizer has produced a highly focused study of the changing and contested role of appeal to Homeric epic in political debates over sovereignty and governance in Renaissance France.¹ Bizer demonstrates the resonance of the Homeric poems for court councillors and men of letters throughout the sixteenth century, an age when monarchs declared their descent from Trojan stock and humanists saw possibilities for advancement in offering advice to kings. The first half of the book spans the decades 1530–1560 and encompasses Guillaume Budé, Jean Dorat, Pierre de Ronsard, and Joachim du Bellay among the Pléiade poets, and the critic of tyranny (and friend of Michel de Montaigne) Étienne de la Boétie. It contains much that will interest classicists, from the perhaps surprising co-option of *both* Odysseus and Agamemnon as figures of princely prudence, to the flexibility of the range of political-allegorical interpretations performed upon the epics in this early period. Bizer draws attention to the foundation of such readings in longer traditions of Homeric (and Virgilian) allegoresis, which were given new stimulus in the sixteenth century through the dissemination of pseudo-Plutarch’s *Essay on the Life and Writings of Homer* and the works of Erasmus (18–30). In the second part he tracks how currents of Homeric interpretation shifted during the French Wars of Religion, as commentators on both sides of the religious divide sought to advance their views on the wisdom or otherwise of toleration, the authority of rulers, and the liberty of subjects by reference to models of kingship, social governance, and self-governance extracted from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. He argues convincingly that the writings of Huguenot critics such as Jean de Sponde were testament to the continued force of humanist notions of Homer as a guide to political wisdom, even as they sought to reject his by-now-traditional authority as a ‘mirror for princes’. This is a learned and specialist work as well as a meticulously detailed one; its primary audience is surely intellectual historians, but, in addition to many

¹ *Homer and the Politics of Authority in Renaissance France*. By Marc Bizer. Classical Presences. New York, Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. xii + 245. 4 illustrations. Hardback £55, ISBN: 978-0-19-973156-5.

interesting individual observations, the student of classical receptions will find food for thought in Bizer's overall examination of the plasticity of interpretations of canonical texts under changing political conditions and diverse ideological imperatives.

Justine McConnell also focuses on a set of modern readings and rewritings of Homer which carry political resonances.² Unlike Bizer, she resists drawing extensive connections between the responses to the *Odyssey* that she examines, arguing that the diversity of receptions among writers of 'ultimately African descent' since the 1930s should not be reduced to a single perspective, and aligning her approach with Stuart Hall's notion of the 'diasporic' in opposition to homogenizing and potentially imperialistic ideas of ethnicity and cultural identity (3–4). The result is a certain tension between her insistence upon the 'radical differences' between various anti- and post-colonial readings of Homer, which can only be traced to their authors' 'diverse political, personal, and cultural concerns' (237), and her tentative attempts to define themes of persistent appeal within the *Odyssey* itself ('its story is inherently of proto-colonialism, of dislocation from home and from one's identity, of struggle against the unfamiliar, and even of sympathy for the "other"', 258). The works of each of the artists she examines (Aimé Césaire, Ralph Ellison, Derek Walcott, Jon Amiel, Wilson Harris, Njabulo Ndebele, and Jatinder Verma) are carefully contextualized, but the most exciting parts come in her close readings of their writings against the Homeric text, as when she argues persuasively that the oscillation between sympathy and distance in Césaire's presentation of the Cyclops encourages a more nuanced reading of the ambiguities and equivocations of Odysseus' first-person narration within the ancient poem. A lengthy, analytical introduction helpfully situates McConnell's work within recent scholarship on classics and colonialism. In addition to its appeal to researchers, one can imagine this book finding a place on advanced undergraduate and Master's reading lists.

In fact, there has been a notable surge of scholarly activity in this area lately, with a number of recent monographs addressing the profound and long-lasting effects of empire and colonialism on modern receptions of antiquity, from a diverse array of perspectives. Sarah Butler's assessment of Britain's complicated relationship with ancient Rome begins in the mid-Victorian era, with the empire at its height, and tracks its development through to 1920.³ She shows how, throughout these decades of immense change and upheaval, the model of ancient Rome persisted as a topic of debate and an intellectual tool, even as it provoked anxiety and controversy (how could Britain's empire avoid Rome's decline and fall?) and demanded repeated re-evaluation (when might 'republic' provide a better model than 'empire?'). A certain amount of this terrain has already been effectively mapped out elsewhere,⁴ but Butler's contribution is an emphasis on the extent to which Rome had become

² *Black Odysseys. The Homeric Odyssey in the African Diaspora Since 1939*. By Justine McConnell. Classical Presences. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. x + 312. 5 illustrations. Hardback £65, ISBN: 978-0-19-960500-2.

³ *Britain and its Empire in the Shadow of Rome. The Reception of Rome in Socio-political Debate from the 1850s to the 1920s*. By Sarah J. Butler. London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2012. Pp. viii + 256. Hardback £65. ISBN: 978-1-44-115925-0.

⁴ For example, N. Vance, *The Victorians and Ancient Rome* (Oxford, 1997); Mark Bradley (ed.), *Classics and Imperialism in the British Empire* (Oxford, 2010).

part of Britain's 'intellectual infrastructure' (11) over this period. The onslaught of material in support of this thesis, drawing on newspaper reports and novels, school textbooks and political tracts, is occasionally exhausting, but the cumulative effect certainly reinforces how deeply the classical past was embedded in the British psyche. The organization of the three central chapters, which consider 'Empire', 'Nation', and 'City', also helps us to make sense of the full length of Rome's shadow, not to say the extent to which Britain's imperial identity shaped domestic politics and society too. The final chapter is the most original and distinctive, with its fascinating account of how late Victorian and Edwardian anxieties over urban degeneracy led to urban reform movements – such as the 'Garden City' idea – which drew on ancient models in surprising ways.

While Butler's book is a welcome addition to studies of ancient and modern imperialism as seen from a Western, 'domestic' perspective, our other titles help to forge the new paths for classical reception studies that James I. Porter outlined in 2008. Moving from centre to periphery, they greatly enhance our understanding of the 'comparisons between hegemonic Western classicism and non-Western classical traditions', beginning with two monographs on India which sit exceptionally well together.⁵ Phiroze Vasunia has already contributed more than anyone, perhaps, to scholarship on how the Greco-Roman past is used to forge imperialist and national identities, both for the colonizers and the colonized, and his latest study is a remarkable addition to the field.⁶ While, as he acknowledges, it does not provide a comprehensive or neatly chronological history of the classical tradition in colonial India, its achievement – a kaleidoscopic view of the myriad of unexpected ways in which the classical world makes its presence felt there – is something much more thought-provoking. At its core are a similar set of questions to those considered by Butler, relating to how the Victorians used classical precedents to construct and legitimate their own imperial identity, this time considered from an Indian perspective. More familiar accounts of the matrix of ancient-modern comparisons in socio-political discourse, and the role of a classical education in the Indian Civil Service, are expanded by a rich and well-illustrated chapter on how classicizing architecture was used (and, crucially, talked about) as an instrument of power. Set alongside accounts of the Raj and its recourse to classics are rewarding insights into how Indian writers and thinkers adopted and rejected ancient texts and models. As Vasunia points out, 'colonizers and colonized alike called on the ancient cultures' (27), both in various ways: Alexander the Great, for example, carries as many opposing meanings for Indians as he does for Europeans, from the adoption of the regnal name 'Sikander' by a number of Indian rulers to the tart dismissals of Alexander's achievements in Urdu literature. Vasunia's tour of what is to many of us unfamiliar Indian territory demonstrates anew, and with refreshing clarity, how the classical past is 'never just one thing or the other' (27) – a slogan for classical reception studies if ever there was one.

⁵ J. I. Porter, 'Reception Studies: Future Prospects', in L. Hardwick and C. Stray (eds.), *A Companion to Classical Receptions* (Oxford, 2008), 476.

⁶ *The Classics and Colonial India*. By Phiroze Vasunia. Classical Presences. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. xii + 416. 11 b/w illustrations, 4 colour plates. Hardback £85, ISBN: 978-0-19-920323-9.

If Vasunia gives us a wide-angled view of the classics in India, then Alexander Riddiford provides the complementary close-up.⁷ His rigorous and erudite study of the works of the nineteenth-century Bengali poet and playwright Michael Madhusudan Datta is a commendable piece of scholarship, which will bring detailed knowledge of his oeuvre, and its surprisingly numerous receptions of classical literature, to new audiences (while surely also offering valuable new perspectives to scholars of Bengali and Sanskrit literature). If Vasunia's ten or so pages on Madhusudan whet the appetite (and they are perhaps the easier introduction to the topic), then Riddiford's rich account will surely sate it, for the bulk of the book offers close readings of his key works and their classical engagements, from a series of letters written by women from Hindu epic and drama and modelled after Ovid's *Heroides*, to a retelling of part of the *Iliad*. Throughout, the emphasis is on the doubly subversive qualities of Madhusudan's work, which Riddiford sees as going 'against the grain of contemporary British tastes' in classical literature and equally as 'a tool [used] to resist and undermine the hegemony of elite Hindu culture' (50). The analysis is lucid and generally accessible, thanks largely to the excellent introductory chapter, which sets the scene for many of the important contexts for Madhusudan. In fact, this book serves as a useful testing ground for a methodological quandary that often besets classical reception studies – namely, if two (or more) distinct scholarly disciplines are to be brought together in its pursuit, how can researchers ensure that they possess sufficient expertise in both, and how can they satisfactorily convey that expertise to readers who may be new to one or both fields? Such questions press themselves on classical reception in all its forms, but they are surely most acute in a study such as the present one. Riddiford does an admirable job of bringing his readers up to speed in matters such as nineteenth-century Hindu elite culture and Sanskrit literary aesthetics, such that classicists will enjoy his readings of Madhusudan's poetry and prose to the full; the flip side of this, though, is that a certain amount of prior knowledge of classical literature is (necessarily?) taken for granted.

From India, we travel back to Africa, to observe how colonialism and post-colonialism affected and were affected by classical texts and ideas in Sierra Leone, Ghana, Nigeria, and South Africa; again, two books provide valuable complementary takes on the matter at hand (as well as providing useful contexts for some of the literature discussed by McConnell). First, a monograph by Barbara Goff, who has done as much to bring African receptions of the classics to light as Vasunia has for India, and whose study of a range of classical receptions in the British colonies of West Africa might usefully be read alongside his.⁸ Unsurprisingly, parts of Goff's analysis, which extends from the nineteenth century to the present day, resonate strongly with the studies of India: for example, her discussion of the provision (or equally the prohibition) of a classical education for the native population, or the impact of that education on emerging nationalist figures. The autobiography of the Ghanaian Joseph Appiah, for example, furnishes Goff with plenty of evidence for how a Western-style classical

⁷ *Madly After The Muses. Bengali Poet Michael Madhusudan Datta and His Reception of the Graeco-Roman Classics*. By Alexander Riddiford. Classical Presences. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. xix + 296. 3 illustrations. Hardback £60, ISBN: 978-0-19-969973-5.

⁸ *Your Secret Language? Classics in the British Colonies of West Africa*. By Barbara Goff. Classical Diaspora. London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2013. Pp. 248. Hardback £65, ISBN: 978-1-78093-205-7.

education could be combined with indigenous traditions and then turned against the colonial powers, as with Appiah's enthusiastic invocations of Cicero, his model as he embarked upon his legal career. But there are, of course, ways in which the experience of colonial Africa is markedly different from colonial India, not least because of the matter of slavery. Here, too, education returns as a central theme, as in Goff's interesting account of the experimental College and Grammar School in Freetown, Sierra Leone, run by missionary authorities for whom 'the African acquisition of Greek and Latin takes on substantial symbolic value' (34).

Our second African study is Michael Lambert's exploration of three important 'crunch points' in the turbulent history of South Africa and its formation of national identities, each of which engages with the classical past in meaningful, productive, and sometimes controversial ways.⁹ The foundation of the Classical Association of South Africa in 1956, against the backdrop of the 'chill blasts of decolonization throughout Africa' (54), gives it a particular role in the (re)formation of Afrikaner identities, while English-speaking South African identities are explored through a study of Classics in various South African universities, including an absorbing tour through some prominent classicists' inaugural addresses. Finally, the significance of missionary schools and their Classical education for shaping black South African identities is considered. This slim but sharply focused book makes for an engrossing, powerful read, perhaps because it is written from an insider's perspective. Its author stands much closer, in time and space, to the events that it describes than is the case in the previous books under review, which lends the arguments an urgent, questioning, but always objective, tone. For that reason, it is recommended to anyone with an interest in how Classics might be fought over, picked up, and discarded by different political groups, whether in a (post-)colonial context or not.

History of scholarship is also a growth area within classical reception studies,¹⁰ and Daniel Orrells has made a significant contribution with his recent monography on *Classical Culture and Modern Masculinity*.¹¹ His investigation, which begins with the Göttingen professor Johann Matthias Gesner in the 1750s and concludes with E. M. Forster and Sigmund Freud in the 1930s, uncovers an important set of exchanges within the Anglo-German traffic in culture and intellectual ideas throughout the long nineteenth century, yet his examination of discourses surrounding ancient pederasty and modern pedagogy in Britain and Germany offers more than a historical study. In both countries, philhellenism formed an educational as much as an artistic ideology, and Orrells shows how the acknowledged centrality of pederasty to ancient Greek understandings of education generated a proliferation of discourse surrounding the character of Greek love, its moral status, and its potential translatability to the modern age. His discussions of key moments in the emergence of modern notions of homosexuality, such as J. A. Symonds and Havelock Ellis' definition of 'sexual inversion'

⁹ *The Classics and South African Identities*. By Michael Lambert. Classical Diaspora. London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2011. Pp. 256. Paperback £19.99, ISBN: 978-0-71563-796-8.

¹⁰ See Porter, (n. 5), 469–81; Constanze Güthenke, 'Shop Talk: Reception Studies and Recent Work in the History of Scholarship', *Classical Receptions Journal* 1.1 (2009), 104–15.

¹¹ *Classical Culture and Modern Masculinity*. By Daniel Orrells. Classical Presences. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. ix + 301. 2 illustrations. Hardback £66, ISBN: 978-0-19-923644-2.

and the Oscar Wilde trial of 1895, shows how complex and contestable references to Greek love would be throughout the period he examines. Pederasty thus forms a test case, a significant and problematic one, within the broader history of modernity's attempts to define itself 'through its reification of its relationship with antiquity' (3–4): a key concern of classical reception studies.

Finally, Edith Hall's examination of the ancient and modern reception of Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Tauris* is a major work which shows just how fruitfully classical scholarship can be married with the study of receptions.¹² Hall's book is a labour of love, for she confesses that the *IT* is her favourite drama, and she aims to contribute to its recovery from the obscurity into which – so she argues – it has only recently sunk. Her approach, which she terms 'cultural history', is to treat both ancient and modern receptions of a classical myth and text together as 'a semi-continuous but fluctuating process, consisting of a series of crucial readings or cultural moments in which each ancient text has come into psychological prominence' (3).¹³ The material of Hall's thirteen chapters is arranged roughly chronologically, but her discussion frequently doubles back on itself, reinforcing earlier points in her discussions of the resonances of the play's emphases on religious ritual, on fraternal fidelity and comradeship, on the plot of escape, and not least its questions of intercultural interactions, civilization, and barbarity. Her analysis is most stimulating where she picks up on concerns manifest in her earlier published work, such as class and notions of the barbarian other; and also where she seeks to intervene in debates over interpretations, as when she argues that the Thoas of Goethe's *Iphigenie* is too complex a character to conform to the kinds of simplistic, imperialist reading that both 'classical humanist' responses to the play and twentieth-century anti-humanist reactions alike tend to sustain (Chapter X). Elsewhere, she concedes just how hard it can be to sustain non-parodic or -ironizing readings of Greek tragedy in an era highly conscious of the relation of the classical tradition to European violence meted out upon peoples elsewhere in the world and the disenfranchised within, such as women (Chapters XII, XIII). Her book is to be commended for its combination of careful scholarship and clear exposition suitable for the general reader, for its chronological and geographical range (from antiquity to the present, Greece and Italy to the Crimea and the United States), and for the passionate, personal voice which adds extra interest and insight to her sophisticated and critical exposition.¹⁴

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¹² *Adventures with Iphigeneia in Tauris. A Cultural History of Euripides' Black Sea Tragedy*. By Edith Hall. New York, Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. xxxii + 378. 87 illustrations, 3 maps. Hardback £41.99, ISBN: 978-0-19-539389-0.

¹³ Hall's approach is prefigured in her monograph on the *Odyssey: The Return of Ulysses. A Cultural History of Homer's Odyssey* (London, 2008).

¹⁴ One small gripe: the illustrations, which are certainly necessary to a study of this kind, are small and often hard to make out. Colour plates, or at least larger images, would have been very welcome indeed in a work which includes close discussions of visual evidence.