

with love and enthusiasm for its field. Its only flaw is its complete blind spot when it comes to women's bodies and how to write about them. I want very much to recommend this book to all the young students who are interested in classics and film, because it will broaden their horizons immensely. I think it will also make quite a few of them very angry, because in fact most young people now do not use the term 'political correctness' as a pejorative. I was surprised that no one at Cambridge University Press thought about letting Winkler know about this in 2017.

ELENA THEODORAKOPOULOS
University of Birmingham
 e.m.theodorakopoulos@bham.ac.uk

ZAJKO (V.) and HOYLE (H.) (eds) **A Handbook to the Reception of Classical Mythology** (Wiley-Blackwell Handbooks to Classical Reception). Malden MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017. Pp. xiv + 482. £148. 9781444339604.
 doi:10.1017/S0075426919000612

There is one guaranteed way to write successfully about myths: call a Muse and sing, and let someone record your words. Alternatively, you can take out your (wax) tablet and jot down your *perpetuum carmen* yourself. But what if you are not a Homer, Virgil or Ovid, and yet, nonetheless, still feel deep in your heart that you are duty-bound to transmit classical myths? Well, there is a way, though it is strewn with obstacles that can never be overcome, for how can you extract the living fibres of myths and then weave them into a coherent story without *licentia poetica*? But this is exactly what awaits you if you take up the Herculean task of becoming a scholar of reception.

In her introduction to this handbook, Zajko notes that 'There is something faintly ridiculous about attempting to write an introduction to a volume such as this, the content of which spans so many centuries and covers such a variety of genres' (1). I might add that the very attempt to create such a volume may also seem ridiculous. Yet here it is, and nor is it just any book; it is an excellent collection of wide-ranging essays, a much-needed contribution to interdisciplinary scholarship. The source of the editors and authors' success seems to lie precisely in Zajko's introductory remark: 'The value of reception within classical studies is still being hotly debated, not because there is any question about its having a significant role within the discipline, but because

of a lack of consensus about what that role is and what it could be in the future' (1). This orientation on the future, quite atypical in classical studies, results from the definition of a classic by Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve, T.S. Eliot and J.M. Coetzee: a text that, paradoxically, while being immersed in the past, makes us go – here and now – a step further. Thus we should not be afraid of testing our classics with ever new questions and doubts. The real classics will only grow stronger from such testing and will thereby offer us more solid support. Indeed, Zajko and Hoyle, together with their authors, look at the ancient myths as a base that down through the ages has been helping us define this indefinable, both marvellous and sinister, wonder: the human being (Soph. *Ant.* 332). Owing to this approach – a humble (in the best meaning of this term) abstention from easy answers in favour of an attempt at gathering, preserving and presenting the crumbs of Homer's table to the public of the 21st century – this handbook accomplishes an apparent mission impossible. Its authors offer an overview of the reception of classical mythology from antiquity until our own times. This is a selective overview, yes, but one imbued throughout with a relentless curiosity about the role of ancient myths in our culture and the role of scholars with regard to this phenomenon.

Still, the task of organizing 32 contributions on various aspects of the reception of ancient myths was surely a daunting one. The editors have handled it aptly and with all possible acumen. They have grouped the essays into four parts according to either their main research problems or the kinds of myths discussed. And they have organized the contributions chronologically, where applicable, giving readers a vast panorama of the reception of myths from classical antiquity up to contemporary popular culture. Of priceless help in working with the volume – a handbook *par excellence*, as it is targeted also at non-professional readers – is the fact that the dominant ideas of each essay and its place in the collection are carefully explained in the introduction.

Part 1 ('Mythography') offers the fundamentals for reflection on the transmission of myths from a perspective that is valid both for scholars and for general recipients of culture since childhood. In part 2 ('Approaches and themes') the contributors focus on certain selected issues that in various periods have exerted significant impact on the perception of ancient myths and their role in culture. Part 3 ('Myth, creativity, and

the mind') regards psychoanalysis and the use of mythical narration in describing human psychological construction. Some of the threads discussed in this section entwine with themes also considered in previous parts, but this is a natural trait of the mythical *perpetuum carmen*, which can be examined from various angles, as only then can the full scope of reception manifest itself. Finally, part 4 ('Iconic figures and texts') is a kind of Apollodorus' *Library* for the scholarly reception of myths. In this section the editors gather together essays dedicated to mythological narrations that are crucial for understanding art rooted in Graeco-Roman culture: literature, visual arts, music, etc. One may notice the absence of several major mythological figures here, yet let's remember that not even the ancient *aoidos* was able to sing about all of them during the same session – more encounters with myths were needed and more singers had to wander over the world in order to attempt to satisfy people's insatiable hunger for mythical stories. Those readers willing to broaden their knowledge of reception have at their disposal, maybe not numerous, but already 'classic' publications such as Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray's *A Companion to Classical Receptions* (Malden MA 2008) and Ken Dowden and Niall Livingstone's *A Companion to Greek Mythology* (Malden MA 2011), by the same publisher, or ever more frequent single chapters on reception in general companions. It is also worth stressing that each author in Zajko and Hoyle's collection offers precious bibliographical advice in a 'Guide to further reading'.

Summing up, this handbook is a rich and valuable volume that makes the reader rethink many famous and important works (some of them, alas, neglected today, as a bit dusty and 'too classical'), by drawing on mythical figures like Cupid and Psyche (Julia Haig Gaisser) and Medea (Lars von Trier in the chapter by Mette Hjort), and assessing works such as George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* (Helen Slaney) and Albert Camus' *Myth of Sisyphus* (Kurt Lampe). It also includes chapters by pioneering experts on completely new or emerging research fields within classical studies, like Sheila Murnaghan's and Deborah H. Roberts' chapter on the reception of ancient myths in children's literature or Phiroze Vasunia's analysis embedded in postcolonial discourse. All this and much more is offered in a reader-friendly form, with the essays being concise and well structured. The chapter on Narcissus and Echo by Rosemary Barrow may be cited as an outstanding

example of how to present the reception of a myth across various periods of time and fields of culture; this is one of the best synthetic surveys of this myth I have read.

The volume also passed the test of a university seminar. I had the opportunity to use several of its essays as starting points for discussions with my students on the given myths, and these essays indeed fired interesting debates. This testifies to the volume's power to inspire, as all good handbooks should.

In short, if you are looking for a simple set of elaborations with ready answers to the meanings of myths, do not pick up this book. If you seek stimulating discussion, a solid base and a starting point for scholarly reflections (and for private ones, too), this handbook is the right choice for you. It conveys the ancient myths from classical antiquity all the way to our modern world and the contexts of our own contemporary problems. For instance, the last essay by Lisa Saltzman considers the problem of pain through the lens of Anish Kapoor's sculpture *Marsyas* (2002–2003), which is exhibited at the Tate Modern in London. Saltzman concludes that 'we may find in *Marsyas* not only a monumental memorial to tortures ancient and modern, but also an occasion to reflect on the experience of migration in the global present, when so many of us feel the pull of a homeland even as we live in a place that we now call home' (470). There is nothing better than ancient myths, via a reception process reaching back to ancient times, to offer a sense of homeland and belonging.

This artwork by the Mumbai-born Kapoor always brings to my mind a poem by the Polish classicist Zbigniew Herbert (1924–1998), *Apollo and Marsyas*. Describing the duel between these two characters, Herbert – having experienced the totalitarianisms of the 20th century – contrasts the unemotional god with the satyr's suffering, to which the whole of nature responds. A petrified nightingale suddenly falls at Apollo's feet. The god 'turns his head / and sees / that the tree to which Marsyas is fastened / is white / completely'. Each and every one of us can recall similar experiences that make us reflect anew on the world, justice, suffering, art ... To evoke this kind of reflection is a mark of writing successfully about myths, whether you are a Homer or not. And this is what the editors and the authors of *A Handbook to the Reception of Classical Mythology* have done.

KATARZYNA MARCINIAK
 University of Warsaw
 kamar@al.uw.edu.pl