

Hardwick and Harrison (eds), *Classics in the Modern World – a Democratic Turn?*). Paula James deftly negotiates her analysis of the reception of Pygmalion in screen versions of the myth, guiding us from films of the 1920s and 1930s, such as *Metropolis* (1927) and *A Star is Born* (1937) up to the recent cult television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2003) and films such as *Notting Hill* (1999) and *Miss Congeniality* (2000). J. combines considerable erudition about recent scholarship on Ovid's Pygmalion which is currently shaping our understanding of the myth, and about the various cultural influences which marked alternative versions of the myth for different generations. I particularly enjoyed her sensitive discussion of Burne-Jones' *Pygmalion and the Image* sequence and the ways in which these images are echoed and reflected in films from *My Fair Lady* (1964) to *SIMONE* (2002). This is a study which is unusually wide-ranging, and which combines close and probing analyses of Ovid's text with a meticulous and detailed knowledge of a vast corpus of films. The book is enriched still further by J.'s lucid exposition of the cultural histories in which these different screen versions are embedded. And so we are led through a cultural history of the various different social issues which the Pygmalion myth addresses — what constitutes the 'perfect woman'? How does the image change at different times and in different societies? Who controls the fashioning of these images? What does this teach us about the dangers of fantasy, of misogyny? Underpinning the whole study is the issue of how myths survive and to whom they belong.

If I had a quibble it is that occasionally the tone of the book is a little too relaxed — there are a number of conversational asides in parentheses, and the identity of the perceived target audience appears to slip. And yet this is a book that seeks to embrace a wide audience in order to emphasize the abiding power of the classical tradition. J.'s refreshing accessibility is a large part of the book's charm and success. *Ovid's Myth of Pygmalion on Screen* is that rare phenomenon — a serious and important work of scholarship, which is great fun to read.

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C. KREBS, *A MOST DANGEROUS BOOK: TACITUS' GERMANIA FROM THE ROMAN EMPIRE TO THE THIRD REICH*. London: W.W.Norton & Co., 2011. Pp. 303, illus. ISBN 9780393062656. £18.99/US\$25.95.

This fascinating new study by Christopher Krebs looks at the history of Tacitus' *Germania* from the author's own day to the end of the Second World War. Its introduction, eight chapters and epilogue span the entire history of the reception of this important work in a sensitive and perceptive fashion, concluding with a thoroughly engaging, albeit disturbing, exploration of how pervasive the *Germania* was in National Socialist ideology.

After an exciting introductory chapter recounting an attempt by the SS to acquire a manuscript copy of Tacitus' text, K. continues with a helpful exploration of the motives of the ancient author himself. Often lacking in works on classical reception, we are given a detailed grounding in the world in which Tacitus lived and wrote. K. asks the important question of why Tacitus wrote his *Germania* in the first place. Beyond conventional explanations he suggests some more unusual, yet wholly feasible, questions never asked by those that received Tacitus' text: 'Did Tacitus hope that his *Germania* would help to persuade the emperor to strike a blow against the Germanen?' (49).

After this begins a long and very well-informed account of the text through later ages. K.'s understanding and analysis of the process of historical reception is thoughtful and sophisticated. Early in his book he sums this up in an apt and insightful metaphor, recognizing that the reception of the *Germania* in itself involved parallel readings, often contemporary with one another, and that later receptions were often shaped by earlier ones. 'No tradition runs in a single stream. There are rills, runnels, and rivulets, making up different readings of the same text' (24). Later he applies his approach to the different periods he examines. Looking at the sixteenth century he asks, 'After all, who today would read Beowulf to learn about modern Scandinavia?' (83). He points out the often confused and confusing nature of reception, adding of this period: 'Three decades into the sixteenth century, in a circle of reference, the text that started the tradition is supported by the tradition' (128). Throughout his book and throughout the periods that he studies, K.'s narrative is continuously reflective, highlighting much of the irony and

unpredictability that the history of Tacitus' work has involved, and the often tenuous attempts by later writers and statesmen to read what they wished to into his work. 'Vagueness is a generous host' (172), as K. puts it in the sixth chapter.

Ch. 2, 'Survival and Rescue', contains a brilliant and entertaining account of the attempts of Italian humanists from the late fifteenth century onwards to acquire copies of the *Germania*, and the rivalries between acquisitive cardinals and clerics that often resulted. He litters his telling of one such rivalry, between Poggio Bracciolini and Niccolò Niccoli, with quotations from their correspondence, thrusting us into the world of the Italian Renaissance and bringing these colourful characters back to life. 'As for the German books I will say no more; just this: that I am not asleep — that's your habit — but vigilant' (72).

From here K. moves on to the important subject of the reception of the *Germania* by German humanists, the first time when the text was understood as a positive representation of German ancestors. He highlights the rôle of Martin Luther and others in this change, and how the traits of loyalty and integrity came to be seen as defining Germanic characteristics. The beginning of the literary tradition directly inspired by Tacitus is looked at through figures like Ulrich von Hutten, and in later manifestations such as Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock's *Bardiet* trilogy about Arminius. In a broader discussion in the fifth, sixth and seventh chapters he describes the ideological background of racial pan-Germanicism in the nineteenth century and the foundations of this.

K.'s treatment of the rôle of the *Germania* in National Socialism is novel and informative. He makes clear how pervasive the influence of this text was for the development of the regime's official ideology, and looks closely at the influence of the text on Heinrich Himmler. Aside from the more obvious appeal of such a work to National Socialism he provides several more subtle examples of where the influence of the *Germania* can be traced. In the last chapter he discusses articles in ideological journals such as *National Socialist Education* and *Germanic Heritage* which were built around quotations from Tacitus, and looks at how careful misquotation of the text could lead to National Socialist-friendly meanings being found in the text. Perhaps most unnerving of all is the use made of Tacitus in certain publications of the time directed at adolescents, 'rendered in Nazi jargon and darkly resonant with the cult of the Führer' (238).

The only significant criticism that I would make of K.'s work is precisely this orientation. The final chapters on the use of Tacitus by the National Socialists are both original and insightful. For this reason it is all the more of a shame that K. falls into that common pitfall of reception studies, especially those dealing with National Socialism, by giving his work a teleological slant. While the opening, beginning as it does with Himmler's desperate quest for the manuscript, adds drama to the subsequent narrative, one inevitably reads what follows in light of what happened in the twentieth century. There are several points later on in the book where the reader is encouraged down this ultimately misleading path by sentences which flag up National Socialism as a looming presence on the distant horizon. This is by no means a phenomenon restricted to this book, and is especially symptomatic of much reception work especially on nineteenth-century German classical receptions, drawing from the trend of wider German cultural studies, for example those looking at Wagner. Unfortunately in this book we can see the application of this method to earlier periods too. At the end of the fourth chapter, concluding a fascinating chapter on the humanists, K. comments that: 'In most if not all respects the National Socialist vision of the Germanen would be a mirror image of the humanists', only slightly twisted through time' (128). Undoubtedly this is true, but to understand the humanists' reception of the *Germania* a clearer perspective can be maintained through keeping National Socialism on that horizon. Moreover the idea of reception being twisted is an inconvenient metaphor for the process of reception, implying that the humanists' reception of Tacitus was in some objective sense more straight than that of the National Socialists, which the sensitive approach to reception taken by K. in the rest of this book would not suggest.

However ultimately these points do not detract from what is a wonderfully entertaining book, full of original insights for all of the periods that K. examines. *A Most Dangerous Book* has the combination — surprisingly unusual among reception studies — of being both very informative and a thoroughly enjoyable read.

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