

MURNAGHAN (S.) and ROBERTS (D.H.)
Childhood and the Classics: Britain and America, 1850–1965 (Classical Presences).
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In 1887, a pamphlet by the novelist Charlotte Yonge on *What Books to Lend and What to Give* when undertaking ‘parish work’ recommended classical subjects as the most accessible to poorer readers: ancient history and mythology boast plots and characters far removed from ‘drawing room’ stories, which quickly became obsolete and were beyond many children’s experiences. Yonge’s favoured list includes fictional accounts of early Christians in Rome and retellings of Homeric and Virgilian epic, but, as Murnaghan and Roberts explain (n. 6, 48), Yonge’s highest praise is reserved for Charles Kingsley’s *The Heroes* and Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *A Wonder-Book for Girls and Boys* and *Tanglewood Tales*.

These three revolutionizing works form the backbone of the equally ground-breaking *Childhood and the Classics*. This fascinating study, organized around the reception and manifold afterlives of Hawthorne’s and Kingsley’s mythological retellings, represents a significant advancement in the relatively young but flourishing field of children’s classical reception. Throughout, rich details are sensitively located within theoretical frameworks of children’s literature and cultural history to raise far-reaching questions. How can children’s literature be defined? What does it mean for classics to be popular or accessible (and among or for whom?). Murnaghan and Roberts, whose collaboration is seamless and polished, combine incisive analysis with a fast-paced, enjoyable narrative.

Hawthorne’s and Kingsley’s mythical reworkings were, as Yonge notes, popular with the adults who chose children’s books with regard to educational and improving, as well as entertaining, aspects. Murnaghan and Roberts examine this intersection of pedagogy and leisure as it developed alongside changing publishing conditions, evolving genres and consumer expectations. An overarching concern is the inextricable interaction between how children encounter antiquity and adults’ recollections of such childhood encounters. Here, the diachronic nature of this study – from the mid-19th-century flourishing of children’s fiction until the rise of more graphic and

digital media – is exploited to demonstrate the significance of children’s exposure to classical antiquity and, specifically, the legacies of Hawthorne and Kingsley in transforming children’s culture. A fine balance between American and British material, both transatlantic and more local in circulation, adds an additional layer to this analysis.

The first three chapters unpack exactly how and why Hawthorne’s and Kingsley’s innovative collections of myths revolutionized children’s encounters with classical antiquity. Analysis of their predecessors and legacies, in the context of children’s publishing, shows how education and leisure were entwined, and how difficult it is to separate children’s perceptions from adults’ recollections. These chapters feature particularly detailed analysis of the relationship between narrative and illustration, supported by a generous allowance of images, including colour plates. Murnaghan and Roberts excel at charting cultural trends and tracing the significance of author and illustrator choices. Mythical figures featured in wonderful detail include Proserpina, Perseus, Theseus and Pan.

While Kingsley and Hawthorne each specifically wrote for both boys *and* girls, chapters 4 and 5 examine later narratives that adopted more nationalistic and gendered approaches: case studies include the historical and geographic margins represented by Roman Britain (from both British and American perspectives) and the various additions of female slaves, wives and daughters into historical fiction. Antiquity here is shown to be ‘open to authorial invention and intervention’ (186), as when Allena Champlin Best introduces Daedalus’ daughter as her heroine in *The Winged Girl of Knossos* (1933) or Roman Britain is reconceived as the American frontier (163).

Chapters 6 and 7 zoom out from analysis of children’s books themselves to assess the impact of childhood encounters with antiquity and the recollections of real-life adults. These include the poet H.D. (Hilda Doolittle), novelist Naomi Mitchison and archaeologists Heinrich Schliemann and Arthur Evans. The essayist Leigh Hunt’s fond memories from his 18th-century childhood of illustrations in the compendious Tooke’s *Pantheon* reintroduce the dual status of classical myth as an alternative to or assimilated with fairy tales. Gathering up these threads, alongside the key contemporary links made between reading about antiquity in

childhood and writing about antiquity as an author's coming-of-age, Murnaghan's and Roberts' epilogue considers writers and educators a century after Yonge who still considered exploitation of 'children's universal connection to myth' to be more suitable to 'economically and ethnically diverse' (279) classrooms than books that assume familiarity with specific socio-economic contexts.

While this book largely draws upon middle-class and elite fiction, or reported encounters with them in other such texts, the authors begin to unpack the many privileges associated with such material, noting that they existed alongside other, differently experienced, media. However, the focus here on mythical and fictional retellings enables their sustained comparative analysis, which efficiently covers immense temporal and geographic areas. The depth of research is obvious in the plentiful, fantastic details: personal favourites are the Crawfords' account of a Trojan Horse eating peanuts in a zoo (104) and the authors' description of Daedalus' daughter as a 'Cretan Nancy Drew' (191), but readers will find such gems throughout this important study.

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PRINS (Y.) **Ladies' Greek: Victorian Translations of Tragedy.** Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017. Pp. 315. £62.95. 9780691141886.

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'How shall I paint her?', asked the poet and artist Sir Noel Paton of 'A Girton Girl' in 1893. *Atalanta*, one of the foremost girls' magazines, regularly promoted the study of classics at women's colleges. Paton, however, depicts a stereotypical bluestocking, 'In her college room ... alone among her books ... Rich with the thought of Greece, the lore of Rome'. His romantic image of female education is, like the periodical's title, ambiguous: the 'brave girl-student' is 'self-immured in vestal solitude' although 'fashioned to win man's reverence and love' (*Atalanta* 67, 1893, 1–2).

Ladies' Greek, a compelling and timely book, explores exactly these ambivalences towards women's increasing access to higher education and classical knowledge through the 19th and early 20th centuries. Prins' rich archival findings

challenge Paton's rather patronizing view of women accessing 'learning's glorious heritage'. At the same time, her finely woven study uncovers the interconnections and networks formed by a transatlantic community of female classical scholars.

As Prins points out, her ephemeral and archival evidence also tells a different story from that of the 'gradual decline of Greek studies in the twentieth century' (239) in formal educational curricula. In these other encounters, para-educational, autodidactic and artistic, 'we see the ongoing recirculation and renegotiation of women's desire for ancient Greek', which 'produce[d] a public culture for the performance of Ladies' Greek in the twentieth century' (239).

Specific case studies of the responses of American and British 'ladies' to a selection of Greek tragedies enable Prins to examine both the 'transatlantic phenomenon' of 'literary and cultural exchange' (243) and the 'reinvention of female classical literacy' (12). Starting from Elizabeth Barrett Browning's 'First Greek Ode', Prins deftly escorts us through the long 19th century and across the Atlantic.

Featured women include Cambridge students Agnata Ramsay (who, while in her first year at Girton, was the only student across the Classical Tripos to receive a top First), Jane Harrison, Amy Levy, Helen Magill and Virginia Woolf. From various American colleges, we meet Annie Fields Adams, Edith Hamilton and Eva Palmer Sikelianos, the co-organizer of Greek play revivals at Delphi. A fascinating range of sources is woven into this compelling story of how learning Greek influenced these real women's lives, personally and professionally.

Tragedies whose reception is analysed here include *Agamemnon*, *Prometheus Bound*, Sophocles' *Electra* and Euripides' *Hippolytus* and *Bacchae*. Productions discussed include *Electra* at Smith College in 1889 and Girton College's *Electra* of 1883. The latter was the first Cambridge women's Greek play to reach performance (Newnham's rehearsed *Electra* was cancelled in 1877) and starred Janet Case, who, as Athena in the 1900 production of the *Eumenides* was the only female cast member of a Cambridge Greek Play until 1950.

One of the highlights of this book are the 44 black-and-white illustrations. Prins' selection affords a generous insight into her archival process, as well as the range of visual, performative and textual material in which women