

In the final section M. Trundle succinctly summarises how the Classical world ‘played an important role in framing the military context of New Zealanders at war’ (p. 313). Trundle highlights how key military events such as Gallipoli were associated with the Trojan War in provincial New Zealand newspapers to provide a sense of the greater glory of war amidst the loss of life and limb. Closing the volume, A. Holmes-Henderson provides a snapshot of the ‘current state of Classics education in New Zealand’ (p. 326). Her analysis provides the closing bookend for Ihimaera’s opening companion. Ihimaera notes in the opening lines of his essay: ‘One of my major regrets about the time I was growing up in the 1950’s is that I never had the opportunity to take Latin, Greek, and Classics’ (p. 51). Perhaps most sobering, then, is that, as Holmes-Henderson has noted, the study of Classical Studies is in steady decline in New Zealand.

The success of this volume lies in the thoughtful manner in which the editors have linked the essays together creating a dialogue between scholars of Classical Reception and writers, poets and artists who continue to adapt and reimagine the Classical world in light of their unique geographical and cultural situation. Despite the niche subject, the volume is just the beginning of a conversation that can continue to critique Classical Reception from an *omni*-local perspective. As Ihimaera writes in *Thrill of Falling*: ‘Mate, you don’t know the half of it’ (p. 9).

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ANTIQUITY TODAY

RAPHAEL (F.) *Antiquity Matters*. Pp. xiv + 362. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2017. Cased, £20, US\$26. ISBN: 978-0-300-21537-3.

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This book’s aim is to show ‘that the “dead” languages and culture are alive in what we say and think, whether we know it or not’ (p. xiv). Nowhere in it does R. offer any more explicit argument than that as to why ‘antiquity matters’. He seeks instead to intimate that it simply does, by stringing together an eclectic and eccentric jump-around narrative of the ‘ancient’ world that evokes highlights of Greek and Roman history, literature and culture.

The book is divided into 79 sections (there are no chapters) each of which is organised around an ancient text, individual, event or theme. These zigzag around, but ultimately follow a loose chronological order. R.’s point of reference is not really ‘antiquity’; nor is it even ‘Greece’ and ‘Rome’ as most Classicists would account for them today. Greece here begins with Classical Athens (with flashbacks to the age of myth, the Homeric poems and the lyric poets) and ends, more or less, with the death of Alexander the Great. On p. 281 gears switch quickly for the last 60 pages on ‘Rome’, which is charted from Cicero to Tacitus.

This periodisation is not accidental; it is polemical, and it is ironic that R. ventriloquises T. Whitmarsh to make his point. Whitmarsh has done an immense amount of work to open the field of Classics to overlooked authors, yet here R. ropes him in as an expert who ‘acknowledges’ that ‘authors who were, until recently, dismissed as second rate or second-hand have received freshly clipped laurels from academics in search of a relatively neglected topic’ (p. 74; the quotation is R., not Whitmarsh). The Classical bookends

used to be where they belonged, around the really good stuff, while the rest of antiquity is second rate: forgettable, omittable and even regrettable.

R.'s prose is polished and clever – he can certainly turn a nice phrase –, but the book zips all over the place, forging thin links of associations between ancient and more modern. The result is all Pindaric flights or fever dreams. He tends not to cite specific passages in the ancient works to which he refers; there is no bibliography, and the teeming footnotes often do not provide full reference information. These footnotes are nevertheless a necessary apparatus here, for in them R. makes most of his slack, anecdotal and random connections between the “dead” languages and culture and the modern world’.

It is difficult to understand just how R. is trying to position himself. Does he speak as a voice of authority from within the establishment (the dust jacket hails him as ‘a major scholar in Classics at Cambridge’)? There is a very particular set of scholars – P. Cartledge, P. Green, R. Seaford – that he namechecks (‘so and so tells me’) so as to assure us that he rubs shoulders with the big dogs of the professional field. Other pages suggest that this is the critique of the outside observer whose position on the margins allows him to see things as they are and tell it like it is. He refers to M. West’s *The East Face of Helicon* as a ‘scrapbook of Middle Eastern lore’ (p. 87 n. 151) designed to knock ‘Hellenists’ down a notch, while M. Bernal’s ‘followers’ have renewed the ‘notion that Greek culture derived, more or less entirely, from Egypt (otherwise known as “Africa”)’ (p. 148). He complains that today ‘Modern classical studies are likely to be based on the assumption that students will not know either Latin or Greek’; it is a sign of bad times that philology ‘with its dry demanding curriculum, has little appeal in today’s universities’ (p. 92).

In outlook and argumentation, the book is at once a relic of a different time and a plea for its return. There is much in tone that many readers will object to, but my sense is that R. would object to our sensitivity. On pp. 66–7, a footnote that refers to J. Harrison’s *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* adds that ‘Harrison is the precursor of such female scholars as Mary Lefkowitz and Nicole Loraux’ (p. 67). The point is not that Harrison influenced Lefkowitz or Loraux, but rather that she was the arch #ladyauthor of Classics. On p. 88 we learn that Archilochus’ poetry has not survived because ‘After the invading Arabs destroyed the great ancient libraries, access to the poet’s lines was limited to shreds’; on p. 267 ‘the Arabs’ are again blamed for the destruction of the Library of Alexandria (the implication is that it was wholly intact until then). On p. 212 n. 314 R. cites M. Bowra’s *Periclean Athens*, then goes on to remark that Bowra ‘had the same sexual tastes as the great Latinist A.E. Housman’ (a point followed up with a vulgar anecdote). On p. 219 he observes that, in the Melian Dialogue, ‘It requires no great stretch to read [the Athenians] as playing the traditional Greek male role. They claim that the weak, by their nature, have no choice but to yield, hence no need to feel ashamed’.

In the introduction R. calls the book a ‘montage’, which is precisely what it is. His hope is that it might serve ‘the reader as a primer, in the sense of both a place to start from and what might cause an explosion of interest (even of exasperation)’ (p. xiii). Few, I think, are the uninitiated readers whom this book will tempt to dig more deeply into the field; instead, I suspect that it will speak most to those who, like R., now look back nostalgically on a posh classical education they were forced to endure many decades ago, in the good old days when verb forms meant something and things like the Second Sophistic and *Black Athena* had not messed everything up.

I am not saying that this book does not have its moments or that it is wholly charmless and unentertaining. Sometimes R.’s jittery *longue-durée* approach provides a little insight (into antiquity’s historiography, if not its actual history), and he is certainly well read and enthusiastic. Once in a while the jokes and droll remarks are even funny. By the second

half, when I had started to get over my own 'exasperation', I got rather annoyed at myself for actually enjoying the prose and storytelling. In the end, I do not blame him for writing this book. I even think it is of some interest for the glance it offers at what the world of today looks like to the layperson once reared on old British schoolboy Classics. Defences of (the study of) antiquity are proliferating, and it was also particularly instructive to read *Antiquity Matters* and N. Morley's *Classics: Why It Matters* (2018) within weeks of each other. R. and Morley seem to be exactly each other's imagined antagonists.

Yet I do blame Yale University Press. I assume that the book went through readers; I cannot imagine what their reports must have said. What occurred to me by about ten pages in – after I had noticed the lack of references, bibliography, structure, point and so on – was that no one but a 'Distinguished White Man' could have gotten away with writing this. Women (even the lady Classicists R. cites as J. Harrison's legacy) and people of colour would never have made it through the first hoop of the academic publishing process with such unscholarly work – nor, do I think, should anyone be able to. Yet these kinds of 'crossover' books (published by academic presses but marketed as trade) are what represent this field to a broader public. It is really about time, then, that the presses take more seriously the ethical responsibility involved in the business of publishing them.

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