Reception

In *American Arcadia*, Peter Holliday offers readers a sumptuous and fascinating account of 'California and the Classical Tradition'.[1] Beautifully presented and illustrated, this book is not only a thought-provoking and pleasurable read but also a valuable addition to the body of scholarship that has explored classical receptions in the United States at some length in recent years. Much of that scholarship has focused on now familiar terrain, from the fixation on antiquity in Hollywood and popular culture more broadly, to the grandiose evocations of classical architecture in eastern cities such as Washington, DC, and New York. California, by contrast, for all its prominence on the world stage and in the cultural imagination, might not spring so readily to mind as a rich locus of classical receptions, but Holliday convincingly demonstrates 'how Californians used classical antiquity as a metaphor for fashioning the Golden State and their own lives in it' (355). Although well-known buildings such as the Getty Villa, Hearst Castle, and Caesar's Palace rightly receive lengthy discussion, there are a wealth of examples which are likely to be new to many readers, from the nineteenth-century Hungarian refugee building a Pompeian villa in a self-consciously Arcadian landscape, to the 1960s development of the CalArts campus, whose Modernist architects yet proclaimed their debt to Athens and Rome. Nor is the book solely concerned with architecture. Although the built environment is at its core, the full range of Californian identification with, and appropriation of, classical imagery and ideology is explored. The final chapter, for example, shows how pursuers of the quintessentially Californian healthy lifestyle and body beautiful knowingly looked to classical paradigms on multiple occasions. Resisting the temptation to frame all of this in a conventional 'classical tradition' approach, Holliday takes pains to show the full extent of the interaction and innovation that characterizes Californian classicism, and the resulting study is highly recommended.

One of the delights of *American Arcadia* may well be its presentation of relatively unfamiliar classical receptions, but the next volume under consideration is distinguished as a publication of a hitherto almost entirely unknown text. As with broader studies of reception in the US, the relationship between Italian Fascism and Roman antiquity has been explored in some detail.[2] The importance of *Romanità* to the Fascist regime as a way of shaping its symbols and its urban footprint, its ideology, and – crucially – its sense of legitimacy, is well known. But the existence of a corpus of Fascist Latin literature amid this nexus of ancient and modern will surely be news to many. The subject of this slim but vital new study by Hans Lamers and Bettina Reitz-Joosse is *The Codex Fori Mussolini. A Latin Text of Italian Fascism*.[3] The Codex is a 1,220-word text written in Latin, on parchment, and buried under a monumental

[1] *American Arcadia. California and the Classical Tradition*. By Peter J. Holliday. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. 446 + xxix. 108 b/w illustrations; 60 colour plates. Hardback £29.99, ISBN: 978-0-19-025651-7.

[2] See, for example, A. De Francesco, *The Antiquity of the Italian Nation. The Cultural Origins of a Political Myth in Modern Italy, 1796–1943* (Oxford, 2013).

[3] *The Codex Fori Mussolini. A Latin Text of Italian Fascism*. By Hans Lamers and Bettina Reitz-Joosse. Bloomsbury Studies in Classical Reception. London, Bloomsbury, 2016. Pp. x + 139. 24 b/w illustrations. Hardback £80, ISBN: 978-1-4742-2695-0; paperback £28.99, ISBN: 978-1-3500-5486-8.

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obelisk in the Foro Mussolini (as was) in 1932; it reads as a kind of foundation document for Fascism, recounting the rise of the movement and its leader, and celebrating Mussolini's key achievements, such as the establishment of Fascism's youth movement, the Opera Nazionale Balilla, and the building of the Foro itself. Lamers and Reitz-Joosse here present a first translation and critical edition of the text itself (the original remaining buried under the obelisk, it exists in only four variants, much like the classical texts on which it draws so heavily), along with a detailed commentary and valuable contextual essays: in so doing, they provide a great service to anyone interested in Fascist receptions of antiquity, or political appropriations of the past more broadly. They offer an exhaustive analysis of the text – drawing attention to the many direct quotations from and allusions to authors such as Cicero, Livy, and Virgil, for example – and discuss important contexts, such as the wider role of Latin at this time, and the composition of the Forum. Some lines of enquiry emerge as perhaps worthy of more detailed consideration – such as the possible synergy between the Codex and the *Res Gestae*, treated (and dismissed) here in only one paragraph. But with this new piece of evidence in the scholarly and public domain, others will doubtless expand on the important work done here.

Forging new directions in scholarship is the battle cry of our next publication, too. In 2011, George Kovacs and C. W. Marshall edited *Classics and Comics*, a self-proclaimed 'groundbreaking' *Classical Presences* title that, within just a few years, has already spawned its own sequel, in the form of *Son of Classics and Comics*.[4] Here, the emphasis is more squarely on a global perspective, with more chapters devoted to classical receptions in the Japanese manga tradition, and to the much-loved Astérix series. To an extent, the two publications need to be regarded as a pair: *Son of…*, probably unsurprisingly, sees no need to set out for a second time the critical framework that provided the introductory essay to the original publication. This time, the Introduction is a more pedestrian account of some of the classical comics that are not considered in the main chapters here. As a result, it is to individual chapters that readers are likely to turn, and there are certainly interesting explorations to be found here. The overall impression, however, is of a succession of studies that are useful but that can be a little limited in scope. Edited volumes often fall prey to this charge, of course, but classical reception studies can appear especially susceptible to this mode of publication, and its pitfalls. Although Kovacs and Marshall undoubtedly provide valuable inroads into this important aspect of popular culture, it remains to be seen what kind of results could be yielded by a more sustained and critically coherent examination of comics. Individual contributions also run the risk of being missed, especially when the volume might not provide their most obvious home. A fascinating account of 'Classical Allusion in Modern British Political Cartoons', by Ian Runacres and Michael K. Mackenzie, deserves a readership that might not think to look for its unforgettable images (think various politicians in the form of the Laocoön) amid the superheroes of the Marvel universe.

By contrast, Amanda Wrigley's *Greece on Air* offers a focused account of a fairly limited body of material – the ways in which Ancient Greece was presented on BBC radio

[4] *Son of Classics and Comics*. Edited by George Kovacs and C. W. Marshall. Classical Presences. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. xxx + 250. 58 illustrations. Hardback £64, ISBN: 978-0-19-026888-6; paperback £19.99, ISBN: 978-0-19-026889-3.

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between the 1920s and 1960s[5] – but, as a monograph, it is afforded the leisure to explore this material in detail, and to carefully construct a set of persuasive and productive arguments. In keeping with the titles already discussed in this review, the book covers a lot of new ground. Many readers are likely to be surprised at the prevalence and richness of Ancient Greek texts and ideas in a wide variety of radio programmes of this era, from a range of adaptations of Aristophanic comedy in the 1950s, to wartime radio plays on various aspects of Greek history (including a version of Xenophon's *Anabasis*) by Louis MacNeice. In fact, it is notable that many of the leading figures in this period of classically themed radio are just such esteemed writers and thinkers: also looming large in Wrigley's study are Gilbert Murray, Robert Graves, and Benjamin Britten, who in 1943 scored a fascinating creative engagement with Homer's *Odyssey*, entitled *The Rescue* (written by Edward Sackville-West). Two features of Wrigley's methodology and analysis stand out as particularly useful. First, the amount of time and attention devoted to sifting through the evidence for audience reception of these plays – an ambition still conspicuously absent in many classical reception studies – is to be commended. Considerable use is made of publications such as the *Radio Times*, and of various Listener Research Reports, in order to present an 'in the round' picture of 'the full, *actual* life of a cultural work in the public imagination' (6). Second, the study repeatedly points to the distinctiveness of radio as a performance medium; without visual images, Wrigley argues, 'radio engagements with ancient Greece may actually enable the listener to get more readily to the human dimension of ancient Greek stories, histories, and ideas' (278). Given how much space cinema takes up in classical reception studies, it is refreshing to have our ears trained on a very different but, Wrigley would argue, no less important medium.

Finally, another Classical Presences volume offers yet another fresh and unexpected take on receptions of the past. J. Alison Rosenblitt herself acknowledges that 'We don't normally think of [E.E.] Cummings as a classically influenced poet' (23), but over the course of her monograph she sets out to demonstrate the numerous ways in which the American poet and artist was just that.[6] The main thrust of the argument is that Cummings (a Classics major at Harvard) would certainly have been regarded in this way by his own contemporaries, but that the twenty-first-century reader – perhaps less alert to the forms that classical influence might take, or unaware of the extent to which elite culture was steeped in classicism only a century ago – is likely to miss this important context to his work. In the service of this argument, Rosenblitt not only assesses the classical motifs in some of Cummings' well-known works – for example, his engagement with an array of Pan-like figures, in poems such as 'in Just-' – but also presents a considerable body of previously unpublished material. Mostly relating to his time at Harvard, this includes a number of translations from classical authors such as Horace, Sophocles, and Homer – work which Rosenblitt shows to have played no small role in his later poetry. Particularly fascinating are the short prose

[5] *Greece on Air. Engagements with Ancient Greece on BBC Radio, 1920s–1960s*. By Amanda Wrigley. Classical Presences. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015. Pp. xix + 328. 28 illustrations. Hardback £80, ISBN: 978-0-19-964478-0.

[6] *E.E. Cummings' Modernism and the Classics. Each Imperishable Stanza*. By J. Alison Rosenblitt. Classical Presences. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. xxii + 370. 13 b/w illustrations. Hardback £60, ISBN: 978-0-19-876715-2.

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extracts from undergraduate essays: in one, 'The Greek Spirit', Cummings argued that 'The Greek point of view is to one generation one thing & to another a different and more beautiful. "The Greek spirit" will never be definable till eternity, when the first poet of the Earth is at last fully understood' (304) – a fitting manifesto for classical reception studies if ever there was one.

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General

If you still haven't chosen a book to take with to the desert island, I have a suggestion: *L'encyclopédie du ciel*.[1] At 1,202 pages, it will keep you occupied day and night: what you read as text by day will help you read by night in the sky. This wonderful and extremely useful book is as difficult to classify as it is to put down. Essentially, it is a compendium of Greco-Roman discourse on the stars and planets, divided into three parts. The first ('Les images: histoire et mythologie: voir et raconter') is about the constellations and the planets. It opens with a catalogue in which each constellation is illustrated, explained, and accompanied with appropriate quotations from Eratosthenes' *Catasterismoi* and Hyginus' *Astronomica*. There follow essays about the names of the constellations, on the Sun, Moon, and the planets, and one on Greek and Roman creation myths. All are accompanied by long passages of appropriate Greek and Latin texts in translation. The second part of the book ('Les lois: l'astronomie: observer et calculer') is about the ancient attempts to make sense of and explain the stars and planets as a system, about calendars, and about ancient astronomical instruments and objects. This part of the book also contains a complete translation of Hipparchus' *Commentary on the Phaenomena of Eudoxus and Aratus*. It closes with an account of Greek star catalogues. The third part of the book is concerned with various attempts to interpret the celestial phenomena ('Les messages: signes et influence: interpréter et prédire'). It includes, but is not restricted to, astrology; philosophical ideas are also discussed, such as astral apotheosis, the ascent of the soul through the sky, and the music of the spheres. There is a dictionary of astronomical and astrological terms and a dictionary of ancient astronomers and authors dealing with astronomy. The book closes with parallel star catalogues of Eratosthenes, Hipparchus, and Ptolemy.

Turning our gaze from the loftiness of the heavens to the earth and human culture, where the only constant thing is the change itself (as memorably outlined at the outset of Herodotus' *Histories*), a remarkably wide-ranging volume addresses the human reaction to catastrophic loss – the commemoration of the fall of cities.[2] The volume opens with a foreword by Margaret Alexiou, whose monograph *The Ritual Lament in the Greek*

[1] *L'encyclopédie du ciel. Mythologie, astronomie, astrologie*. Edited by Arnaud Zucker. Paris, Éditions Robert Laffont, 2016. Pp. 1202, ills. Paperback €30, ISBN: 978-2-221-09790-8.

[2] *The Fall of Cities in the Mediterranean. Commemoration in Literature, Folk-Song, and Liturgy*. Edited by Mary R. Bachvarova, Dorota Dutsch, and Ann Suter. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2016. Pp. xviii + 277. 2 maps. Hardback £64.99, ISBN: 978-1-107-03196-8.

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