dismembered woman. Barry sees this as the aspect of an intellectual tradition which devalues and erases women's experiences of violence and is central to the development of early Christianity. Augustine has a central role in that trajectory, in which suspicion of female sexuality, a link between marriage and servitude, and the tendency to blame women for whatever evil occurs in the world are major operating principles. In this reading Barry sees the start of a 'dismissive approach to sexual assault' (79) that is a fundamental feature of late-antique culture and has deep and troubling ramifications. The hagiographical tradition constructs a contained and disciplined image of the female body, which is ultimately the product of male oneiric strategies. That is the most relevant and pressing aspect of the problem, in Barry's view, because it retains a role in shaping the horizons and expectations of modern Christians. This thesis is as radical as it is likely to prove controversial – to put it neutrally. It is built on the close reading of some key texts (the original Greek or Latin is never given, alas) and on a clear-eyed vision of the disciplinary stakes of the project and the citational politics that should underpin it (the approach she takes to William Harris' work at p. 16, n. 42, is driven by an altogether important concern, but is quite fundamentally unhelpful to her readers and to the overall quality of her discussion). It posits a strategy of engagement with strands of scholarly practice and reflection that rarely intersect with debates in ancient history. This is a book that takes sides. It is led by an intellectual and political commitment to a society in which the oppressed and the silenced might stand a better chance to find their voices and have them heard. It deserves attention, perhaps especially from those who might take a very different view on its subject matter.

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Reception

In preparing for this review, I spent a little bit of time on *Eidolon* journal, the groundbreaking exercise in socially-conscious public scholarship that wound up its activities in December 2020, in the midst of Covid and shortly before Joe Biden's inauguration.[1] In many ways, the publication encapsulated a moment when many classicists, at least in Anglophone (especially North-American) communities, appeared to be reconsidering the discipline's relationship to axes of power, most notably those along lines of gender and race, envisaging more equitable and restorative modalities for studying the ancient world, and asking what contribution Classics makes to a more just world. It also, more controversially perhaps, repeatedly asked the question 'Burn it all down?' While many classicists have no doubt been inspired to incorporate practices

[1] https://eidolon.pub/ On the demise of *Eidolon*, see Donna Zuckerberg, 'As *Eidolon* Lay Dying', *Public Humanities*, 2025; 1:e25. doi:10.1017/pub.2024.35

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inspired by social justice, and Humanities departments are under threat on both sides of the Atlantic, in 2026, Classics has neither been subject to a total reinvention nor gone the way of Meleager's branch.[2] Indeed, as the authors of the first two books in this review, both former contributors to *Eidolon*, argue, classicists still need to consider how they are alibis – or worse – to oppression.

The discipline as it is publicly conducted is of interest here. The hostile reception that has been observed to greet contemporary anti-colonial praxis within Classics is noted by Dan-el Padilla Peralta in his short but impactful work, based on his 2022 series of W. E. B. du Bois lectures at Harvard.[3] Early on, he takes direct aim at the response to events supporting Palestine seen on the Liverpool Classics LISTSERV, arguing that attitudes conveyed there do not bode well for attempts to support the 'material and psychic flourishing of Black and Brown communities' (xi). At a more foundational level, however, this book unpicks what constitutes conventional classicism and explores how mainstream definitions of the classical negatively position Black people and cultures. The focus of Padilla Peralta's attention therefore flows between the personal, the inter- and intra-disciplinary, and elements of the wider world.

Classicism is defined as a 'system of aesthetic determination and calibration' which is determined through the forming and reforming of tradition, 'assertions of chronological precedence and priority', as well as 'normative presumptions of value' (1). On the face of it, there is probably little that is controversial in such a broad definition, even one that nonetheless foregrounds the dynamic nature of a classicism that is at once participatory and exclusionary. However, what might be most controversial to some is what is missing: Greece and Rome. This is a core part of Padilla Peralta's discussion: that Greece and Rome are 'overrepresented' in classicism (2). What follows, therefore, is not merely a breakdown of classicists' scholarship or art within the Greco-Roman tradition, but a journey into the work of Black scholars and creatives.

In Chapter 1, 'Epic Maroons', the author discusses the birth of Classics and Greco-Roman classicism within the era of the transatlantic trafficking of enslaved people and western imperialism. Disciplinary formation and the exploitation of African slaves are interlinked: 'racializing epistemes and the distribution of material wealth are historically interconnected' (25). Moving from the views of classicists, Padilla Peralta offers intriguing alternatives to the classicism of the plantation era: 'fugitivity' (40). In Chapter 2, 'Zealots', epistemic domination is examined in respect to Black and Indigenous spiritual life. Eurocentric knowledge formations sought to categorize and contain a wide range of beliefs and practices as merely 'pagan'. From this, Padilla Peralta goes on to explore the relationship between members of the Caribbean diaspora and religious practice as expressed through personal moments and works of art and literature. Greco-Roman classicism and classical training are seen as insufficient for

[2] As is argued in a piece also cited by Padilla Peralta (see below, 76), the progressive calls for classical conflagration originated from motives less destructive than external attempts to restrict access to the Humanities: Rebecca Futo Kennedy and Maximus Planudes, 'Changing "Classics": What Do We Want? Not What Some People Keep Saying We Want'. *Classics at the Intersections*, 22 February 2021: https://rfkclassics.blogspot.com/2021/02/changing-classics-what-do-we-want-not.html, accessed 30 April 2026.

[3] *Classicism and Other Phobias*. By Dan-el Padilla Peralta. New Jersey and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2025. Pp. xxiv + 191. 15 black and white illustrations. Hardback £22, ISBN: 978-0-691-26618-3.

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comprehending these worlds. Chapter 3, 'Let Me Clear my Throat', resumes the themes of temporality and material processes to discuss the rhetorical positioning – or even absenting – of Indigenous people with a particular focus on Du Bois. The author argues that his 'case should be a warning to those who quest after [. . .] classics and classicism' without paying heed to 'the settler-colonialist preconditions of [their] existence and production' (100). The final chapter, 'Kehinde Wiley Dreams Classicisms', assesses Wiley's and others Black artists' responses to classicizing traditions that are predicated on Black people's separation from them. This chapter contains a number of interesting images and a thoughtful investigation of Wiley's use of nature imagery. The book concludes with a provocation to continue challenging the 'racist settler-colonial intimacies of classicism' (148).

Curtis Dozier also raises some difficult questions about the veneration awarded to, and perspectives offered by, Classics.[4] Dozier has previously gained recognition for this work on the *Pharos* project (tagline: doing justice to the Classics), which sought to challenge the appropriation of ancient Greece and Rome by the far right.[5] The subtitle of this accessible study, 'How White Nationalists Use Ancient Greece and Rome to Justify Hate' is an accurate indication of its contents. Following a chapter on some of the important figures in white nationalist activism in the United States, Dozier breaks down a number of key themes and ideas that are promoted by these circles and are in some way influenced by the ancient Mediterranean. Chapter 2 looks at ideals of heroism, particularly those that emanate from Sparta and Roman military leaders. Chapter 3 discusses civilizational decline, such as that which is associated with the fall of the Roman Empire. The next three chapters explore the promotion of white bloodlines: the racialization of the ancient Greeks as white ancestors to the white citizens of the contemporary United States; the presentation of European peoples as pre-eminent in their intellectual, military, and moral capabilities; and the naturalness of established social hierarchies. Chapter 7 draws connections between racial purity and dreams of white ethnostates.

Just as Padilla Peralta also looks to recent events, the urgency of Dozier's discussion is clearly highlighted by his frequent evocation of current affairs in the USA. However, many of these vignettes will be familiar to those outside the country. Dozier opens Chapter 2 with a description of the attack on the Capitol on 6th January 2021, for example. The author portrays these events as part of a broader interweaving of racist and androcentric currents that stretch across the White House itself, traditional broadcast media, the streets of Charlottesville, the Internet, and back to the libraries and senior common rooms of European universities. So, for example, Dozier notes that the classicist and disgraced Conservative politician Enoch Powell's infamous leveraging of Vergil has made him a 'hero' to various Stateside racists (155).

Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech is still widely regarded as an instance of racial hatred in the United Kingdom. On the other hand, a more provocative element of Dozier's argument lies in his analysis of views and attitudes within Classics that might be regarded as anodyne or even clichéd. According to Dozier, some of these sentiments

[4] *The White Pedestal: How White Nationalists Use Ancient Greece and Rome to Justify Hate*. By Curtis Dozier. New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2026. Pp. xvi + 268. Hardback £25, ISBN: 978-0-300-27273-4.

[5] https://pharos.vassarspaces.net/, accessed 29 April 2026.

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might overlap with those expressed by white nationalists. He cites specific aspects of a number of well-known classicists' responses to Homeric epic as foreshadowing similar comments in highly problematic venues. Dozier firmly states that these scholars are not in league with or sympathetic to white nationalists. However, he suggests that these views 'indicate, rather, the prestige, familiarity, and popularity of the qualities that white nationalists celebrate in Homeric heroes' (52). Scholarly output occupies a full spectrum of relationships to white nationalist thought in Dozier's analysis, from outright refutation of supremacist attitudes towards the ancient world, to somewhat helpful or serendipitously congenial positions, to extensive scaffolding.

Dozier does not exempt himself from scrutiny either. Not only does he acknowledge his subject position as a 'white, straight, Christian man', but he also reflects on his previous work (12). Following the work of Critical Ancient World Studies, the *Pharos* project, which sought to correct misapprehensions of antiquity by the far right, is now viewed by Dozier as a form of 'defensive scholarship'; he was making a move typical of 'when beneficiaries of white supremacy attempt to distance themselves from it' (13) – the same kind of 'White innocence' to which Padilla Peralta also refers (30). Drawing on the work of a number of ancient historians, the author is careful to say that idealization of the ancient world, whether from a liberal-democratic perspective, or from the point of view of a far-right ideologue, will always lead to an inaccurate portrayal: ancient Greece and Rome were horrific and inspiring on their own terms and they require neither sugar-coating nor distorting.

While the mode of Dozier's discussion makes plain some of the author's own political disposition, and which views he considers to be truly poisonous, it is not an overly heavy or sententious read. He introduces key figures and concepts from both Classics and white nationalists in a digestible way. The material refers to contemporary forms of racism, antisemitism, misogyny, and homophobia, which are dealt with plainly and clearly. Awareness of the porous borders between the academy and the public sphere is shown in both the nuances in Dozier's discussion of historians and the impassioned nature of his conclusion. He admits, for example, that the idea of a Roman 'decline' is so deeply rooted that 'even professional academics who venture into political commentary reproduce it' (71). The flow between the ivory tower and the newsstand therefore makes his suggested remedy even more important. Including analysis of the oppressive dimensions to the societies of ancient Greece and Rome is more than a necessary step, it is a personally rewarding one: 'it is exciting to challenge long-held beliefs that serve violence. Being critical is a form of love' (183). Dozier's own experience, he says, is testament to this.

Padilla Peralta also offers a discussion that is explicitly grounded in his own identity and experiences. As he says in the Preface, 'This book concentrates on Black American and Afro-diasporic lives and cultures because these are the ones I know best', although just as important is that he feels 'most obligated' to the same (xii). We catch glimpses of the young Padilla Peralta at home, listening to music, or out and about, and are privy to reflections on his education, including how it did not give him 'a language for the study of *los santos*' and the still-living spiritual world of the Caribbean diaspora (64). The affective and ethical ties that underpin the author's presence within his own work are made clear.

However, this book also reveals through its structure and form an ideological and intellectual commitment to Black life and dismantling a narrow form of Greco-Roman classicism. As Padilla Peralta himself explains, 'I privilege a relational and associative

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mode of argument that, consciously eschewing classicist disciplinary norms, seeks instead connection with Black communities' (12). True to his word, this book does freely roam across sources, times, and ideas in a manner that resists typical linear structures. He is also generous in his use of scholarship from a wide range of writers, including many who will be more familiar to those working in Black Studies or post-colonialism. In many ways, then, this book can be a challenging read for a Classicist, particularly where the references are brief. But being witness to a process whereby the typically classical becomes marginalized may be considered an important readerly experience in itself.

One of the more striking aspects of Padilla Peralta's book, so far as it implicates classicists, is his understanding not only of what Classics and classicism might do to or for the world, but what it (and dominant educational frameworks) does to those who study it. I have already mentioned that classical training left the author ill-equipped for understanding Afro-diasporic spirituality. However, there is a broader claim at work here. The demands of becoming part of a discipline, by Padilla Peralta's calculations, are heavy indeed. It requires nothing less than 'attachment, immersion, and an emptying out of the self' (40). But this disembodied, deracinated way of living may still develop within its participants feelings of love. This love must not veer into 'eroticization of disciplinary practice' since, as the author rightly notes, it can be an alibi for 'predatory behavior' (41). One of the draws of classical training, which might initially seem independent of the political values of its content, is the emphasis on rigour and the resulting disciplinary 'awe' (68). The author suggests that this form of regard for the discipline provides a framework and motivation for passing over more fundamental criticisms of the classical status of Classics.[6] Responding with solidarity and commitment to the understanding that the discipline's emergence from imperialism and racial exploitation has necessarily left it intellectually and ethically compromised may allow the flourishing of both knowledge and ourselves.

I don't wish to imply that these two books are working towards identical ends; indeed in many ways they differ greatly in terms of both their approach and their goals. Critically, Dozier is more invested in challenging Classics the discipline, while Padilla Peralta specifies that he is 'isolat[ing] classicism and not *classics* for scrutiny', with Classics' role in promoting a single form of classicism a secondary consideration (2). Nevertheless, what they do have in common is that they present a challenge to the conscientious classicist: what motivations do we have for our investment in Classics the discipline? And what is it of ourselves, our identities, that we invest? Both books open up future possibilities for our relationships with Classics and classicism that exhibit a good deal of care.

Another common thread in publications this issue is the production of large volumes that give a comprehensive overview of a particular topic. One important work on *The Reception of Philo of Alexandria* is a case in point.[7] This edited volume is divided into six chronological sections that together illustrate Philo's widespread influence and

[6] As he acknowledges he has done elsewhere. See Sasha-Mae Eccleston and Dan-El Padilla Peralta, 'Racing the Classics: Ethos and Praxis', *American Journal of Philology* 143.2 (2022), 199–218.

[7] *The Reception of Philo of Alexandria*. Edited by Courtney J. P. Friesen, David Lincicum, and David T. Runia. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2025. Pp. xiv + 669. 10 black and white illustrations. Hardback £135.94, ISBN: 978-0-19-883622-3.

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methodological questions around the dissemination of his work. Part one concentrates on the centuries immediately following Philo's death in 50 CE. The subsequent sections are named 'Late Antiquity', 'The Middle Ages', 'The Renaissance and Early Modern Period', 'From the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Centuries', and 'Contemporary Perspectives', altogether forming thirty-five chapters by a multi-national cohort of scholars.

The editors Courtney Friesen, David Lincicum, and David Runia assert in their Introduction the importance of this undertaking by pointing out that Philo's is 'one of the larger bodies of writing to survive from the ancient world' (1). Furthermore, with the exception of the Septuagint, his work is 'the only substantial literary remains of the Jewish community of Alexandria', which was 'virtually destroyed' during the reign of Trajan (1). In their clear and systematic discussion, the editors explain that they are taking the topic of reception 'in a broad and general sense', but that these receptions can be roughly put into five categories of 'approval and appropriation', 'historical record', 'disapproval and weaponization', 'scholarly study', and 'religious tradition' (2). However, even these arrangement leaves them open to much variation, although the theorization or complication of theories of reception is not at the forefront.

The first section grapples with the difficulties of tracing Philo's influence when important evidence is missing. Emblematic of this are James Carleton Paget's work on 'Apostolic Fathers and Early Christian Apologists' or Torrey Seland on 'The New Testament'. An interesting issue arises in Gregory E. Sterling's chapter on 'Ancient Platonic Philosophy'. In reviewing the possibility that Philo had an impact on the Platonists, such as Plutarch and Numenius, Sterling points out that the possible similarity that one of Numenius' references to God has with a Hebrew formulation found in the Septuagint could be as a result of Philo's influence. Linguistic and cultural exchange and interaction in the ancient world is a recurring theme in this book, as is the close attention to questions of philology. A later chapter by Sabrina Inowlocki highlights how Philo's status as a 'Jewish Greek philosopher [. . .] who unknowingly paved the way for Christian theology by synthesizing Greek and biblical culture in an Alexandrian fashion' made him a useful target for rhetorical exploitation by Eusebius (161).

While the first two sections are largely focused on individuals, many of the chapters in the subsequent sections give a useful history or survey of a particular area, whether that is Olga Vardazaryan on 'Armenian Christianity', Alexander Treiger on 'Christian Arabic Literature' in the Middle Ages, Dirk Westerkamp on 'German Philosophy, 1650–1850', or Ze'ev Strauss on 'The Jewish Enlightenment (*Haskalah*)', to name but a few. James R. Royse on the one hand and David Runia, Gregory Sterling, and Michael Cover on the other give accounts of the transmission of Philo's writing in 'Greek and Latin Manuscript Traditions' and 'Early Printed Editions of Philo's Writings' respectively. Further methodological issues are raised at different points: for example, Madalina Toca and Johan Leemans discuss usage of the *TLG* (*Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*), and David Lincicum includes reflections on the predominance of comparative work in New Testament Studies.

In many ways, the latter two sections on the modern era and 'Contemporary Perspectives', which are almost entirely concerned with intellectual history (along with Runia's recommendations for creative literary engagements with Philo in several languages), provide a useful framing for understanding the context of the arguments in the chapters that precede them. Classicists may find the chapter devoted to Philo's reception

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by classicists especially relevant. Friesen's discussion reflects on competing definitions of the Second Sophistic, and, building on the work of Tim Whitmarsh, argues that 'Jewish writers can provide an impetus for problematizing the Hellenocentrism that underlies many conventional studies of this time period' (520–1). Friesen then explores Philo's response to theatre culture, an area on which Philo is said to be a valuable resource, as well as indicative of his interaction with 'Greco-Roman elites' (531). These chapters in the final section also offer thoughts on further areas for research. In so doing, this volume not only gives a wide-ranging history of Philo's afterlife, both in respect to his writings and as a representative figure, it also captures a particular moment in Philonic studies with one eye on the future.

Another sizable achievement – this time the brainchild of a single person – is Susanna Morton Braund's substantial offering.[8] Again, this volume makes its mark in providing a detailed and comprehensive overview of an area of reception. In this case, the area is on translation of Vergil, which the author herself declares to be an 'enormous' topic (2). This volume avoids a chronological or geographic structure in place of a thematic one, which allows her to explore the 'why' of the popularity of Vergil from different angles (53). These angles comprise national identity, the identity of the translator, 'economics', poetic rivalry, 'poetic careers', 'partial translations', 'supplements and paratextual material', metre, 'fidelity of concepts and register', and 'equivalences and identifications'. Braund claims her approach to reception is 'a development of reader-response theory' (9). The outputs of translators are observable responses to their reading of Vergil, which, Braund notes, also produce downstream effects in the Vergilian tradition, not least, it seems, in the sheer number of them perpetually reinscribing his privileged position.

Necessarily, then, Braund finds some ways to narrow the scope of her study. One is largely to limit the types of translation she is interested in to the 'literal' type and the 'paraphrase', although these are not hard and fast rules (36). Braund introduces her theoretical approach to translation through a complication of common 'binaries' that are used in relation to the subject, instead preferring a 'spectrum' (33). One word that does crop up repeatedly, however, is 'fidelity' – a loaded term indeed. This discussion is an accessible introduction to the topic, and the way in which Braund discusses the limits, framing and scope of her study is exemplary. Similarly, the chapter on the economics of publishing translations brings together a lot of interesting pieces of data on the circulation of printed materials, as well as comments on the migration of skills related to printing, and on the culture of patronage. It even offers space to consider editions that may be on our shelves right now.

The first chapter contains several examples of early modern and modern European nationalism – although there is also room for the international language of Esperanto and several other instances from elsewhere. It is pleasing to see an awareness of the interactions between different member countries of the United Kingdom, and later we are treated to a discussion about twentieth-century Welsh translator Euros Bowen. Translation is connected here to 'prestige', as it is in her discussion of Ukraine and 'cultural capital' (102; 104). When talking about the identity of translators, Braund

[8] *Translating Virgil: A Cultural History of the Western Tradition from the Eleventh Century to the Present*. By Susanna Morton Braund. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2025. Pp. xxx + 992. 67 illustrations, 7 tables. Hardback £150, ISBN: 978-1-108-47061-2.

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makes a concerted effort to talk about women practitioners from across the centuries. Braund is interested in how religious affiliation and class impact these women. One of the case studies is the well-known Hélisenne de Crenne, who is discussed further in Chapter 3 as an 'innovative bestselling author' (235). Also included in this chapter are some images of exquisite woodcuts by Mabel Alleyne that accompany L.A.S. Jermyn's translation of the *Georgics* made during his internment in Singaporean labour camps in the Second World War.

Chapter 7 on Supplements and Paratextual Material also presents an occasion for some fascinating figures, such as a botanical drawing for John Martyn's translation of the *Georgics* and many reproductions of antique editions, among them one from a 1508/9 translation of the *Eclogues* by Adelphus Mulling. In a sense, the business of publishing reappears here too: 'beautiful, expensive objects in folio format' are discussed (537). The analysis of interviews with translators – in which the theme of 'fidelity' pops up in relation to Sarah Ruden's view on gender and translation – is another reminder, to an extent, of the business side of translation. This is a chapter that also advances a set of categories, inspired by (but not absolutely faithful to) Genette, for thinking about the paratext in translations of Vergil and beyond.

Many chapters, as would be expected, offer close readings of translations and the Latin. Braund analyses the fortunes of Annibal Caro's at times controversial translation of the *Aeneid*, published in 1581, and which she says exhibits 'domesticating tendencies' (733). There are some charming details highlighted by Braund in this Italian rendering that take inspiration from 'contemporary court life' (734). As usual, non-English texts are translated in the footnotes, and Braund also offers Ruden's translation as a comparison. A contrast is Johan Heinrich Voss's version, in which he strains the German language to imitate the Latin word order, as Braund shows using an interlinear structure. This is an example of 'German foreignization', as Braund continues with troubling the binary oppositions which, she states, are sometimes presumed in studies of translation.

The book is well organized and managed; included within are two appendices, one listing the translations discussed, and one with 'brief biographies' of the translators whose names are emphasized in the main body of the book in bold. The reader is also aided in navigating the volume by in-text page references to related discussions. For all the clear exposition that Braund grants us, much of this book goes at a fair pace, with coverage that is sometimes relatively brief. Nevertheless, the prose is suffused with what appears to be a sincere passion for Vergil and the process of translation. One of Braund's stated aims is to promote further research into this topic, and – similarly to the previous volume on Philo – in addition to usefully bringing together huge swathes of bibliography, this work is likely to do just that.

Although much more compact, another volume includes several chapters that give compelling introductions to areas of study. *Pompeii in the Visual and Performing Arts: Its Reception in Spain and Latin America* is a collection of chapters that sheds light on the traffic in ideas, images, and wealth between Pompeii and large parts of the Hispanophone world and Brazil.[9] Mirella Romero Recio's Introduction gives us a

[9] *Pompeii in the Visual and Performing Arts: Its Reception in Spain and Latin America*. Edited by Mirella Romero Recio. London, New York, and Dublin, Bloomsbury, 2025. Pp. x + 240. 29 black and white illustrations. Paperback £28.99, ISBN: 978-1-350-27792-2.

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helpful overview of the excavation of Pompeii and its impact on Europe and the Americas. This sets the scene for her chapter on the seductive dream held by Spanish residents of inhabiting a 'Pompeian house'. Architecture and interior design are, unsurprisingly, well represented among the visual arts in this book.

Latin America's position within global power structures is a recurring theme that is tied to the use of these two artforms. A number of chapters contextualize these countries' interests in Pompeii with the changing fortunes of post-independence countries, navigating an increasingly powerful North America and a culturally dominant and prestigious Europe. Elites in South America may be growing their wealth through their countries' natural resources and global trade, as described by Carolina Valenzuela Matus in her chapter on Chile, but they are still reckoning with the legacy of the Old World. In some cases, this leads to some interesting examples of appropriation in the forming of new national identities. Aurelia Vargas Valencia and Elvia Carreño Velázquez show how Petronilo Monroy created an allegorical image of the constitution as woman to celebrate the Mexico constitution of 1857, which appears to combine elements of a Pompeian-style Bacchante with Moses returning with the Ten Commandments. The drama of empire as played out in space is clearly shown in Daniel Expósito's chapter on Puerto Rico and the United States. Attempts by new elites to consolidate power in times of instability and change are also present in Federica Pezzoli's chapter on Cuba. The outlining of this political context in many of these chapters also serves to make the discussions approachable for a novice in these areas.

Individuals also play a role in the use of Pompeii by elites, as is shown by Renata Senna Garraffoni's discussion of empress Teresa Cristina in Brazil. Elsewhere, chapters deal with other forms of art or further individual encounters. To name just two out of the worthy contributions, Laura Buitrago gives a history of adaptations of Bulwer-Lytton's *The Last Days of Pompeii*, noting that the promotion of some iterations as 'education resources' drives the inculcation of problematic and 'Eurocentric' ways of thinking (198). Meanwhile Jesús Salas Álvarez maps the impact of plaster casts and photography, adding to a topic that is often of interest to those working in classical reception studies of the nineteenth century.

Overall, these chapters bring together an informative combination of specificity and more general overviews that creates a picture of an exciting area of study within Classical reception. The writing is often very evocative of the visual material as well as of the political context.

I now move onto two rather different books, both by Martin M. Winkler. The first is a paperback issue of a hardback from 2020 and the second is a new contribution.[10] Both discuss film. While *Ovid on Screen* is for the most part focused on a single author, *Classical Antiquity and the Cinematic Imagination* darts from Aristotle to Zeno of Elea to Heliodorus, Lucretius and more. What these two publications share, however, is that they both communicate a passion for Classics and the cinema. Their lively and enthusiastic style addresses a presumed audience of cinephiles and classicists, with the

[10] *Ovid on Screen: A Montage of Attractions*. By Martin M. Winkler. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2025. Pp. xxi + 444. 54 colour illustrations. Paperback £29.99, ISBN: 978-11-0-870695-7; *Classical Antiquity and the Cinematic Imagination*. By Martin M. Winkler. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2024. Pp. xxi + 530. 110 colour illustrations. Hardback £126, ISBN: 978-10-0-939669-1.

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author as the intermediary between the two, engaging the reader with numerous asides, historical titbits, and little jokes.

Both works are sizeable endeavours with multi-part structures. *Ovid on Screen* is divided into five main parts, each one in turn further subdivided into chapters and subsections that travel between antiquity and modernity and produce what the author refers to as 'a montage of topics – attractive ones, I hope' (11). Part 1, 'Theory and Practice', introduces the key concept coined by Winkler: 'cinemetamorphosis'. This refers to 'versions of literary texts' formed by the cinema, which Winkler considers a medium with unique and superior capabilities when it comes to the rendering of classical literature (3). It seems worth quoting this specific phrase used here, since the connotations of 'turning' possessed by 'version' and the broad range of possibilities the term points to are relevant. He also endeavours to highlight how Ovid's approaches to narrative have something of the filmic about them – his 'film sense'. Part 2, 'Key Moments in Ovidian Film History', explores Ovidian forms, influences, and styles in the work of Italian critic Gabriel d'Annunzio and several films with labyrinthine qualities. Part 3, 'Into New Bodies' elaborates on 'cinemetamorphosis', discussing the nature of Ovidian metamorphosis and adding to his roster of key metamorphic figures that inform subsequent discussion. In Part 4, 'Love, Seduction, Death', Winkler moves onto another set of themes which he considers to be endemic in the work of Ovid. Part 5, 'Eternal Returns', explores 'aspects of immortality, artists' fame, and the survival of their works', which necessarily requires further appearances from Orpheus, following the previous section's invocation of him (15).

In his 'Prooemium', Winkler claims that he is attempting to 'show the wide-ranging ramifications that Ovidian archetypes, and related archetypes in their Ovidian form, have been capable of provoking in a modern medium that did not exist at his time' (xix). The terms 'archetype' and 'Ovidian', along with 'cinemetamorphosis', cover a lot of ground here, necessitated by the complexity and scale of Winkler's intent. 'Archetypes' include 'Pygmalion, Medusa, Icarus', whose reappearances across cinematic history can be considered a manifestation of the 'eternal return' (372). The book oscillates between examining direct references to Ovid's work in films, exploring Ovid's texts through the lens of cinema, and the location of figures and narrative strategies that have something in common with characters or poetic sensibilities found in Ovid's poetry. This last category is in part identified as 'background Ovidianism', which concept the author borrows from Hinds (6).[11] So, a long list of films about love and sex, including many where the protagonist must learn how to find love, could be said to be infused with the poet's 'spirit' (303). The list embraces the 2003 romcom *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days*, several Marilyn Monroe vehicles, and most of the output of Éric Rohmer and Ingmar Bergman.

Extended romps through lists of films are one of the characteristics of the book, and they are balanced by much more detailed readings of individual scenes and movies, and analyses of passages of classical text. Winkler creates the impression that huge swathes of European and US cinema (with some examples from further afield) are part of an Ovidian universe and certainly offers plenty of suggestions for further investigation. Meanwhile, the more deeply analytical passages show a welcome regard for the visual artistry of filmmaking. His discussion of Alain Resnais' French New-Wave film *Last Year*

[11] Stephen Hinds (2011) 'Seneca's Ovidian *loci*', *Studi italiani di Filologia classica*, fourth series 9, pp. 5–65.

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at Marienbad (1961) is one such example. As part of his exploration of labyrinthine qualities in film and literature, Winkler draws links between Ovid's version of the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur in the *Metamorphoses* with the surreal and mysterious storytelling in Resnais' film. Winkler views Ovid's epic as a new paradigm for the genre which 'changed the traditional relationship between the epic genre and its readers' through the use of innovative narratorial strategies equivalent to 'rapid and non-linear editing' (124; 125). The labyrinth, particularly as described by Ovid, therefore, can be viewed as 'analogous' to his storytelling (126). *Last Year at Marienbad* is similarly deceptive and enmeshing. Winkler highlights how Resnais made use of cinematography to create a feeling of enclosure within the space, using 'long shots composed symmetrically [. . .] in which we see the château's corridors or its park leading up to a vanishing point in the centre of the screen' (134). Furthermore, occasional mismatches between the voiceover and what is on screen adds to the disorientation.

Another form of analysis exhibited by Winkler is his film treatment of ancient texts. Winkler devotes several pages to the story of Niobe from the *Metamorphoses*. He breaks down the section into scenes, which he summarizes and follows with a description of how he would film it:

> Niobe's mention of Delos, introduced by Ovid's *quondam* ("back then," 186) triggers a cut or quick dissolve to a flashback of the divine twins' birth, followed by a cut back to Thebes (43).

The aim of this process is to really emphasize 'the cinematic quality of Ovidian storytelling', which, Winkler notes, was also appreciated by the great film director Sergei Eisenstein (42). This is a highly detailed treatment that demonstrates great love for both ancient literature and the cinema.

One could say that love and desire run through the book. After the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid's *Heroides*, *Amores*, and *Ars Amatoria* are well represented. Meanwhile, the story of Pygmalion and his statue features heavily, the 'Galatea effect' being an important way of thinking about the development of cinema. The magic of female movie stars is particularly in evidence as part of the overall delight in the film's aesthetics and its facilitation by high-level artistic and technical capability. This is certainly not a book about the movie business and its material, societal, or political effects. Having been published after the rise of the Me Too and Time's Up movements, the reference to 'Ovid's Corinna, Hitchcock's blondes, and any number of famous or beautiful ladies lucky enough to have a verbal or visual poet to make them immortal' is indicative of this (60).

Classical Antiquity and the Cinematic Imagination adopts a similar mode and attitude, taking just as effervescent a tour through the wonders of cinema, ancient literature and thought, albeit with a stronger emphasis on ancient visual culture. Part 1, 'Prolegomena', introduces ways of thinking about cinema and other visual forms, including the ways in which the former diverges from theatre, and a welcome inclusion of Laura Mulvey's work. Part 2, 'Progymnasmata: Ways of Seeing', undertakes methods of reading ancient images inspired by film. Part 3, 'Complex Cinematism', takes some of this approach further by looking at aspects of film, such as movement, illusion, and close-ups in ancient texts, and then back to modern cinematic iterations. Part 4, 'The Cinema Imagines Difficult Texts' utilizes a 'reverse angle', engaging in

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'cinematic classicism', and looks at films that are connected to ancient works (xvii). Among other instances, Winkler looks at different attempts to render visually the difficult description of the arrangement of axe-heads in Book 21 of the *Odyssey*. Part 5, 'Epilegomena', captures some works of especial interest to the author.

Arguably, even more than in the previous book, Winkler here seems invested in analysing ancient works. A case in point is his investigation into a fifth-century red-figure drinking cup by the Athenian Douris, found at the beginning of Part 2. The image depicts Jason in the jaws of a dragon – although it is unclear whether he is emerging or being swallowed, with the golden fleece behind him, and Athena nearby. Winkler reviews differing scholarly interpretations of a picture that seems to place different parts of the myth side by side, before introducing the idea of the critical point in time, variously referred to as 'the now', *kairos*, 'fruitful moment', as theorized by Aristotle, Enlightenment critic Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, and photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson. He argues that 'it is primarily its temporal indeterminacy that makes Douris' image irresistible and urges viewers to construct a whole scenario surrounding this moment' (52). Winkler's conjuring of interlocuters from the different time periods and who engage in a range of pursuits is characteristic of this approach. Additionally, his interest in a 'viewer response', like a 'reader response', helps bridge his concerns about both the aesthetic-interpretive aspect of cinema and the cognitive realities and technical history of film's development from static images (51).

The coalescing of static images into a perceptible whole is of particular interest to Winkler, and it is theorized through the famous paradox of Zeno on how a discharged arrow is never moving since it can only be in one place at any time. This is part of a wider interest in cinematic technology that is present in *Ovid on Screen* and is given fuller treatment in the later volume. One recurring issue for the author is the impact of advanced technology, such as CGI, and whether this is always an improvement.

Magnitude might be the watchword for both these books. They are replete with many extensive quotations from scholarly works and ancient literature, and long footnotes directing the reader to further reading and watching. They have in common lavish illustrations: there are images of ancient artworks and film-screen captures that are informative and also pleasing to the eye. Both are also enormously ambitious in their scope, name-checking numerous texts, artworks, and films and offering a variety of creative ways of thinking about cinema and antiquity.

Winkler's are not the only texts interested in responses to visual culture in this issue. A collection of chapters on the essayist and critic Susan Sontag (1933–2004), who was certainly wide-ranging in her interests, also engages with the use of antiquity in theorizing about images.[12] Katharine Epstein, in her chapter on 'Art and Nourishment of Consciousness: Sontag in Plato's and Kafka's Cave', explores Sontag's use of Plato when thinking about photography. Analysing her application of Plato's cave allegory in the *Republic* allows Epstein both to comment on Sontag's approach to the ethical and aesthetic components of responses to disturbing photography, and to contribute to our understanding of an 'elliptic' use of Classics born from 'indiscipline' (82).

[12] *Susan Sontag's Tangential Classics*. Edited by Laura Jansen. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2025. Pp. xii + 180. 9 black and white illustrations. Hardback £84, ISBN: 978-0-19-287069-8.

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Others among the chapters most attuned to Sontag's interest in images are Mario Telò's humorously entitled 'Fear of Flaying' and Figen Geerts's 'The Writhing Laocoön'. Telò explores depictions of Apollo's punishment of Marsyas and also of Cadmus and the serpent, continuing his ongoing interest in the human-animal distinction.[13] Sontag's writing on that paradigmatic statue of Laocoön and his extreme suffering feature in Geerts and here, as elsewhere, shadows of Homer and his depictions of suffering accumulate.

Geerts' use of the phrase 'tangentially evocative of Homer's *Iliad*' is in keeping with the approach of this slim volume that takes as its theme the 'tangential' use of classical culture (131). Laura Jansen explains in the Introduction that 'Sontag's connection with the classical often emerges alongside, rather than within, her work' (1). This is argued to be because antiquity is rarely felt to be the real area of her interest, but it appears more subtly as 'exiguous traces, connections, and references within a polymathic awareness' (9). This vexed question of the elusive in classical reception is touched on with an amusing degree of irreverence in Adrien Gramps' chapter on 'The Morality of Style: Sontag and Seneca'. As Gramps puts it: 'the very act of putting these two names together in my title like that is perhaps a little cheeky in its implicit promise that these two endlessly absorbing figures will be revealed, through the magic of intertextuality and the hermeneutics of reception, as deeply absorbed in one another in that wonderful, mutually edifying way that we classicists love so dearly' (84). What actually emerges is that the two writers could be considered as producing 'affiliative literature' (84). Gramps examines how they think about the relationship of style to content and what certain styles might reflect about the character of the speaker. For all the humour, this produces a lucid and thoughtful account of Seneca and Sontag's attitudes to communication.

Jerome Boyd Maunsell deals with literary technique in 'The Diaries and the Art of Aphorism', which highlights Sontag's fascination with the art of aphoristic production and of aphorisms' aesthetic and performative power. While the essayist was mostly interested in the form's more recent history, there are connections to be drawn with their ancient predecessors. Meanwhile, the use of metaphor is explored in Nancy Worman's 'Night-Sides', which, like others in this volume, investigates Sontag's interest in human suffering. Worman explores the 'sacred/tainted bodies of Greek tragedy, such as Oedipus and Philoctetes, and Sontag's writing on AIDS victims' (62).

Rebecca Kosick also explores Sontag's response to contemporary culture in 'Against Immersion'. This discusses Sontag's favouring of contemplation as a response to art at a time when immersive performances in the form of 'Happenings' were increasing in popularity. Kosick notes that we are currently in a moment where immersivity is a fashionable structure for events as well as a trending topic within Classical scholarship.[14] Sontag's responses are reflected on in relation to research on Greek tragedy. This fluid intermingling of pasts, influences, and evocations, as with the rest of the volume, captures the theme of 'tangential classics'. As Laura Jansen writes in her chapter discussing Mexican author Carlos Fuentes, 'The Dream Machine: Plato and Lucretius',

[13] See my previous review from April 2026.

[14] Published more recently is *Experiencing Immersion in Antiquity and Modernity From Narrative to Virtual Reality*, edited by Emma Cole (London, Bloomsbury, 2025).

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'specific themes operate in Sontag's associative network as projections on an ancient Greek screen' (157). The consistent development of this theme throughout the volume structures the approach to classical reception very effectively.

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General review

It has been an exciting and eventful ten years since Ivana and I were entrusted with the privilege and responsibility of editing *Greece & Rome*. The editorship has been an immensely enriching and genuinely rewarding experience for us both, one for which we feel profoundly grateful.

The journal has given us the opportunity to engage with an extraordinary community of scholars, teachers, students, and readers. I have learned an enormous amount from our authors, referees, and colleagues responsible for subject reviews, and I would like to express my sincere thanks to all of them for their generosity, expertise, and for both their good humour and the seriousness of their commitment. What has struck me repeatedly over the years has been the remarkable energy, collegiality, kindness, and enthusiasm that continue to animate our discipline. A hiccup here and a pandemic there notwithstanding, the dedication of everyone involved – whether in research, teaching, reviewing, production, or administrative work – has been both inspiring and reassuring. I personally have no doubt that the study of the ancient world, broadly conceived, will remain a vital, dynamic, and forward-looking endeavour with a bright future ahead of it, and with a place for everyone interested in and passionate about the ancient world.

We are also deeply grateful to you, our readers, whose continued interest and support have sustained the journal over the years. Thank you: it has truly been a privilege to serve in this capacity, and we look forward to passing the baton to a new editorial team in 2027, with great confidence and enthusiasm for the journal's future.

For this issue, I will keep the General Review concise and focus on the three remaining volumes that we have received. We start with religious epigraphy and another important volume from the *Kernos* Supplements series, dedicated in its entirety to a single but lengthy and noteworthy ritual norm from Thessaly. Jan-Mathieu Carbon and Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge, who together with Saskia Peels-Matthey have established the now essential and ever-growing 'Corpus of Greek Ritual Norms (CGRN)',[1] have joined forces and edited a rich volume dedicated to a recent, remarkable epigraphic find, a ritual text from Marmarini (CGRN 225).[2] The inscription was discovered in 2002 in

[1] http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/

[2] *La Norme rituelle de Marmarini. Essais d'interprétation*. Edited by J.-M. Carbon and V. Pirenne-Delforge. Liège, Presses universitaires de Liège, 2025. Pp. 266. Paperback €30, ISBN: 978-2-87562-479-6.

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