BOOK REVIEW

Reception and the Classics: An Interdisciplinary Approach to the Classical Tradition. Edited by WILLIAM BROCKLISS, PRAMIT CHAUDHURI, AYELET HAIMSON LUSHKOV, and KATHERINE WASDIN. Yale Classical Studies 36. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Pp. x +188 Hardcover, £55.00/$95.00. ISBN 978-0-521-76432-2.

This collection of articles on reception was edited by a panel of four presumably young academics, all with the rank of "Assistant Professor" (two being "Visiting Assistant Professors") at various prestigious US institutions of higher education. All ten papers (by well-established scholars) stem from a conference held at Yale University in 2007, though the editors' "Acknowledgements" report with regret that conference papers by Julia Haig Gaisser, Charles Martindale, David Quint and Claude Rawson could not be incorporated. Of these, Martindale seems to loom over this volume rather like an elephant *not* in the room. His thoughts on reception as uttered at this conference (even if his work as doyen of reception studies is well known) would have rounded out a volume in which he receives frequent mention.

With such a relatively large editorial committee one might have expected some glaring aberrations of approach in the editorial Introduction, but the four scholars have produced a satisfyingly seamless initial chapter. Their very first note (happily a *footnote* on Page 1 and not relegated to the back of the book as an *endnote* requiring constant paging back and forth) clarifies their method of reference: "we use 'Classics' to refer to the discipline and 'classics' to refer to ancient Greek and Roman works of art (usually literary)." They explain the approach of the book as "looking across disciplinary boundaries" and as focusing on "classical reception in the early modern period." They emphasize its strong connection with their *alma mater* and the influence of established Yale scholars from various fields: Thomas Greene, Harold Bloom and Paul de Man. The greater part of the Introduction is devoted to explication of the set-up of the book and a brief discussion of individual contributions.

The two "Parts" that follow are titled "I: Reception between Transmission and Philology" and "II: Reception as self-fashioning," each comprising four pa-

pers. A final chapter (10, which shares its title with the book as a whole) has its own category: "Part III: Envoi." It is not by a literary critic, but by Christopher S. Wood, Professor in the Department of History of Art at Yale. This chapter is offered as both an "essay" and a "talk" meant to help participants at the original conference to unwind. Hence its author deplores the inevitable loss of its "performative quality" (163). Woods' rather rambling discussion starts with Martindale's challenge to show the "inextricability of a classical text from a present-tense reading situation" (ibid.), going on to further discussion of Martindale's later pleas to literary critics to assign "value to literary texts," and the relative value of historicism versus hermeneutics, the eschewing of canonical valuation and "normativity" versus intrinsic truth, ending with the idea of literature as "communicat[ing] with the gods" (169). From this Woods wanders off into "classics … as a strong concept of poetry" (170), where he equates "being classic" with "being intimate with the gods" (ibid.). This statement then serves as a springboard for a discussion of the classical tradition in the plastic arts, ending with the concept (articulated by the German art historian Warburg) of the metaphysical transmutation of primordial experiences in "pulsations of fear or ecstasy … [as] a "pathos formula" … [and as] a direct expression of a real force" (172). This concept Woods urges literary critics to consider in tracing reception in literary works.

To give a brief summary of individual chapters: in Chapter 2, James Zetzel discusses the sometimes "reluctant co-operation" (25) of the nineteenth century scholars Mai, Niebuhr and Leopardi in the retrieval from a palimpsest of Cicero's "lost" *De Republica*, and its ideological use within both the ecclesiastical and the secular politics of the day.

Next Robert Kaster (Chapter 3) contextualizes his following exhaustive discussion of Servius' commentary on the *Aeneid* with an amusing anecdote illustrating the concept of *honor* in self-perception. Servius' judgment of the poem and of Augustus was rooted in a culture and "a world where *honor* mattered" (51). This led to Servius' assuming that his own basic assumptions about Vergil's "intention" to honor the emperor would have been shared by all who read him. Kaster illustrates his analysis of the poetics of praise rhetoric with copious examples.

Joseph Farrell asserts in his examination of "Joyce and modernist Latinity" (Chapter 4) that the Irish author was running counter to the common assumption that Greek literature, art and language are "more beautiful" than their Latin

and Roman counterparts. Detailed discussion of many examples from the Irish author's works and aspects of his biography support Farrell's cogent argument that we should approach the "engagement of Modernist writers" with their "ancient forbears" … "from both directions" (70). For Farrell, our understanding of the reception of the ancients by the moderns cannot be reached without an understanding of the modernists' particular contexts as well of our own.

Richard Tarrant in Chapter 5 gives an interesting and straightforward chronological account (from the late eighteenth century onward) of musical settings of Horace' *Odes*. Here, also, the cultural and personal context of the composer as receptor plays an important role and needs to be understood if we wish to grasp the ideological uses (if any) to which such compositions were put. A particular musician could be closer to or further from the spirit of the poet, to the degree in which he himself understood the poetic and ideological context of the *Odes*.

The personality of the receptor is of even greater importance in the four chapters that comprise Part II. "Self-fashioning" appears to have been very much to the forefront of Petrarch's mind, so Giuseppe Mazzotta (Chapter 6), when he decided to publish his "Letters on Familiar Matters" after discovering Cicero's letters to Atticus in the Cathedral Library of Verona. But Cicero was not his only model: Petrarch's "existential Odyssey" was very much a riff on Dante's "Ulysses" (101–3) and he managed to assume a whole array of *personae,* imitated to varying degrees from various predecessors, centring himself as a "character in fiction" (106) while remaining deeply indebted to the classical tradition.

Emily Wilson's "case study in reception" (Chapter 7) discusses the "first British *Aeneid*." Her chapter focuses on translation as a very specific form of reception: the *Eneados* of Gavin Douglas, a Scot. Wilson places the sixteenth century Douglas in both literary and historical context and gives a clear account of his methods and stated aims. She postulates that the *Aeneid* is important in our study of reception exactly "because it is itself concerned with the reception of the classical past … this is a poem about translation and about reception" (108). Here, again, Douglas' translation is shown as itself "bound up with contemporary issues of national, political and personal identity" (122).

Gordon Braden in "Ovid's Witchcraft" (Chapter 8) considers Shakespeare's reception of the *Metamorphoses* in *The Tempest.* Braden starts with the difference of approach to Shakespearean Ovidianism between Jonathan Bates and Martindale. An interesting passing point is a quotation from the last scene of *The*

Tempest that shows that Shakespeare "did also read the original Latin" (128) which deviates from the translation by Golding that is often treated as Shakespeare's source. Braden intriguingly suggests that the "fabulous book" that Prospero is about to destroy was perhaps a copy of the *Metamorphoses,* for Ovid, so Braden (130), represented a "serious kind of disrespectability": *magic*, as decried by Reginald Scot in his *Discovery of Witchcraft* (1584), with which Shakespeare could have been familiar. Braden nods briefly to the common concept of Prospero as a Shakespearean self-portrait, adding the thought that, just as magic is fraudulent, a "confidence game" (133), so theatricals are deceptive. Shakespeare takes leave of both magic and the theatre.

Richard Thomas rounds out this collection of reception studies with a well-documented, detailed and persuasive analysis of classical reception in the poetry (songs) and autobiographical writings of Bob Dylan. Thomas painstakingly cites and compares passages from various of Dylan's album that may be directly traced to Vergil and Ovid (even pinpointing the translations he must have read) but also analyses the artist's prose references or allusions to Thucydides and Dante, and also complex intratextual allusion to his own earlier reception of the Scottish poet Burns. For Thomas, Dylan "works like a blend of rhapsode (performance artist) and a poet on the border between oral and literary cultures" (152). His discussion ends with an exposition of the various versions of particular songs that Dylan sang over years and in a variety of venues. Like the rhapsodes of old, Dylan's performances are not fixed, but can vary from performance to performance: more "Homeric" than "Vergilian."

A twelve-page bibliography (174–86) is followed by a brief Index (186–8). This well-presented book is a valuable addition to a growing bibliography on reception studies.

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