

BOOK REVIEW

The Trojan Wars and the Making of the Modern World. Edited by ADAM J. GOLDWYN. Uppsala: Uppsala University Library, 2015. Pp. viii + 270. Paper. ISBN 978-91-554-9322-6.

This collection of essays powerfully illustrates how Greek myth has “gone global.” The twelve pieces gathered here, which originate from a 2013 conference at Uppsala University, examine receptions of Trojan War narratives over a vast chronological and geographic range, from the late middle ages to the present, and in some dozen different countries (see the table of contents below for a sense of this scope).

What unifies (at least putatively) these disparate elements is a focus on the role that Trojan myths have played in the “making of the modern world.” As editor Adam J. Goldwyn explains, the volume explores reuses of Trojan material that were “tied to emergent nationalism, to changing political and cultural mores and to the praise of the individual heroes who embodied these ideals” (7). This approach is perhaps best exemplified by Anastasiya Andrianova’s chapter, which focuses on Ivan Kotliarevskiy’s *Encida*, “a travesty of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, in which the eponymous hero is recast as the leader of the Ukrainian Cossacks” (91). This chapter lucidly situates the poem in its cultural context, showing how it marked the beginning of vernacular literature in Ukraine and helped to establish Ukrainian cultural identity in the face of Russian imperial threats. It also treats two later adaptations of the *Encida*: a rock opera and an animated film, both produced in 1991, the year of Ukraine’s independence. As Andrianova reveals, the tradition of the *Aeneid* remains a lively part of the Ukrainian cultural imagination and retains powerful political resonance. Her chapter represents the collection at its best, making compelling connections between the Trojan Wars and the modern world and offering insights into a little-known but fascinating case study in classical reception.

Not all of the essays connect so well with the volume’s theme, however, and it sometimes feels rather scattershot, more of a sampling of Trojan receptions than a unified study of the myth’s implications for the shaping of nations. A case in point is Derek Pearsall’s chapter on Criseyde/Cressida in Chaucer and Shake-

speare. His study is rich and sensitive, offering readings of two well-known texts that made this reviewer wish to return to them and appreciate them anew. But his approach is fairly narrowly literary, with little to say about emergent nationalism. Johanna Akujärvi's chapter is another example: it treats several competing models of Homeric translation in nineteenth-century Sweden, but it is restricted to a relatively small corner of the history of scholarship, and broader implications are not addressed.

Of course, one could argue (and one would be right) that such texts *are* political; indeed, it's hard to imagine a case of classical reception that isn't. But Goldwyn's introduction assumes that the political is a neatly separable realm, claiming that "this volume ... examines that small piece of the large web of [receiving] works where aesthetics, politics, and ideology meet" (7). As the essays that follow demonstrate, though, this piece is not so small; it is indefinitely extendable. A fuller discussion of the variety of ways in which receptions can engage with or reflect aspects of politics and nationalism would have added greater coherence to the collection. Additionally, it would have helped to organize the chapters according to approach or topic rather than mere chronology.

A related issue is the volume's relative lack of attention to theories of reception. Goldwyn's introduction offers a simple framework, according to which classical materials are reused to offer paradigms of behavior and/or to gain cultural prestige, but the essays themselves represent a variety of much more complicated (or simply different) conceptions, and this again contributes to a feeling of disunity within the volume.

Several essays helpfully include theoretical frameworks of their own. For instance, Maura Giles-Watson's study of Orestes plays in Early Modern England relies on Benjamin's concept of *Jetztzeit* to understand the dynamics of reception, and this yields a nuanced appreciation of the texts she considers within their cultural and political contexts. Goldwyn's own contribution to the volume, a chapter on allusions to the Trojan War in *New York Times* editorials after 9/11, nicely analyzes the complexities of reception and the ways classical paradigms can be renegotiated and repurposed, and it serves as an apt and thought-provoking conclusion to the collection.

Other chapters, however, are undertheorized to the point that they seem merely descriptive. Rui Carlos Fonseca's treats a fascinating subject—a series of Pindaric odes written in praise of Portuguese national heroes by António Dinis da Cruz e Silva. But his account consists almost entirely of detailed summaries of various odes and short historical accounts of the heroes they describe, and offers

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little in the way of analysis. Similar is Barbara Witucki's treatment of Trojan War themes in the novels of Victor Hugo. Though she nicely sets up how Hugo sought to become a kind of "new Homer," the bulk of her essay is devoted to listing parallels and allusions.

Despite some organizational issues and some unevenness among the selections, the collection as a whole is very valuable. The essays take the reader through a wide array of times, places, and texts, many of which may be unfamiliar and illuminating to classicists (as was certainly the case for this reviewer). This comparative material will be a welcome resource for any scholar of classical receptions; it may also prove helpful for teachers of mythology or the classical tradition, as it brings to light many fascinating examples of the continuing resonance and relevance of ancient myth.

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