

## BOOK REVIEW

*Antipodean Antiquities: Classical Receptions Down Under*. Edited by MARGUERITE JOHNSON. Bloomsbury Studies in Classical Reception. London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2019. Pp. xi + 293. Hardback, \$102.60, eBook, \$82.08. ISBN 978-1-350-02123-5.

Marguerite Johnson's edited collection *Antipodean Antiquities* makes a fantastic contribution to the expanding field of Classics and colonialism or post-colonialism. The authors take various approaches to the role, influence and engagement with Classics in Australian and New Zealand (ANZ) culture—including (among other things) early colonial comparisons with mythical landscapes, paintings commemorating ANZAC service at Gallipoli, young adult novels reimagining Classical stories and contemporary films/television shot in New Zealand. The volume provides a solid foundation for further focus on Classical reception in Australasia, which has received comparatively little critical attention until recently.

As with most Classical reception studies, this book takes a complex approach to the cultural work done by ANZ authors and artists as they deploy Classics. Many of the essays address how Australian and New Zealand values like independence, individuality and freedom intersect with Classical texts, often seen as representing conservative European traditions. For instance, Anne Rogerson argues that Sulari Gentill's young adult *Hero Trilogy* "encourages a very Antipodean scepticism towards authority and political leaders" as mythical leaders/heroes are exposed as petty, selfish, and violent (167). At the same time, in Australia and New Zealand's attempts to define their own cultural places distinct from their British roots, Europe has provided a strong foundation for Antipodean artists to try and engage their world. This was especially true in the early days of Australian colonialism, as Johnson and Rachel White's essays show. Johnson examines depictions equating Aboriginal peoples with mythical figures, and White follows a pattern of references to Hades in convict descriptions of their prisons. Seeking inspiration from European Classics remains an important aspect of Antipodean reception, as Hannah Parry's essay about Peter Jackson's NZ-filmed *Lord of the Rings* Trilogy shows. Parry argues that "in adapting a text partly influenced by

classical epic into an epic of a different kind, the filmmakers engage in an act of Classical Reception, adapting classical themes and motifs for a new audience and a new medium” (224). These concerns about how ANZ artists navigate their relationship with Classical culture and with their British colonial history are central to *Antipodean Antiquities*; Johnson describes this navigation as “the dual process at the core of Antipodean Classical Reception Studies: the symbiotic action of a subject nation’s gaze ‘upwards’ in mimetic response to the imperial gaze ‘downwards’” (2).

The book is organized primarily by genres: Part II is on theatre, Part III on NZ poetry, then fiction, painting and printing, and finally Part XI is about film. Part I, composed of Johnson’s and White’s essays, looks at the earliest classical references from Australia. For those with a particular generic focus, this makes the book extremely easy to navigate, which is a major benefit. However, across these different genre-focused sections, particular themes recur, giving the book an overall unity. For example, several of the authors utilize feminist analysis (Jane Montgomery Griffiths, Anna Jackson, Elizabeth Hale, Leanne Glass, etc.) and several focus on YA literature (Hale, Babette Pütz, Rogerson, etc.). One weakness of the collection—as Johnson acknowledges in the introduction (4)—is the lack of indigenous voices, either Australian Aboriginal, Maori or from the broader Polynesian community. The only text created by an indigenous person discussed closely in the book is Wesley Enoch’s *Black Medea*, analyzed by Michael Ewans and Johnson, and there are no essays by indigenous authors. Despite the notable lack of Maori and Aboriginal voices, the collection does include multiple essays focused on or referencing issues of indigenous rights or multiculturalism (Johnson, Ewans and Johnson, Ika Willis, etc.). The range of essays taking up various thematic concerns shows the dynamic engagement of ANZ artists and writers with Classical materials in different times, and for different contexts and purposes.

Given its wide temporal, geographic, generic, thematic and theoretical scopes, *Antipodean Antiquities* is an excellent resource on Australasian receptions of Classical materials. These essays begin filling a gap in the field of Classical reception and (post-)colonialism, specifically, how settler colonies have dealt with the Classics in their unique experiences of negotiating colonial identities. As Johnson suggests, the next logical step is to expand the focus on Aboriginal and Maori receptions of the Classics to provide a more complex picture of Classics in the Antipodes, but this book is a great start toward that picture. *Antipodean Antiquities* will be a wonderful resource for scholars working on Classical receptions

(particularly with a colonial/post-colonial focus), adaptation studies, post-colonial literature or ANZ literature and art. The different essays have different levels of theoretical and linguistic difficulty, but overall the book should be suited for graduate students, with some essays being useful for advanced undergraduates, though the primary audience is likely to be scholars.

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