

BOOK REVIEW

Reception in the Greco-Roman World: Literary Studies in Theory and Practice. Edited by MARCO FANTUZZI, HELEN MORALES, AND TIM WHITMARSH. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2021. Pp. xxii + 456. Paperback, £ 90.00. ISBN: 9781316518588.

Classical reception is the study of how the classical world, especially Ancient Greek literature and Latin literature, have been received since antiquity. It is the study of the portrayal and representation of the ancient world from ancient to modern times. The nature of reception studies is highly interdisciplinary, including literature, art, music and film. The field of study has, within the past few decades, become an increasingly popular and legitimized topic of interest in Classical studies.¹ The book under review edited by Marco Fantuzzi, Helen Morales and Tim Whitmarsh is a welcoming volume for the reception of classical studies that aims to supplement modern scholarship and embraces a variety of subjects, such as the prominent feature of intertextuality, generic versatility (the so called *polyeideia*), a variety of styles and metres, as well as allusive literary perspectives from archaic literature to modern times, such as Oscar Wilde and Cavafy. This volume is dedicated to a master of reception studies in antiquity, professor Richard Hunter, and consists of four parts engaged with generic variety and themes.

Tim Whitmarsh's chapter, "Cultural Pluralism and Psychosis in Ancient Literary Receptions" (1-19), offers some introductory remarks on classical reception and highlights the difference between "intertextuality" and "allusion" in Hellenistic and Latin poetics. Whitmarsh argues that "intertextuality" indicates something more "acrophobically destabilizing" than mere allusion, in the sense that a text embraces different and various interpretations within a cultural-historical context (2-3). Reception is actually the product of a particular set of late-modernist

¹ See J. Tatum (2014), "A Real Short Introduction to Classical Reception Theory," *Arion* 22 (2), 79; C. Martindale (2006), "Introduction: Thinking Through Reception," in C. Martindale – R.F. Thomas (eds.), *Classics and the Uses of Reception*, Maldon and Oxford: Blackwell, 1; F. Budelmann-J. Haubold (2008), "Reception and Tradition," in L. Hardwick-C. Stray (eds.), *A Companion to Classical Receptions*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1-2.

intellectual and political concerns and reminds us of the different stories that can be potentially told of past and present (4-8).

Part I: Archaic and Classical Poetics

The first contribution of this part, “Neighbors and the Poetry of Hesiod and Pindar” (23-47) by Anna Uhlig, showcases Hesiodic influence on the choral poetry of the archaic and early classical period. Pindar is a figure shaped in pivotal ways by Hesiodic tradition. More specifically, Uhlig focuses on the striking relationship between these two poets through the theoretical background of poetic “neighborliness” and stresses the commonalities and connections between their works through metaphors, composition, structure and, more importantly, their temporal extensions (45-47). The second chapter, “Stesichorus and the Name Game” (48-71) by Richard P. Martin, analyzes the technique of naming the predecessor poet – rival or ally – and distilling into a moment the “reception” of previous verbal art that opens a performative space for the presentation of one’s own innovative self. As an example, Martin explores Stesichorus and his conscious choice of composing a “lyric epic” poem, *Cygnus*, that seems to recall the sort of epic Callimachus might admire, with Hesiodic allusions in its context.² The third chapter, “From Epinician Praise to the Poetry of Encomium on Stone: CEG 177, 819, 888-9 and the Hyssaldomus Inscription” (72-91) by Ettore Cingano, examines the relationship between poet and patron in the pre-Hellenistic inscriptional epigram or poem in the manner of the encomia composed by Ibycus or the praise poetry of Simonides, Pindar and Bacchylides. These inscriptional poems are defined by metric versatility since we observe blurred hexameters, elegiac couplets and trochaic tetrameters in them. Besides, Cingano has confined himself to a limited number of such texts dating from the late 5th to 4th century BCE and their connection lies in the social and political prominence of the addressee and the prominent role of the inscribed poet. Finally, the last contribution of this part, “Geometry of Allusions: The Reception of Earlier Poetry in Aristophanes’ *Peace*” (92-118) by Ioannis M. Konstantakos, explores earlier traces of Hellenistic *polyeideia* (generic interplay) in Aristophanes’ *Peace*; this poem alludes to features from epic poetry, lyric poetry, tragedy and contemporary comedy that reflect Aristophanes’ political and historical concerns (95-6). These generic forms,

² See A. Cameron (1995), *Callimachus and his Critics*, New York, 450, on his observations concerning the history of the sub-genre of epyllion.

carefully explored by Konstantakos, indicate how this generic variety is inserted into a designed dramatic structure revealing Aristophanes' overall historical meaning, literary consciousness and the overarching artistic vision of his work (97-99).

Part II: Classical Philosophy and Rhetoric, and their Reception

The second part of this volume examines the reception of Philosophy in rhetoric, historiography and modern poetry with philosophical intertexts; more specifically, the first chapter, "On Coming After Socrates" (121-144) by Laura Viidebaum, discusses the reception of Socrates, not as a "philosophical idea", but as an actual *corpus*, a human being in the rhetorical works of Isocrates. The rhetorician offered a description of Socrates' physical presence and transformation into an imaginary model figure perceived to have shaped the cultural and philosophical landscape of Athens. Viidebaum strikingly presents the reflection of Isocrates' rhetoric on Socrates and his role as a teacher in Athens. The following chapter, "Chimeras of Classicism in Dionysius of Halicarnassus' Reception of the Athenian Funeral Orations" (145-166) by Johanna Hanink, engages historiography with classical orations and presents the example of Dionysius of Halicarnassus' perception of "classical" Athens in the new world established by Rome; Dionysius' view of Athenian public funerals and their symbolic significance actually stood at odds with the revival of Greek cultural values that the historiographer sought to articulate and promote. The third chapter, "Our Mind Went to the Platonic Charmides': The Reception of Plato's *Charmides* in Wilde, Cavafy, and Plutarch" (167-193) by Timothy Duff, explores three examples of the reception of Platonic *Charmides* by later authors: two modern authors, Cavafy and Wilde, and one ancient, Plutarch. Whereas Wilde and especially Cavafy exploited the *Charmides* for its erotic nuances and its frank discussion of Socrates' sexual desire for young men, Plutarch denies that Socrates' motivation was sexual, stressing the educational role of the conversation between Socrates and Charmides (193). The final contribution, "Naked Apes, Featherless Chickens, and Talking Pigs: Adventures in the Platonic History of Body-Hair and other Human Attributes" (194-215) by Alastair J.L. Blanshard, discusses the reception of a strange theme, that is hair, and the Platonic distinctions between animal and human hair in relation with their striking differences. Blanshard examines Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers* and Plutarch's *Gryllus* and highlights certain modes of

discourse, most notably myth, as the most effective media for the exploitation of such ideas (196).

Part III: Hellenistic and Roman Poetics

The first chapter, “Before the Canon: The Reception of Greek Tragedy in Hellenistic Poetry” (219-240) by Anette Harder, begins with an actual statement: Alexandrian poets had at their disposal a large *corpus* of Greek plays. Harder focuses on the reception of the fragmentary lost tragedies by Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides which are still unexplored in connection with Hellenistic poetry. Intertextuality plays a leading role to this reception and highlights the importance and relevance of earlier texts by alluding to them (222). The following attribution, “Pun-Fried Concoctions: Wor(l)d-Blending in the Roman Kitchen” (241-265) by Emily Gowers, explores scenes from the Roman kitchen starting from the confusion of the comic stage expressed in Plautine word-flipping to the hybrid freedman culture exemplified by Trimalchio’s riddling appetizers (265). The universe is miniaturized in an herb-speckled cheese and Virgil’s only self-acknowledged pun frame as “child’s play” help to suggest meanings beyond the immediately ludic, from metapoetics to politics to cosmogony; thus, words are found within worlds and worlds within words as well. Finally, the third chapter, “Powerful Presences: Horace’s *Carmen Saeculare* and Hellenistic Choral Traditions” by Giovan Battista D’Alessio, examines Horace’s *carmen saeculare* that is located within a ritual context and fits within a secular Roman tradition of ritual song performance. However, its references are unavoidably Greek and D’Alessio here makes an attempt to place this work firmly within the continuing and changing choral practice, as well as to show its crucial link to Callimachean poetry, or as he very well puts it, a link to Callimachean ideology of choral performance.

Part IV: Multimedia and Intercultural Receptions in the Second Sophistic and Beyond

The last part deals with themes and reception studies in late antiquity and the Second Sophistic; the first chapter, “Received into Dance? Parthenius’ *Erōtika Pathēmata* in the Pantomime Idiom” (293-318) by Ismene Lada-Richards, introduces a welcoming subject for this volume, namely the reception into the non-verbal, kinaesthetic and thoroughly embodied medium that is the art of dance. The chapter focuses on Parthenius’ bizarre mythological stories entitled *Erōtika*

Pathēmata with a passing comment on *Hermeneumata Leidensia* attributed to ps.-Dositheus, a shadowy teacher of the third century CE. This mythological collection was much in value by professional users, such as painters, grammarians and pantomime dancers. The chapter highlights the fact that a Pantomime dancer would highly be profited from perusing an epitome of myths. The following contribution, “Sappho in Pieces” (319-343) by Susan Stephens, examines the survival of Sappho’s poetry: first, Stephens examines what ancient Greek sources outside of Graeco-Roman Egypt reveal about literate (in contrast to performative) reception. Second, Stephens explores how papyrus and parchment sources recovered from sandy Egypt nuance this picture. This chapter highlights the processes and biases inherent in our modern attempts to recover ancient texts (note the intriguing tables of Sappho’s papyri in 341-43). The third chapter, “Hesiodic Rhapsody: The Sibylline Oracles” (344-70) by Helen Van Noorden, begins with a striking sibylline passage of Homeric critique and proceeds to re-evaluate it through Hesiodic aspects of the sibylline corpus. Van Noorden builds up a multi-faced case for viewing the collection as latter-day “Hesiodic rhapsody,” whose blurred universal historical elements and ethical exhortation is actually informed by supra-Homeric perspectives (344-345). Finally, the last chapter, “Homer and the Precarity of the Tradition: Can Jesus be Achilles?” (371-398) by Simon Goldhill, explores the Byzantine courtier and Homeric scholar of 10th century CE, Cometis, who opens a striking window onto one of the most pivotal arenas of reception in antiquity: the process of transvaluation and the contested construction of tradition that is integral to Christian engagements with its inheritance of non-Christian literature fundamental to the education and culture of elite Greek society. Cometis actually presents a different aspect of reception that is a crisis in signification, a failure of the gestures of appropriation and assimilation that the construction of tradition demands. An example par excellence is his use of the Homeric formula of *aphthiton kleos* and the pursuit of personal glory that creates a theological confusion between the dynamics of mortality and immortality in the *Iliad* and the theology of the Incarnation in the Christian context.

Overall, this is an intriguing volume that is worthy of praise and is of value to modern scholarship. It is a supplementary volume that serves to provoke further thought in the reception of Classical studies containing multiple generic interactions, a variety of striking themes, different meters and styles explored by well-experienced scholars in the field of Classical studies in honor of the pioneer of reception, Richard Hunter. I totally recommend this book for every scholar who

wants to be further engaged with intertextual and allusive ways of understanding literature; the question “how ancient writers treated their predecessors and how modern writers valued classical literature” will still remain a pivotal theme to be explored with many provocative answers to be given within different cultural and historical boundaries each time.

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