

BOOK REVIEW

Classics in Extremis: The Edges of Classical Reception. By EDMUND RICHARDSON, ed. Bloomsbury Studies in Classical Reception. London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. Pp. xi + 256. Hardback, \$121.50. ISBN: 978-1-350-01725-2.

Following the editor's introduction, notable for its discussion of what it means to study things that lie at the margins of antiquity, this book contains twelve chapters, each devoted to a less common but still fascinating sub-topic within classical studies. Although each of the essays is worthwhile, limitations of space lead me to focus on only a few here.

In "The Hand That Shook the World: Daniel Dunglas Home's Disembodied Classics," Edmund Richardson tells the story of Home, a Victorian spiritualist obsessed with antiquity (59). Victorian Classicists confronted claims of occultists who asserted that they could summon the spirits of, for example Alexander the Great. Some spiritualists even claimed that the Ancient Greeks themselves were spiritualists, communing with ancestors and mythological beings (60). A few thought that Home was indeed endowed with special powers. Not surprisingly, he also had detractors who would infiltrate his seances, dressed as Alcibiades or Socrates, only to reveal themselves as quite alive (66). "For Home, who had spent much of his life trying to 'normalize' spiritualism, bringing it from the margins into the center of Victorian society, classics was about power: acquiring it for himself, and taking it away from others. Classics *in extremis* was a game. And he was a grandmaster" (69-70). While we may rightly discredit Home's methods, Richards reminds us to tip our hats to Home's interest and enthusiasm for classical subjects.

"Picturing Antiquity: Photography, Performance and Julia Margaret Cameron" by Jennifer Wallace highlights the work of Cameron, a mid-19th century photographer who composed images with titles such as "Sappho" and "Circe." At the time, writes Wallace, questions arose as to whether photography was an art or a science, whether it might present something fanciful, or should document only what was real and factual (75-76). Similar questions surround translations:

should they be literal and firmly adhere to original texts, or are translators allowed some license? and are they artists in their own right? Some of the era found photography to be a lower artform, base and even tawdry, and thus questioned its suitability for classical subjects (79). Cameron's images, says Wallace, are far from this, and may even verge on "maternal" at times, seeing the individuals posing in them as subjects rather than mere objects (80, 86).

The focus of "The Caribbean Socrates: Pedro Henriquez Ureña and the Mexican Ateneo de la Juventud" by Rosa Andújar is the Dominican intellectual P. H. Ureña, who re-introduced Greek literature to his area and was a teacher of Borges. Ureña influenced thinkers who were active in the Mexican Revolution, and the author goes so far as to say that Ureña helped spark the movement (101). Andújar's argument is that we should not think of Latin American scholars as being on the periphery of Euro-American scholarly endeavors, but rather in the middle of them. Greek literature and other classical texts were a kind of global cultural capital, and Ureña moved easily in such circles, which should cause us to question what is at the center and what is on the periphery.

Henry Stead's "Classics Down the Mineshaft: A Buried History" challenges the notion that Classics has not been the province of the working class. Classical themes are relevant and accessible to the proletariat, he says, and points out that Karl Marx thought of *Das Capital* as being a katabasis (138). Sid Chaplin, the British novelist and essayist, began his working life as a miner, attending the informal university of the Spennymoor Settlement (an area especially known for coal mining). Many of his poems draw upon classical imagery such as the figures of Hades and Atlas (140). Ernest Rhys was a mining engineer, but also a founding editor of the Everyman Library, and "responsible for much of early-twentieth-century Britain reading good English translations" of Greek and Roman classics" (149). He turned a disused miner's cottage into a clubhouse and library for the mine workers, who had very few resources for entertainment and enrichment when they were not working. These men were capable of understanding ancient texts and they hungered for the distraction and wisdom that they brought.

Other entries in the volume include "Thinking with classical reception: critical distance, critical licence, critical amnesia?" by Lorna Hardwick, "Daphnis transformed: Aphra Behn's politics of translation" by Amanda Klause, Alexia Petsalis-Diomidis' work on local engagements with archaeology in Greece in the early 19th century, Jennifer Ingleheart's essay on the reception of ancient "homosexuality," Edith Hall's essay on connections between ancient war epics and World War I, "Extreme classicisms: Jorge Luis Borges" by Laura Jansen and "The costly fabric

of conservatism: classical references in contemporary public culture” by Maarten de Pourcq.

As is the case with many academic publications, the hardcover price may prohibit individuals from buying it for their own libraries, and not every essay will be useful to each and every reader. The paperback and e-reader versions are, however, more reasonably priced. This collection has in its favor the variety of subjects that it covers, and each essay will lend its own nuance to research and classroom discussions.

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