

In contrast to Veyne, H intends to understand the vast amount of material in Pausanias not in terms of belief or truth, but in terms of ancient patterns of story-telling and habits of thinking about myth (p. 184). The *periēgēsis* was a travel guide to a world in which each village had a story and these stories delineated the regions and communities Pausanias visited. They conveyed the significance of each place, how their local traditions were used and manipulated and why they mattered. Local stories were related to local geography and to local monuments, thus forming a whole world of present meaning. In his search to understand the reality he encountered, Pausanias, like Heraclitus, could be eclectic and pluralistic, drawing on rational criticism in diverse ways in response to particular circumstances. At the same time, when in Arcadia, long thought to be a wild place of primordial otherworldliness, where the mythic past seemed palpably present, Pausanias recognized the value of the allegorical interpretation of the story of Cronos devouring his sons (p. 215). He could insist that in the events of olden times related in Arcadian myth men could become gods, sounding very much like a Euhemerist (p. 215).

In sum, H has written a very interesting and stimulating book that forces the reader to think. H insists that ‘mythic rationalization was embedded into the ancient system of myth’ (p. 223). This was a world of eclectic plurality, and rationalization provided solutions to specific problems by engaging in “bricolage”, creating new narratives by tinkering with familiar motifs and patterns. It offered a new way of speaking about the past which resonated “truthfully” with the present and then became part of the same tradition it had attempted to “cure”. In the end, as H concludes, ‘rationalization ...does not signal the death of myth or the corruption of ancient storytelling traditions. It is not antithetical to the authenticity and purity of Greek myth. It is myth’ (225).

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Thomas E. Jenkins, *Antiquity Now: The Classical World in the Contemporary American Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. 253 pp. ISBN 9780521196260.

*Antiquity Now* is a delightful book, whose accessible style in no way detracts from the excellence of its scholarship. Concentrating on the reception of ancient Greece and Rome in contemporary America, it consists of an introduction, conclusion and five chapters entitled: gay and lesbian receptions of the ancient world; classics and ideology; September 11<sup>th</sup> on the Western stage; From the borders: contemporary identity, community, and the ancient world; Power, the canon, and the unexpected voice. These chapters cover a wide range of issues that concern modern America, including sexuality, race, ethnicity, religious fundamentalism, feminism and ecocriticism. This book therefore will be of use to those working within these areas of classical reception, but will also be of interest to a much wider audience, due to its study of a wide range of contemporary sources and texts.

From the outset, Jenkins sets the tone of his book, with its emphasis upon, and illuminating analysis of, texts of popular culture, by beginning with a study of a scene from the TV series, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, in a fascinating demonstration of the way in which the complex messages broadcast by this episode are an example of how ancient culture is received in contemporary Western society (pp. 1-8). He then moves on to another case-study, this time of Robert Mezey’s *To the Americans*, an ‘American-ization’ reception of Horace’s *Odes* 3.6 (pp. 8-20), before progressing to summarise the recent theoretical developments within classical reception studies, as he outlines the debate between the ‘Classical Tradition’ and ‘Classical Reception’ (pp. 20-25). This section in itself, due to its admirable clarity, will be of benefit to anyone involved in the field, and in particular anyone teaching courses or seminars within Classical Reception. After a brief examination of both Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas* (1689) and Mark Morris’ dance theatre version from 1989, Jenkins declares his main focus, namely

'adaptations of ancient texts and themes that are outrageously, violently, wonderfully un-literal' (p. 29), and he goes on to fulfil this promise in his subsequent chapters.

Chapter two (pp. 33-94), by far the longest of these, focuses on gay and Lesbian receptions of the ancient world. Again, Jenkins brings a wide range of texts and examples, focusing in depth on receptions of Plato's *Symposium* (particularly *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (1994) and *All About Love* (1997)), the writings of psychologist George Devereux and Robert Eisner, the groundbreaking production *Dionysus in 69*, Mark Merkis' 1998 novel, *An Arrow's Flight*, the 2001 graphic novel *Age of Bronze* by Eric Shanower and Alice Tuan's play *Ajax: (Por Nobody)* ((2005). Some of Jenkins' readings and identifications of homophobia seem a little stretched; I am not convinced, for example, that Harris and Platzner's presentation of Apollo as an unsuccessful lover,<sup>1</sup> in comparison with Zeus, is misleading or 'idiosyncratic' (57) or in fact that it does present Apollo as a 'frustrated homosexual' (p. 58). Nevertheless, Jenkins does provide a great deal of food for thought, providing fascinating examples and case studies, and goes a long way towards proving just how entrenched attitudes towards sexuality, and in particular homosexuality, are, within receptions of the ancient world.

The focus of the third chapter (pp. 95-128) is ideology, with Jenkins concentrating on "strongly ideological appropriations of antiquity" within the context of post 9/11 America. Some of his chosen case studies are strikingly original: he considers in depth, for example, the book *Dateline: Troy* (1996/2006) as well as the Waterwell theatre company's *The Persians: A Comedy about War in Five Songs* (2005). Others are somewhat more predictable: *300*, Oliver Stone's *Alexander* and the films of Michael Cacoyannis. Yet even when he is dealing with the more commonly treated works, Jenkins' insights are original and illuminating, providing more food for thought, and demonstrating that there is plenty more to be said on these productions.

In the next chapter (pp. 129-157), Jenkins zooms in closer on the broader issue raised in the previous one, that of east/west relations, as he considers how the events of 9/11 have appeared in classically influenced receptions on the western stage. Concentrating first on the *Antigone*, the chapter starts with a brief outline of one non-dramatic reception, Kurzanki and Hopkins' comic book version of *Antigone*, before moving swiftly on to Seamus Heaney's *The Burial at Thebes* which, as Heaney himself has explained, "encapsulates the dictatorial bluster of George W. Bush after the invasion of Iraq" (p. 130). This influence justifies the inclusion of a book subtitled "the Classical World in the Contemporary American Imagination", despite the fact that Heaney is Irish rather than American, as is Conall Morrison, next discussed here, whose *The Bacchae of Baghdad* (2006), like Heaney's, opened first in Dublin rather than in the United States. Also examined in this chapter are Bill T. Jones' *The Bacchae Project* (2001) and Richard Nelson's *Conversations in Tusculum* (2008) as well as two versions of Euripides' *Helen*, that by Ellen McLaughlin (2003/2005) and the BBC Radio Three production from 2011. Jenkins illustrates how contemporary events, ideology and politics influenced the production of these plays, explaining how the versions of *Helen*, like Mary Zimmerman's *Metamorphoses* of 2001, which was rehearsing in New York during the attack on the twin towers and its aftermath, were actually changed, reinterpreted or even rewritten as a result of such events. Finally, the chapter concludes with an examination of a production based on Sophocles' *Oedipus*, Craig Lucas' *Small Tragedy*.

The next two chapters pick up on Bernard Knox's "Dead White European Male" designation, to explore "communities and groups not often glossed as historically favored or privileged, and which...have grappled with their marginalized status by (paradoxically) engaging with the tools, texts and myths of the oldest, deadest, Europeanest males" (p. 158). In the first of these chapters (pp. 158-183), Jenkins considers how the ancient world is constructed within the context of race in modern America. After a short outline highlighting the developments within classical reception

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<sup>1</sup> Harris and Platzner, *Classical Mythology: Images and Insights* 241.

concerning the African and Afro-American experience, from *Black Athena* onwards, he refreshingly concentrates not on this particular community, but rather on the Mexican community in the United States. His particular focus is a trilogy of recent Greek tragedies by Louis Alfaro (*Electricidad* (2002), *Oedipus El Rey* (2010), *Bruja* (2012)) a Chicano playwright and activist who “specifically and intentionally “receives” both Euripides and Sophocles through the prism of American race and ethnicity”. Jenkins’ careful and absorbing analysis of the three plays is one of the strongest parts of the book, shedding light on an intriguing case of reception in a less well-known source.

Rather more familiar are the texts under discussion in the second of the chapters (pp. 184-220), where Ursula Le Guin’s *Lavinia* (2008) and Margaret Atwood’s *Penelopiad* (2005) are explored. Exploring these two works, as well as, more briefly, Carol Ann Duffy’s *The World’s Wife* (1999) and a poem by Teresa Cader, *Letter to Artemis* (1999), Jenkins demonstrates how these works enable the voice of women, suppressed by the ancient authors, to be heard. Nevertheless, he also argues, as they are reinscribed into the classical cannon, they also remain confined to the sidelines, constrained by the plots of the *Aeneid* and the *Odyssey*, to remain only marginal.

Appended to the end of this chapter (pp. 205-211), somewhat less than comfortably, is a section on eco-criticism, the rather loose connection being that just as ancient marginalized voices have been incorporated into modern receptions, so the same may be said of voices that did not exist in the ancient world, such as those advocating ecology. Although this linkage is somewhat tenuous, the content of this section, recent ecological receptions of Plato and Ovid, concentrating on Melissa Lane’s *Eco-Republic: What the Ancients Can Teach Us about Ethics, Virtue, and Sustainable Living* (2011) and James Ludson’s retelling of the story of Erysichthon (1994), is thought-provoking. Similarly, the book’s final in-depth case study (pp. 212-220), investigating modern receptions of Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound* that use the play as vehicle for advocating social change and revolution, provides some stimulating material. These include an analysis of the Amnesty International sponsored musical production of 2011, after each performance of which there took place acts of political activism, such as the signing of petitions. Equally fascinatingly, Harold and Ruth Birnbaum’s *Prometheus Trilogy* (1978) (pp. 212-220) included, as Jenkins explains, a speech by Zeus in which creationism is preached, at a time when the issue was very much under debate in the United States.

The final, short, concluding chapter (pp. 221-228) emphasizes the fractured nature of contemporary discourse of which classical reception studies is a part, and the specificity with which modern receptions select ancient texts to adapt. These elements in themselves allow for “a progressive dialogue between antiquity and modernity”, as demonstrated by Jenkins’ final delightful case study, the reception of Plato in the film *Superman: Man of Steel* (2013).

*Antiquity Now*, with its wide ranging choice of case studies from within popular culture, and its author’s capable application of critical skills to these texts, is a welcome addition to the ever growing library of works on contemporary classical receptions. It interacts with such a wide range of lesser known works, as well as contributing to the scholarship on some of those more commonly studied, that I have no doubt that it will stimulate additional research and readings for some time to come.