

significant historical themes by pulling together sets of material from across the empire. That is the case, for instance, with the treatment of church architecture by Olof Brandt and monastic architecture by Karel Innemée, and in Gunnar Brands' sheer *tour de force* on civic architecture. Even the chapters that an ungenerous or hasty reader might find more straightforwardly descriptive and less discernibly problem-driven have important historical lessons to yield. The index brilliantly equips readers to locate the discussion of specific issues, and is an invaluable resource for the full appreciation and enjoyment of this major work.

FEDERICO SANTANGELO

University of Genoa, Italy

federico.santangelo@unige.it

doi:[10.1017/S0017383525100636](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383525100636)

This is an Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted re-use, distribution and reproduction, provided the original article is properly cited.

Reception

Unusually for a review of classical reception works, we have several commentaries. The first is a collection of Latin poetry by Martin Luther.¹ This work is made up of an Introduction, two appendices, and six chapters of verse organized around a theme, each with their own introduction, Latin text with facing translation, and commentary.

Carl Springer is keen to show that, despite Luther's translation of the Bible into the vernacular, he had a keen interest in classical texts and the Latin language, carrying his childhood learning into a lifelong practice. Furthermore, while Luther's verse has often been met with a rather lukewarm response, Springer argues that some assessments are too harsh, with his more ludic offerings equivalent in humour to better-regarded poets, and at least one of his more serious works 'filled with the sincerest of emotions [...] following classical, not Medieval norms' (9). Indeed, Springer discusses some of the circumstances of the transition from Medieval Latin to Humanist Latin and notes that Luther used a mixture of 'traditional classical metres' and 'the accentual and rhymed verse characteristic of the Latin and macaronic compositions [...] found in the late medieval collection of verse known as the *Carmina Burana*' (1).

The first chapter of verse contains verses based on the Psalter, and those that express similar convictions. This includes the humorous *Iocus de Cubitensi*, 'A joke about Cubito', a three-line rhyming poem, possibly directed at a doctor Luther knew, playing on *cubito*'s connotations of reclining, and, Springer argues, the connection between sleep and death found in both *Kings* and the *Iliad*. There is also a contemporary re-working, 'On the exodus of Israel' of what is Psalm 113 in the *Vulgate*, in which the Egyptian pharaoh is replaced by 'Henry V, Duke of Braunschweig-Lüneburg and Prince of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, [who] had decided to attack the Protestant city of

¹ *The Latin Verse of Martin Luther: Texts, Translations and Commentary*. By Carl P. E. Springer. London, New York, Oxford, New Delhi, Sydney, Bloomsbury, 2025. Pp. xii + 227. Hardback £85, ISBN: 978-1-350-26149-5.

Goslar, but was opposed by troops representing the Schmalkaldic League, a military alliance of Lutheran princes' (28).

The next chapter contains four pieces of 'Virgiliana'. Springer claims that 'Luther continued to think about Virgil and his poetry right up until the very end of his life' (36). This short selection shows some poems that borrow directly from Virgil's language and a distich on death and fate that has been afforded a place in this section 'because it addresses a firm conviction that Luther shared with Virgil (and the ancient Stoics), namely, that events in this world are shaped by divine forces' (46). The next chapter, on 'Invective, Scatology and Satire', contains some attacks against, among others, Pope Clement VII, Erasmus, and Galen, and one entitled *Dysenteria Lutheri in merdipoetam Lemchen*, 'Luther's dysentery against the shit-poet little Lemnius'. Springer argues for the importance of remembering that poets may adopt a particular 'persona' for writing invective, which is something seen in his classical predecessors, but also claims that the sixteenth century was simply 'an earthier age' than our own (49). It is in this chapter that the author discusses Luther's relationship to Greek, noting that one of the poems was found in a manuscript under a Greek quotation from Hesiod's *Works and Days*.

The next chapter, on Luther's responses to Martial, gives some more biographical details, noting some of the interpersonal motivations and philosophical views that might have played into his poetic choices. This is followed by a chapter described 'somewhat loosely as inscriptional and dedicatory verse' (89). Springer notes that one distich addressed to Spalatin takes its opening words from near the beginning of the popular *Ilias Latina*, or 'Latin *Iliad*' by Publius Baebius Italicus, a reminder of the changing fashions in the classical canon. In the last chapter of verse, on 'Faith and Life', Springer continues to explore Luther's application of the *Bible*. One poem under discussion is a brief riddle, named *COR* or 'Heart'.

Springer explains that authorship of many works associated with Luther is uncertain. Therefore, in the two appendices, he includes those verses which he believes are often mistakenly attributed to Luther, or otherwise associated with him, but cannot be by his hand. In this section, he makes known his reasoning for their inclusion outside of the main sections of the book, as well as some other useful comments. The commentaries, on the other hand, discuss not only questions of transmission, but poetic form, literary and historical references, language techniques, and biographical notes. The writing is accessible and enthusiastic, and some of the poems may even be useful for Intermediate-level unseen practice.

Greek and Roman Antiquity in First World War Poetry and *Rupert Brooke, Charles Sorley, Isaac Rosenberg, and Wilfred Owen* are the first two instalments in a new series of Classical Reception Commentaries at Oxford University Press, with both volumes discussing the same four poets, who receive a section each.² The former, a more compact volume, concentrates on the poets' war poetry, and is described in the blurb as 'a condensed version of the scholarly edition, intended to be available to a wide range of readers'. In both volumes, each poet receives a section prepared by one of the authors, who are also

² *Greek and Roman Antiquity in First World War Poetry: Making Connections*. By Lorna Hardwick, Stephen Harrison, and Elizabeth Vandiver. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2024. Pp. xiv + 247. 1 black and white illustration. Paperback £20, ISBN: 978-0-19-890788-6; *Rupert Brooke, Charles Sorley, Isaac Rosenberg and Wilfred Owen: Classical Connections*. By Lorna Hardwick, Stephen Harrison, and Elizabeth Vandiver. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2024. Pp. xii + 332, 1 black and white illustration. Hardback £90, ISBN: 978-0-19-285667-8.

the series editors, consisting in a discussion of relevant aspects of their life, work, and education, followed by a guide to the location of paramaterials, such as archival correspondence, manuscripts, and art works. Then, each poem is followed by sections on 'poem – date, form, and content', 'reception commentary', and 'associated poems'.

In covering this selection of poets, the volume also examines men from different backgrounds: the Cambridge Classics graduate Rupert Brooke and public-school-educated Charles Sorley are placed alongside the autodidacts, Wilfred Owen and Isaac Rosenberg. With Vandiver having previously noted that most canonical poets of WWI were public-school alumni, the authors take time to detail the kinds of interactions the poets are thought to have had with the ancient world across their prematurely curtailed lifetimes.³ The life and work of Isaac Rosenberg present a particularly interesting opportunity for Hardwick to explore an intriguing confluence of ideas. She notes that, due to his having grown up in an impoverished family of Lithuanian-Jewish refugees, Rosenberg came to classical literature 'via translations, literary traditions in English, and "low intensity" cultural awareness of figures and myths' (58–9). Furthermore, Hardwick cautions against the 'erasure' of other traditions relevant to the background of a creator, and in this case highlights that Rosenberg also engaged with Hebrew and Near-Eastern cultures. For example, 'Autumn 1914', with its images of harvest, crop-burning, and molten iron, Hardwick sees links to Hesiod, Homer, and Virgil, as well as to the Hebrew Bible, situating it briefly in a network of traditions around the Eastern Mediterranean, in addition to looking forward to the likes of Modernists H.D. and Ezra Pound.

It can be observed, therefore, that, despite the very systematic presentation of the form, content, and context of the poems, and the limited space necessarily given to their discussion, the authors have attempted to think broadly and creatively about their place within classical traditions. The Introductions in both editions establish a taxonomy for thinking about reception, with the following labels: allusion; intertextuality; intra-textuality; affinities; associations; glancing; ghosting; improvising and riffing; metal-epic; and trace. These categories are employed not only to capture something of the gradations of subtlety in classical reception, but to highlight the roles of both writers and readers in the process, or as the authors put it, the 'multiplicities of agency' (10). Intriguingly, the idea of 'glancing' is taken from a lecture by Alice Oswald and is described in reference to Rosenberg's work as 'an entry process that hinges on aurality and orality and gives a voice to the experience of subaltern figures' (ibid. 84). This encapsulates the book's attempt to combine the traditional study of prosody with Classical Reception Studies' more progressive drives to pick up forgotten histories. However, the brief discussion found here is undoubtedly a provocation to examine further the implications of this idea.

Elsewhere, the open-endedness of reading what is often very rich poetry within a web of possible literary and classical influences is balanced with efforts to pinpoint meaning. For example, in the case of Wilfred Owen's challenging and highly evocative 'Exposure', which exists in several drafts, Vandiver highlights the 'bewilderingly ambiguous' closing line of its penultimate stanza, with the suggestion that these uncertainties would have been cleared up had the poet been given the opportunity to do so (179). The unsettling poem of battlefield death and disorientation, 'Strange Meeting', poses similar problems,

³ See Elizabeth Vandiver, *Stand in the Trench, Achilles: Classical Receptions in British Poetry of the Great War* (Oxford, 2010).

and invites a detailed look at Owen's use of subjunctives and imperatives in his *oeuvre*, much like one would expect of a classical commentary. Elsewhere, Harrison discusses 'The Old Vicarage, Grantchester' (1912), and makes some very intriguing comments about its links with Euripides' *Hippolytus*. Regarding Brooke's mention of 'Fauns (half-human, half-goat), Naiads (water nymphs), and Pan ('the Goat-foot')', Harrison selects among the many possible antecedents Mallarmé's important poem 'L'après-midi d'un faune' (1877) as the object of the poem's allusions (32).⁴

In the larger volume, the authors remove some of the more elementary material (such as glossing 'Naiad', as above) and instead range over the full extent of classically-influenced works in each poet's *oeuvre*, and quote even more extensively from ancient texts. While Sorley's '*Quis desidero*' is briefly mentioned in the smaller volume, here it is not only reproduced in full, but is accompanied by the Horace ode on which it is based in both Latin and a literal translation. Similar can be said for the other poets. And so, this volume would be very useful as a companion for those wishing to explore the classical (and Biblical) influences on these four poets, regardless of expertise in ancient languages and across all of their works. On the other hand, the smaller volume would suit a broader audience of readers interested in WW1 poetry specifically, who, ideally, have a reasonable understanding of grammar and poetic form, but less knowledge of Classics. Both volumes convey seriousness about the power and craftsmanship of ancient and modern verse alike, as well as the lives of these men.

Stephanie Oade has produced a study that also reflects in great detail on the intricacies of Latin poetry.⁵ However, the focus here is on the ways in which the poetry of Catullus – including, but not limited to, its style, content, and form – and its reception history within the broader context of the lyric tradition, has found its way into twentieth-century music. Beyond this, Oade aims to grow 'some of the methodologies already explored by scholars and supplementing these with a new, analytical approach that allows music and text to be read together in a meaningful way whilst ensuring that both are equally represented and fairly balanced' (1) As can no doubt be discerned, this is a complex and sizable topic, one which Oade herself points out also 'demands specialist skills and understanding from the reader' (4). However, the author aims to support readers who are musicological novices (which is, after all, a reasonable expectation, given that music is one of the lesser developed areas of Classical Reception Studies), by including a glossary of musical terms in the Appendix.

Oade opens Part I with an overview of the development of lyric poetry, starting with Sappho and moving through Pindar to Callimachus. Here, as throughout, entire poems are reproduced in the original ancient language, where applicable, and followed by a translation. Oade engages enthusiastically with these poems, noting how Sappho's 'first-person poetic voice is so persuasively confessional, her language so graceful and so full of emotional clarity' (19). However, this chapter is not just a brief literary history, but also

⁴ For the preponderance of caprine hybrids in the culture of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see, for example, John Boardman, *The Great God Pan: The Survival of an Image*, Walter Neurath Memorial Lectures (Thames and Hudson, 1997); Ronald Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford University Press, 1999), (especially Chapter 3); Patricia Merivale, *Pan the Goat-God: His Myth in Modern Times* (Harvard University Press, 1969).

⁵ *Catullus in Twentieth-Century Music: Lyrics and Lyricism*. By Stephanie Oade. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2024. Pp. xvii + 334. 2 black and white illustrations, 2 tables. Hardback £99, ISBN: 0-19-891868-2.

serves to highlight the contentious role of the personal voice and poetic persona in lyric, and to draw attention to the form's changing fortunes and perceptions since antiquity. Oade also emphasizes key frames for thinking about Catullus to which she returns later. One is the 'lyric "now"', which Oade says refers to the lack of 'progression' in narrative, time, or space found in lyric (48). Another is *Das Gleitende*, taken from a term coined by Viennese poet Hugo von Hofmannsthal. This is used by the author to formalize the conception, which she says is already present in scholarship, of a kind of change in lyric poetry. She describes 'the continuous flux in Catullus's lyric voice and its disorientating effects on the audience' (57). In outlining these themes, Oade does not just refer to antiquity, but charts the development of the lyric voice with reference to more recent works by poets such as Christina Rossetti and D. H. Lawrence.

Oade arrives at the main focus of her project in Part II, with a discussion of two songs by Ned Rorem and Alan Rawsthorne. This is where the reader first sees the potential of the author's aim to fully satisfy the demands of classical reception and musicology. Although Rorem may never have known the original Latin of Catullus 101, his song *Catullus on the Burial of His Brother* is still discussed in relation to the original text, so as to facilitate a re-reading of the original poem. Oade's examination of Rawsthorne's *Lament for a Sparrow*, based on Catullus 3, is a systematic dialogue between the Latin and the song. Oade posits the word-by-word change in perception a reader might experience in moving from the initial plural imperative at its start, to the vocatives that follow. Similarly, Oade maps the journey taken by the song's audience, outlining the emotional contours of the rhythms, dynamics, and tonality, as well as considering its performative nature.

Part III moves away from discussing individual songs and voices to envisaging the work of Catullus in more narrativizing and totalizing terms, specifically in relation to Carl Orff's *Carmina Catulli: Ludi Scaenici*. Here, the possible methods of dissemination and publication in which Catullus engaged, and the resulting impact on the contemporary reception of his life and work are made relevant. Another highly important aspect is the image of Catullus the man and his work's very obvious susceptibility to biographical readings. Oade, reading a strong sense of authorial control in Orff, discusses the physical presence of Catullus the character on stage during the *Carmina*, leading her to observe that 'Orff expropriates from the poet the role of omniscient guiding hand', which leads to him being made into 'a standardized betrayed lover type' (165).

The question of authorship is also discussed in Part IV. Returning to Hugo von Hofmannsthal and his opera with Richard Strauss, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Oade comments on the genesis of the project by the librettist and composer, along with director Max Reinhardt. In comparing the opera to the Catullus's epyllion, his poem 64, she highlights strategies of narrative and visual control, using framing devices and ekphrasis in both works. However, Oade also goes on to analyse the 'pastiche treatment' Strauss employs (291).

With such expansive coverage, this is a highly ambitious work that brings together not only different disciplines, but different intra-disciplinary methodologies, too. Oade has merged close textual analysis, historicist elements, and reader-response within a positivist framework across her readings of both poetry and music in a way that is likely to stimulate further methodological exploration.

A very different approach to classical reception in literature, which nonetheless shows a similar inclination towards very detailed, close reading of text, is Mario Telò's latest

book, which discusses Judith Butler's work on Greek tragedy.⁶ This study is described as an 'experiment, a Butlerian reading of Butler's reading of tragedy' (4). It consists of an introduction, one chapter on each part of Butler's 'tragic trilogy' on Greek tragedy (2), namely *Antigone's Claim* (2000), the Housman lecture of February 2017 'Breaks in the Bond: Reflections on Kinship Trouble', and the essay in *Classical Antiquity*, 'Fury and Justice in the Humanities' (2023), followed by an afterword by Butler herself. However, this is not to say that these are the only parts of Butler's work with which Telò engages; rather, the discussion covers a good deal of Butleriana, as well as Butler the person (or human? – Telò is deeply engaged with the body and the categorization of species). We are told in the acknowledgements that Butler is both friend and colleague to the author, and the monograph draws on many of their publications, as well as interviews with them.

The book launches itself with a quotation from Butler's 2019 lecture 'Out of Breath: Laughing, Crying at the Body's Limit'. With this, we see the intertwining of themes that recur throughout: the body, speech and sound, and action. Breath, of course, has been an increasingly important element of public discourse since the killing of Eric Garner and, subsequently, in a different sense, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Breath's significance has also been explored in the Medical Humanities 'Life of Breath' project led by Havi Carel and Jane McNaughton.⁷ While Black Lives Matter (including its link with breathing) and the pandemic are areas of concern for Telò, the immediate resonance of Butler's intervention on breath is more quotidian. Breath is also linked with several topics to which he returns, namely the emotional impacts of comedy and tragedy and the phonological qualities of ancient texts. In the final chapter, on the *Eumenides*, Telò returns to breath as the quintessential sign of life and therefore of continued existence in the face of repressive state apparatus. Breathing is linked with the anger and 'fuming' of the Furies, and also with victims of anti-Black violence (151). Furthermore, the body's status as medium both for intimacy and for expression that transcends language is an important component of this work, cropping up in various different guises.

However, the performative dimensions of the tragic tradition in a more conventional sense, and the (re)presentation of the body this usually entails, appear intermittently. One key moment is in Chapter 2 'Trans-parentality, Abortion, Social Ecology: *Bacchae*'. Here, Telò discusses Kelly Sinnaph Mary's self-presentation in a series of photographs named *Hotmilk* (2016), in which she 're-imagines the she-wolf who suckled Romulus and Remus as a hispid female human holding a sleeping human baby in her arms', which the author sees as a challenge to the demands by colonizers of their colonial subjects to reject the bestial qualities that are projected onto them (114). This is part of the chapter's discussion on speciesism and kinship, an expansive understanding of trans identities, and furies. The figure of the hairy and animalistic woman is central to this discussion. This reviewer can't help but think of the hirsutism that arises from both maternity and hormonal conditions experienced by AFAB (Assigned Female At Birth) people, and the problematic racial and gender norms that can be exposed by the diagnosis of androgenic traits.⁸

⁶ *Reading Greek Tragedy with Judith Butler*. By Mario Telò. London, New York, Oxford, New Delhi, Sydney, Bloomsbury, 2024. Pp x + 255. 4 black and white illustrations. Hardback £85, ISBN: 978-1-350-32339-1.

⁷ Life of Breath: <https://lifeofbreath.webspace.durham.ac.uk/> [accessed 1 November 2025].

⁸ See, for example, this article which considers the positive and negative experiences of being involved in gynaecological processes in which white cis womanhood is frequently the norm: Katrina Wugalter, Mateja Perovic, Laurice Karkaby, Gillian Einstein, 'The Double-edged Sword of PCOS

As might be guessed from the range of themes in that chapter alone, this book, for all its brevity, is dense and highly allusive, participating in conversations with many influential thinkers beyond Butler, and in several urgent issues facing the world today, relating not merely to social justice but to human and biospheric survival. Ukraine, Palestine, climate catastrophe, and transphobia are all present. At the same time, Telò invokes Freud, Lacan, Derrida, Fanon, and a host of other theorists. In some ways one is compelled to read and re-read this book, forwards and backwards, making sense of the broader network in which the author has situated the discussion through the endnotes. There has been a great deal of care employed in the selection of individual words and the construction of some quite complex sentences, and this mirrors the obvious attention the author pays to the aural and semantic connections between words in the ancient Greek texts. It is striking, for example, that the author has chosen Latinate words used more commonly in scientific English to talk about trans-speciality, and women who are 'hispid' and 'villose' and akin to 'cervids'. This undoubtedly creates a sense of alienation, allowing the author to confront readers with how speciesist language talks about animals versus humans. Elsewhere, Telò reads the 'harsh sonic surface' and the 'rhotic and velar insistence' of Creon's speech in the face of Antigone's attempt to 'stake out a space of neuroqueer countersociality' (56). This is undoubtedly a challenging book with much food for thought for those who are already engaged with Butler's work.

Another form of categorization occurs in this dictionary, edited by Janice Valls-Russell and Katherine Heavey, which represents a useful guide to the use of classical mythology in the works of Shakespeare.⁹ The vast majority of the more than 200 entries in the work are on deities, heroes, and the like. However, the dictionary ventures into the realm of those with 'pseudo-historical status, who [find] their way into mythology', in the shape of Scythian queen Tomyris and Semiramis, the Assyrian queen known historically as 'Sammu-ramat' (382).¹⁰ They are also joined – quite understandably – by the mountains Ossa, Pelion, and Olympus, the city of Troy, and Ovid himself. This last figure is described as 'a looming presence in Shakespeare's oeuvre through countless references to his mythological characters and the structuring role of their stories' and is noted to have been 'explicitly named in four instances' (290).

The editors and authors rightly point out that care must be taken in distinguishing the sources that were used by Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Ovid's importance for early modern education and culture is recognized, and Valls-Russell in the Introduction highlights the other classical authors that were accessible. However, she also observes that 'access to quotations or narratives from lesser-known authors were mediated by the compilations of mythographers such as Boccaccio, in the fourteenth century, or Natale Conti in the sixteenth' (4), and that traditions of ancient manuscripts are such that there is an extra layer of uncertainty in reconstructing the Latin texts early-modern authors were working with. These textual sources are also understood by Valls-Russell to have

and Gender: Exploring Gender-diverse Experiences of Polycystic Ovary Syndrome'. *International Journal of Transgender Health* 25 (2) (2023), 251–67.

⁹ *Shakespeare's Classical Mythology: A Dictionary*, the Arden Shakespeare Dictionary series, 2025. Edited by Janice Valls-Russell and Katherine Heavey. London, New York, Oxford, New Delhi, Sydney. Pp. xxi + 470. Hardback £130, ISBN: 978-1-350-12587-2.

¹⁰ Stephanie Mary Dalley, 'Semiramis', *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (third edition), Simon Hornblower and Anthony Spawforth (eds.) (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003).

been supplemented by visual and material culture, although the focus of the entries is on the former.

Almost all entries are divided into three sections, labelled (A), (B) and (C): the first gives details of the ancient and later sources for the topic; the second discusses the use of the theme or character in Shakespeare 'covering the most significant occurrences and providing insights into their significance in the context in which they feature' (12). The third section gives more details of the wider circulation of the topic among Shakespeare's contemporaries and its analysis in scholarship. I will take as an example Valls-Russell's entry on Centaurs, which is among the longer entries. Here, we learn of the conception of the centaurs (although not Chiron's), and their appearances in Virgil, Martial, Apollodorus, and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, as well as 'the moral interpretations' in Conti (79). The second section is set up by (A)'s focus on monstrosity, the death and exceptional virtue of Chiron, and the violence at the wedding feast of Pirithous and Hippodamia, rather than, say, Chiron's mentorship of Achilles in Statius' *Achilleid* (although this aspect is mentioned in section (B)). Sexual violence, lust, and monstrosity of mind and body appear in the majority of examples from Shakespeare, which range from the very concrete, such as the name of a tavern in the *Comedy of Errors*, to the allusive, Petruccio's close relationship to his horse and his 'roleplaying' of the 'disruption of a wedding banquet by the Centaurs' without directly referencing them in the *Taming of the Shrew* (80). The third section (C) points to an epigram on the title page of Ben Jonson's *Sejanus* and gives a brief indication of the arguments of some relevant scholarship on Centaurs in Shakespeare.

This volume also contains an Index of Shakespeare's Works containing the lists of all mythological references in each play or poem and a Bibliography of Primary Sources, which furnishes the reader with a list of specific editions of classicizing texts from the Middle Ages and Renaissance, as well as of classical texts. This is an informative and well-organized work with a lot of useful material and insight.

The edited volume entitled *The Ancient World in Alternative History and Counterfactual Fictions* provides a thoughtful exploration of genre, history, and reception.¹¹ As might be hinted at by the title, this volume engages with case studies that deal with alternate and alternative histories in a variety of ways, with many authors preferring the term 'uchronia' to describe writers' approaches. The question of genre and form appears across the three main sections of the book. In the first section, which is on conceptualizations of history as pre-determined or subject to chance, Genevieve Liveley engages in a systematic analysis of American author Poul Anderson's intriguing short story *Delenda Est* (1955) in terms of 'the six criteria for judging good counterfactuals proposed by Philip Tetlock and Aaron Belkin' (20). This work imagines what the world would look like if the Scipios had died during the Second Punic War, ultimately leading to the Celts coming to dominance, which results in greatly impeding scientific progress. Liveley concludes that in Anderson's case 'counterfactual history is fundamentally concerned not with what *might* happen but what *must* happen' (30). On the other hand, in the second section, oriented around the 'Great Man' model of history,

¹¹ *The Ancient World in Alternative History and Counterfactual Fictions*. Edited by Alberto J. Quiroga Puertas and Leire Olabarria. London, New York, Oxford, New Delhi and Sydney, Bloomsbury Academic, 2024. Pp. xxvi + 230. 1 black and white illustration and 1 table. Hardback £90, ISBN: 978-1-350-28162-2.

Lynn S. Fotheringham examines the ambiguity of genre in relation to marketing and reader experience. Fotheringham's case study is *The Queen of Sparta* by Pakistani author T. S. Chaudhry (2014), a novel about Gorgo and fictional 'Indo-Scythian prince Sherzada' that, Fotheringham notes, includes historical figures from Greece, Persia, Italy, and India (126). The chapter discusses how the term 'alternative history' might variously be considered as denoting a narrative that is counterfactual or more closely aligned to reality but suppressed by more dominant voices. In examining various promotional materials, the presentation of the novel on bookselling websites, and online reviews, Fotheringham speculates as to how partial information and divergent understandings of history at each stage of the book's circulation might influence responses to the novel's treatment of the past.

The role of history is seen elsewhere in the volume. In the Foreword, Will Tattersdill notes that while "counterfactuals" remain frowned upon by academic historians', they might yet be productive (xviii). In his chapter on the British, young-adult novel *Fireball* (1981) by John Christopher, Ryan C. Fowler explores the possible pedagogical benefits of alternate histories. This novel imagines what the world would look like in 1981 if the Emperor Julian had survived long enough to prevent the ascendancy of Christianity. Not only does its narrative invite young readers to puzzle over the forces at work in driving change over time, but, Fowler argues, it also presents them with the opportunity to reflect on culture clashes and inter-cultural relations. In Section 3 on 'Art, Culture and the Poetics of Counterfactuals', Jesse Weiner suggests another fruitful line of thinking that might stem from working with counterfactuals. Across three case studies, one from the sixteenth century and two from the 1960s, Weiner, in an analysis of reworkings of ancient texts, suggests that "interruptions" of ancient narratives function as counterfactuals, inviting us to revisit and reflect upon classical literature by denying the resolution of their source texts' (181). This different approach nonetheless touches on themes seen elsewhere: lacunae, progress, and genre, to name a few, adding another dimension to the broader discussion in which this volume engages.

Other chapters of the volume deal more directly with contemporary issues. Among these are Alberto J. Quiroga Puertas and Elia Otranto's on the work of Italian journalist and author Mario Farneti, and that of Leire Olabarria, on Ramona Wheeler's *Three Princes* (2014). The former situate their discussion with respect to the storming of the Capitol on 6 January 2021, and the pertinence of Roman imagery to the American Right, before examining the ways in which Farneti's works might be regarded as bearing traits in common with 'Italian uchronias from the Fantafascismo movement that have been criticized for romanticizing fascism' (115). Olabarria's chapter, meanwhile, applies a postcolonial reading to the depiction of imagined Egyptian and Central American empires in the nineteenth century.

Counterfactuals are also an area of interest in an *Imagines* edited volume on *Playful Classics*.¹² As Martin Lindner points out in the introductory 'Thinking About Playful Classics: A Beginners' Guide', essays that 'imagine counterfactual history' had been a common task in German classrooms (7). According to Lindner, this kind of assignment

¹² *Playful Classics: Classical Reception as a Creative Process*. Edited by Juliette Harrisson, Martin Lindner, and Luis Unceta Gómez. London, New York, Oxford, New Delhi and Sydney, Bloomsbury Academic, 2025. Pp. ix + 272. 41 black and white illustrations. Hardback £81, ISBN: 978-1-350-41862-2.

contributed to a range of learning outcomes, some of which were beneficial, but also included the kind of learning that ‘supported cultural scripts of national or racial superiority which escalated into two World Wars’ (8). However, despite such serious ramifications, Lindner declares that ‘the effort was still a playful form of classical reception’ (8). This example highlights not only the exciting and creative dimension to playful receptions of antiquity, but their potential to exert a powerful impact on the player. This volume explores a range of forms of playful reception across different times, places, and media, and in so doing speaks to such issues as pedagogy, identity, and technology.

In this opening essay by Lindner, the reader is introduced to the ‘house rules’ of play, using the work of Brian Sutton-Smith who ‘is rightfully considered one of the most influential scholars of interdisciplinary play theory’, which gives the ludic initiand something of the sense of what is at stake in this topic (2). What emerges quickly is that the editors and authors have endeavoured to replicate a sense of play in encountering the book itself, which is labelled ‘an invitation’ on the first page. The volume is divided into five main sections, each begun with – felicitously – an ‘Interlude’ by one of the editors, giving an overview of the section and adding some comments on the theory and practice of play. The sections are organized around materiality (‘Toys and Games’), video games (‘Virtual Realities’), live performance (‘Playing on Stage’), ‘Immersive Antiquities’, and ‘National Traditions’. Between these chapters and the ‘Coda’ with which the volume ends, readers are encouraged to chart their own path, perhaps tracing out the development of the argument across the ‘Interludes’ or diving into the substance of the chapters.

One theme that recurs across the volume is that of community, including the community of classicists who may share an interest in how the discipline is allowed to flourish. In the opening chapter (a prelude?), Lindner reflects on the changing landscape of Classical Reception Studies, which has moved on from the requirements of self-justification and ‘self-deprecating jokes’ in order to pre-empt criticism against taking seriously such lightweight material (2). But shortly after, we are invited to recall the first time we saw *Monty Python’s Life of Brian* or received a ‘Playmobil legionnaire’, suggesting both the importance of childhood in creating common cultural experiences, and that Lindner is constructing classicists as a community, the formation of which starts in childhood (3). Elsewhere, contributions to this volume seem to project a sense of generosity, a desire to share, and a concern for the vitality of the discipline and the cultures of the ancient Mediterranean. Thus, even where Alexander Vandewalle acknowledges the ‘growing unease’ around connotations of Western supremacy that accompany the term ‘classical’, he states his desire to produce in his database of classicizing video games, *Paizomen*, ‘an accessible catalogue of games easily found by scholars and students’ (69).¹³ He continues by advocating livestreams as a way for academics to engage with people outside of the academy and ‘create interactive spaces where participants meet experts, and are able to respond to new developments or releases much faster than traditional scholarship’ (73). The spirit of sharing is also alive in other chapters that explain various practice-based enterprises: Irina Vagalinska and

¹³ Among the most important of recent interventions in this ongoing discussion might be Mathura Umachandran and Marchella Ward (eds.) *Critical Ancient World Studies: The Case for Forgetting Classics* (London, Routledge, 2023).

Lyudmil Vagalinski explain their efforts to alert Bulgarian children, through a board game, to the problems treasure-hunters pose to archaeology; and Kai Matuskiewicz and Kai Ruffing on their 'digital game-based learning approach' (90). Beyond the traditional environments in which this non-traditional pedagogy has been introduced, Martina Treu and 'non-scuola', 'a unique and non-hierarchical pedagogical experiment' offer their experiences of the 'collective game' of classical performances (142; 143). Meanwhile, in a heavily-illustrated chapter, Anna Socha and Spanish street artists PichiAvo present their works exploring ancient sculpture and attempt to 'revive mythology by unifying classical art and graffiti in one' (199). Their work also includes digital platforms and augmented reality methods, as well as traditional street art, some of which are preserved on the blockchain. As it is expressed in the chapter: 'as much as they want to bring the gallery to the street, they also wish to bring the street to the gallery' (199).

Other chapters detail embodied participation among groups. Antonius Adamske makes a departure from most of the chapters in this volume, in which the majority of case studies are more recent, by discussing performance in the seventeenth-century French court. If these performances were games, they were also serious. Adamske describes how Louis XIV, appearing in 'Apollonian sun costume', allowed himself to assert his power as 'nobles who, as frontiersmen, had hoped for an overthrow of the Bourbons were forced to throw themselves at the feet of Louis XIV in the *Ballet royal de la nuit*' (*Royal Ballet of the Night*) (112). However, while other examples in this volume might not be so immediately connected to fatal consequences, this does not mean that there are not serious undercurrents to be found in, say, the Francoist playing cards discussed by Antonio Duplá-Ansuategui or the colonialist logic of theme parks highlighted by Filippo Carlá-Uhink and Florian Freitag. Overall, this volume covers a wide range of times, places, and artefacts, across social media, Russia, China, physical toys, performances, and even parties, reflecting people coming together to explore antiquity in the street, the classroom, the internet, and beyond. As is customary, omission of a chapter should not be taken as a reflection of its merit. What is likely to make this volume of interest is that it not only functions as a potentially useful catalogue of pedagogical strategies and artefacts, but that it also demonstrates a number of theoretical and methodological approaches that are likely to provoke further research.

Just as the ancient Mediterranean was shown to be a tool for forging and reflecting on national identity through play, this next volume also considers antiquity's role in nation-building.¹⁴ This monograph, which is part of the *Classical Diaspora* series, gives a broad and enlightening history of the reception of Classics in Hungary from the eighteenth century until the twentieth. Hajdu elucidates the conflict involved in incorporating classical antecedents into the history of the Hungarian people. As the author explains, 'Hungarians do not regard themselves as descendants of the Classical people, and do not speak a language related to Latin or Greek' (1). However, as a European country in an area that was partly under the Roman Empire, Hungarians have sought inspiration from antiquity. Hajdu drily comments that, 'as latecomers, however, the Hungarians could

¹⁴ *Modern Hungarian Culture and the Classics*. By Péter Hajdu. London, New York, Oxford, New Delhi, Oxford, Bloomsbury, 2024. Pp. viii + 218. 16 black and white illustrations. Hardback £85, ISBN: 978-1-350-25812-9.

not easily find an ancient ancestor who was not already taken' (6). With this, Attila the Hun became a promising anchor for identity formation, allowing them to form part of the ancient history in which the Greeks and Romans were often regarded as the principal actors. However, since Hungarians 'regarded themselves as spiritual descendants of Classical Antiquity', Hajdu sees Hungarians' epic poetry as a classicizing form of creating a national identity. The author opens up a world of serious and mock epics that engage with the classical tradition in a variety of ways. As Hajdu continues to trace the history of the country and its political upheavals, through the development and circulation of the classical tradition, the position of Hungary and its national identity reappear. An important point, worthy of remembrance by Anglophone readers is his observation that 'as is common in peripheral and semi-peripheral literatures, poetic translation is a prestigious activity in Hungary' (153). However, this first chapter on nation-building in particular makes an interesting counterpart to studies on romanticism, Classics, and the nation in other countries.

Politics is an important element of both the framing and the structure of the book. The chapter on 'Modernist Approaches to the Classics' reflects several political fault lines in the intellectual culture of the early twentieth century. We learn that the literary journal *Nyugat* (West) represented a 'bourgeois kind of progressive modernism' and certainly nothing 'radical' (81). In contrast, the journal *Napkelet* (Orient) emerged from a type of nationalism that saw in Hungary, with obvious antisemitic overtones, 'a decline caused by the rootless cosmopolitan spirit' promoted by liberals (114). Hajdu argues that the 'modernist/conservative opposition in the Hungarian culture' was mirrored by the activities of the discipline of Classics, which had a 'fundamental impact' (120).

The following chapter on 'Classical Studies during the Communist Period' similarly highlights a complex relationship between ideology, political structures, and classicism. Hajdu examines scholarly careers and publications – of 'committed Communist' Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel (130), for example – to argue that 'Communism did not simply cramp every intellectual or academic activity', but actually in some cases awarded substantial 'opportunities' to classicists (133–4). This does not mean that everyone in Classics fared well, and, indeed, Hajdu later claims that the teaching of Latin and Greek in schools suffered under Communism. However, the political situation did allow some academics to make Hungary a hive of research and, as Hajdu comments later, the switch to capitalism in 1989 'does not provide a supportive environment for big translation projects' either (164). This chapter also provides some helpful material for those with an interest in the history of classical scholarship; not only is there a section on the journal *Acta Antiqua*, but we learn some of the justifications given to The Committee for Classical Philology for translating certain ancient texts, such as the Pre-Socratics being 'highly important sources for the history of philosophical materialism' (131).

The monograph gives a wealth of small details like this, as it seeks to combine an over-arching narrative of around 300 years with specific examples from a variety of texts and some visual and material culture, too. English translations of Hungarian are provided, as is important cultural and historical context. It is clear that the work is aimed at those largely unfamiliar with Hungarian literary culture. We are told, for instance, that the novel *Journey by Moonlight* (1937) 'has been a favourite with young adult readers since the Second World War' (110). Hajdu looks at the Hungarian classical tradition in a variety of modes, from translation and paraphrases, to more subtle interactions, and

discusses people, places, and individual texts. It is clear that Hajdu has a canon in mind and presents it in an assured and perceptive way.

RHIANNON EASTERBROOK

Royal Holloway, University of London, UK

rhannon.easterbrook@rhul.ac.uk

doi:[10.1017/S0017383525100648](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383525100648)

This is an Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided that no alterations are made and the original article is properly cited. The written permission of Cambridge University Press or the rights holder(s) must be obtained prior to any commercial use and/or adaptation of the article.

General

We start with two recent *Kernos Supplements* volumes, each based on the author's doctoral dissertation.

Sylvain Lebreton investigates the full spectrum of the cults of Zeus at Athens based on the study of Zeus' local cult epithets.¹ The sheer quantity of cult epithets associated with Zeus at Athens seems to defy any attempt to impose coherence on the general character of the god, as they indicate such a broad spectrum of his powers, competencies, and modes of intervention in human lives. As Lebreton notes, no other deity possesses such a wide range of cultic epithets. Lebreton investigates the individual epithets and cults in detail, but, besides seeking an understanding of the particular aspects of the god's powers that gave rise to them, he also discusses the general picture of Zeus arising from them cumulatively.

Lebreton perceives the epithets of the god as a complex semantic network. He identifies the main nodes of convergence within it and analyses the interconnections of its individual semantic fields. For instance, he notes that epithets that associate Zeus with social order are particularly numerous, whereas Zeus is rarely associated with agriculture. His observations on the specific semantic fields formed by the onomastic attributes structure the study into chapters on: the cults of Zeus 'from the peaks to the fields', which includes mountains, mastery over the weather, and finally vegetation and agriculture; 'Zeus presides over social relations'; 'Zeus from the oikos to the polis'; 'Zeus and power: politics, city, sovereignty'. Lebreton clearly and helpfully explains his methodology in the introduction and provides a summary of his conclusions at the end. Of some forty epithets he identifies, nine are related to Zeus' mountainous or elevated position, seven are meteorological, and about a dozen identify Zeus as presiding over various forms of social relations. Even though 'social' epithets are the most numerous, Lebreton sees the epithets signifying Zeus' exalted spatial position as primary and semantically most significant. He illustrates the semantic network, its spheres, and their interconnectedness with a helpful chart, which, for instance, derives the aspects of

¹ *Zeus d'Athènes: polythéisme et paysages onomastiques* (Kernos Supplément, 44). By Sylvain Lebreton. Liège, Presses universitaires de Liège, 2025. Pp. 480. Paperback €35, ISBN: 978-2-87562-439-0.