

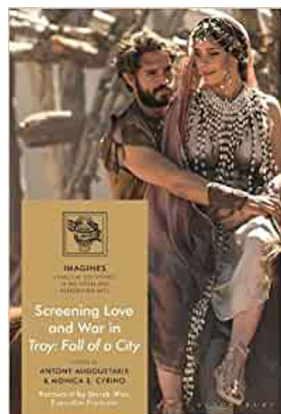
Book Reviews

Screening Love and War in Troy: Fall of a City

Augoustakis (A.), Cyrino (M.S.) (edd.) Pp. xviii + 254, ills. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022. £24.99. ISBN: 978-13501-44231.

Gary F. Fisher

University of Derby, Derbyshire, UK
G.Fisher@derby.ac.uk



Screening Love and War in Troy: Fall of a City is the latest entry into Bloomsbury's *Imagines* series, which aims to develop the scholarly community's understanding of the reception of antiquity in visual and performing arts with a particular focus on 'popular' and 'commercial' media. In this volume, Antony Augoustakis and Monica Cyrino bring together 15 chapters that examine the BBC's and Netflix's 2018 co-produced show *Troy: Fall of a City*.

The chapters are arranged according to three themes: 'Epic Narrative', which considers how *Troy: Fall of a City* engages with its ancient epic sources; 'Cast and Character', which examines how the showrunners cast and portrayed different characters within the series; and 'Tragic Resonances', which investigates the show's relationship with the ancient tragic genre. Chapters examine themes including the development of Helen's costume over the course of the series and its implications for her character, how the show adapts the characters of Ajax and Thersites to promote an anti-war agenda, and the discourse and backlash surrounding the casting of British-Ghanaian actor David Gyasi as Achilles. By selecting a single artefact of reception to scrutinise within this volume, Augoustakis and Cyrino are able to offer a depth of focus commonly lost in edited volumes.

The vast majority of contributors to this volume are academics based at US Higher Education Institutions, although there are also contributions from UK- and New Zealand-based academics, as well as one from the professional world of business leadership and executive coaching. Augoustakis and Cyrino deserve particular approbation for procuring a Foreword from Derek Wax, the Executive Producer of *Troy: Fall of a City*. In his two-and-a-half-page Foreword, Wax offers an insight into the context and motives of the series' production and discusses his thoughts on some of the essays contained within the volume, as well as discussing some of the sources he drew from during the show's production. Though brief, this Foreword is a tremendously valuable artefact in itself,

offering a concise and accessible statement of the production team's relationship with and attitude to their ancient sources. If used in a classroom setting, this Foreword alone could stimulate a rich discussion about the ongoing relevance of the Classics and their adaptability to different contexts and purposes.

Brian Cooke's chapter 'Lessons for Leaders: Destiny, Devotion, and Self-Deception' is also of particular note for the Classics educator. Though he has a background in education, Cooke writes not as a university academic, but as a leadership consultant and executive coach. His relatively brief (ten pages) chapter breaks the mould of traditional academic discourse and examines *Troy: Fall of a City* in the light of modern-day leadership and management strategies and approaches. He explores how Priam demonstrates the trait of self-deception that is so common amongst leaders, shows how the commonly-used management parable of the 'blind men and the elephant' can be used to understand the Trojan decision to move the wooden horse into the city walls, and offers five 'Lessons for Leaders' that can be taken from the show. Although lacking some of the academic rigour of this volume's other chapters, Cooke's contribution is an intelligent analysis of the leadership characteristics demonstrated by the show's characters and a potent demonstration of the ongoing pertinence and relevance of the Classics. One could easily imagine it serving as a stimulant for discussion amongst students within a classroom setting and even, potentially, a useful read for leaders and managers within their schools.

There are, however, some factors that limit the utility of this volume for the Classics teacher. Firstly, as is to be expected for a text of its kind, much of the volume is written in unapologetically academic language. Terms and concepts such as Orientalism, heteronormativity, and transmedia dialogue are introduced without explanation or context, and that is just within Augoustakis and Cyrino's introduction. It is assumed that the reader will already have a confident understanding of the characters and events of Homeric Epic, as well as of adjacent concepts such as the epic cycle and the Judgement of Paris. While this, of course, is the volume's prerogative as a principally academic text, it does potentially limit the accessibility and comprehensibility of *Screening Love and War in Troy: Fall of a City* to younger school students. Secondly, the editors do an effective job of standardising the volume and limiting repetition in each of its component chapters. For example, the volume's first chapter, 'Binge for me, O Muse: Episodes, Books, and Cycles' by Dan Curley, opens by outlining the broadcast schedule that *Troy: Fall of a City* followed. This piece of context is not repeated elsewhere in the volume. While this eliminated repetition has the effect of making *Screening Love and War in Troy: Fall of a City* read cohesively and consistently when taken in its entirety – something edited volumes often struggle to achieve – it may also impede the extent to which individual chapters can be separated out and read in isolation.

These two minor limitations by no means undermine the total value of *Screening Love and War in Troy: Fall of a City* to the Classics teacher and learner. These 15 chapters each offer intelligent, thorough, and original analysis of *Troy: Fall of a City*. Taken as a whole this volume demonstrates the breadth and richness of interpretations that can be elicited by a single piece of 'popular' media. The volume is attractively designed, appropriately illustrated, and can reasonably expect a place in any Classics Department's library.

doi: 10.1017/S2058631022000484