

SHANE BUTLER (ed.), *Deep classics: rethinking classical reception*, London-New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016, ix+347 pp., \$34.95 (pb), ISBN 978-1-4742-6051-0.

Deep Classics: Rethinking Classical Reception is the result of a 2014 conference at the University of Bristol.¹ The volume features 15 chapters, which represent select revised contributions from the conference, with editor Shane Butler's overview of the project serving as an added introduction. The contributions range widely, from case studies of individual receptions including Lecznar on Nietzsche and Joyce and Nooter on Pasolini and Fugard, through to musings on methodology, such as Holmes on the idea of cosmopoiesis. The chapters are unified through a shared integration of Butler's notion of 'Deep Classics', which is positioned as offering, if not an entirely new approach to classical reception, 'then at least a new way of contextualizing some of what we all seem to have been doing, all along' (p. 3). The extent to which the chapters carry out the Deep Classics initiative is inconsistent; however, this is not to the detriment of the individual essays as works of scholarship. Each offers innovative, sometimes provocative investigations into the nature of reception and are all worth the reader's careful attention.

Butler positions the Deep Classics project as something of an intervention into approaches to antiquity's legacy. Published in the wake of both Grafton, Most, and Settis' *The Classical Tradition* and the twentieth anniversary of Martindale's *Redeeming the Text* and his much-popularised notion of a 'chain of receptions',² *Deep Classics* offers a *tertium quid* between 'tradition' and 'reception' which is inspired by the notion of 'Deep Time', a concept which, on the one hand, places us 'face-to-face with almost unthinkable timespans' but, on the other hand, 'confronts us with the no less awe-inspiring *presence* of the distant past' (p. 4). In the chapters that follow, authors explore how and why people, including themselves, have turned their attention to the past, and how that past can be at once an alterity and an immediacy. Unsurprisingly, Butler's own chapter carries out this objective with perhaps the most clarity and cogency, in which he positions Homer's Achilles as the original deep classicist and considers, for example, the simultaneous familiarity and untranslatability of Homer's *oinopa ponton*, both in terms of the literal phrase and in terms of the emotions underpinning Achilles' gaze upon the *oinopa ponton* after the death of Patroclus. A tour of interpretations of the relationship between Achilles and

¹ I joined the University of Bristol in 2015 and had no part in the Deep Classics programme. My employment at Bristol did not overlap with that of the editor of the volume.

² See A. Grafton, G. W. Most, and S. Settis, eds, *The Classical Tradition*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London 2010, and C. Martindale, *Redeeming the Text: Latin Poetry and the Hermeneutics of Reception*, Cambridge 1993.

Patroclus, which provides the backdrop of the former's gaze, demonstrates how, when the past is unknowable, the pose one adopts in its pursuit becomes just as, if not more, revelatory as to its associated meanings.

Despite the breadth of coverage in the subsequent chapters, several recurrent themes emerge. Purves, Slaney, and Frampton, all focus upon materiality, touching upon the haptic imagination (Slaney) through to reading and receiving ancient inscriptions (Frampton). Purves' chapter is a particular highlight; it contains one of the volume's more explicit engagements with the Deep Classics project and encompasses the artwork of Fuseli through to the verse of Homer, exploring how touch grants us a form of access to the past and noting how such 'surface reading' might invite a depth of feeling. Katz and Sissa's contributions share an interest in etymology, with the former interested in how linguistics might foster Deep Classics, and the latter in how the project might facilitate the study of ancient emotions. Richardson, Payne, and Susanetti all share an interest in how ideas of ghosts and haunting inform our study of antiquity. Richardson, for example, posits that prior classicists' interests in spiritualism represents a desire to bridge deep time and are a paradigmatic instance of the past resisting knowability, while Susanetti draws attention to the history of scholarship and how the academic study of antiquity echoes the mythical acts of communing with the dead that are contained in ancient literature. Like Butler, Holmes takes a meta-stance upon classical reception and offers a methodology-focused investigation into what comparatism offers the classics as a form of cosmopoiesis. Her argument in favour of redefining the classical and being alive to a wider range of relationships links Deep Classics to other new directions within the discipline, including the postclassicisms project. It is a shame that the geographical and cultural breadth of what Holmes sees as classics at its boldest and most exciting, 'reaching to Egypt and India and Iraq and China and Brazil, to Assyrian astrological texts and postwar bioethics, to Boileau and object-oriented ontology, to Gemistus Pletho and Moses Mendelssohn and Gilles Deleuze, to John Addington Symonds and Jimi Hendrix' (p. 272), is not reflected in the volume's contents which, like its contributors, are predominantly from the west.

The aforementioned themes represent just a selection of the contributions and the varying dialogues to be found within the covers of *Deep Classics*. The multiple threads that can be followed throughout the collection, in terms of content, form, and methodology, are a marker of the high-quality editorship. Whilst it is still too early to gauge the wider take-up of the approach that *Deep Classics* offers for the study of classical antiquity, the volume's fresh theorisation of reception is very welcome. Students and scholars alike will find much of value in this exploration of what is that we do, think, and feel when we encounter the past.

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