

WARREN (R.) **Sex, Symbolists and the Greek Body**. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020. Pp. 267, illus. £85. 9781350042346. doi:[10.1017/S0075426922001094](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0075426922001094)

Richard Warren's appealing monograph adds to the valuable panoply of books recently published on the reception of classical antiquity in the visual arts of the nineteenth century (for example, Andrei Pop, *Antiquity, Theatre and the Painting of Henry Fuseli* (Oxford 2015) and Kate Nichols, *Greece and Rome at the Crystal Palace: Classical Sculpture and Modern Britain, 1854–1936* (Oxford 2015)). With its focus on the Symbolists' 'understanding and transformation of the classics' (7) the book is, Warren claims, 'the first attempt to give systematic consideration to the erotic reception of Greek art in the painting and sculpture of the Symbolists' (31) from a pan-European perspective. After an introductory chapter, which provides the context and explains the intellectual scope of the book, the volume is divided into three parts: 'The Female Body', 'The Male Body' and the body of 'The Other'. The final, concluding chapter is preceded by a theoretical section which offers an overview of the Symbolists' uses of eroticism and the classics. While the individual chapters all stand alone, they are deftly strung together with the central thesis of the volume. Chapter titles (for example, 'Medusa – as Danger' and 'Faun – as Instinct') aptly guide the reader towards various classical figures which the author associates with specific concepts that illustrate the purpose of the book: to disclose the ways in which the Symbolists used the erotic and the classics as a symbolic means for 'expressing an intended mystic insight or understanding' (7). Warren is able to interrogate further what artistic Symbolism is and to demonstrate that the intellectual milieu of the Symbolists at the turn of the century 'was one absolutely steeped in the classics' (15). The book is complemented by a comprehensive list of links to web images of the works of art under discussion.

Classical reception scholars have long acknowledged that reception is a dynamic process which entails various and intertwined layers of meaning. Simon Goldhill's approach to Laurence Alma-Tadema's *Sappho* (1881) ('The Touch of Sappho', in Charles Martindale and Richard F. Thomas (eds.), *Classics and the Uses of Reception* (Oxford 2006), 250–73) provides a shining example of how such meanings should be deciphered in a Victorian image of the classical past. Warren's analysis of the Symbolists' understanding, and transformation, of the classics carefully scrutinizes many of such layers. The background history of individual artists and works is meticulously contextualized with a complex variety of intercultural and inter-artistic networks. Still, readers might have welcomed a more extensive map of the 'real' bodies of the period that the Symbolists were reflecting in their fantasies. By way of illustration, Warren analyses in full detail various male classical figures as emblems of erotic masculine beauty in chapter 6 ('Endymion – as Idol'), but necessary links to how the performing arts also idolized the beauty of the male body through *tableaux vivants* and circus performances in Europe are not considered in the chapter.

The volume offers an array of different perspectives on the concept of the body. Part Three ('The Other'), in particular, is a treasure trove as it scrutinizes unorthodox encounters of bodies as incarnated in animal, part-animal and monstrous otherness. Warren adds the 'oriental body' to the list of images of the non-human other discussed in this section, which seems an odd association. Conversely, it might have been helpful to see further engagement with the non-human bodies selected for this section, whose single chapter contrasts with the three chapters of the other two parts of the book.

The range of images and primary sources from which Warren draws is large, including authors and works from various European countries. This is both a great asset and a drawback to the book. While the list of web images provided might work for certain formats, readers of the paperback and the hardback might expect to have all discussed images more

at hand, and not a limited selection printed in black and white. Warren nonetheless provides the reader with vivid and detailed descriptions of the works of art he examines which amply compensate for the shortage of images.

Overall, Warren has managed to provide a beautifully written and valuable overview of the Greek body's reception in Symbolist art which perfectly complements his earlier publication on the period, *Art Nouveau and the Classical Tradition* (Bloomsbury 2017). The book is, therefore, a valuable contribution to the growing body of scholarship of classical receptions in the nineteenth century.

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BRYANT DAVIES (R.) **Troy, Carthage and the Victorians: The Drama of Classical Ruins in the Nineteenth-Century Imagination.** Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018. Pp. xix + 383. £90. 9781107192669.
doi:[10.1017/S0075426922001100](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0075426922001100)

Rachel Bryant Davies' monograph takes us on a tour of some of the more dilapidated corners of the Victorian imagination in this study of creative responses to the ruins (or lack thereof) of Troy and Carthage. If there is one thing the Victorians can do, we learn, it is fill in the gaps, sometimes in the most irreverent or surprising of ways.

The book concentrates far more on Troy than it does Carthage, but throughout Bryant Davies encompasses a range of experiences of antiquity across the social scale. While the bulk of analysis falls on a range of popular entertainments, more highbrow debates around the location of the ancient city and its implications for the historical basis of the Bible are key elements of the discussion, allowing the reader substantial insight into the complexities involved in gauging a full picture, not only of the Victorian reception of Troy and Carthage, but the diffusion of antiquity more generally. Starting with an extensive introduction to the conceptual and historical framings that shape this study, chapter 1 makes plain some of the nuances involved. Bryant Davies highlights that the audiences of material which may appear 'popular', such as burlesques and ephemera, included the social elite and well-educated. She explains that the boundaries between both demographics and 'different cultural spaces' were blurred, and that these form 'an overarching discourse about conceiving the past, present and future' (10).

Undoubtedly, it is a tall order for both writer and reader to conceptualise an almost infinitely complex web of influences, allusions and citation. However, Bryant Davies' choice of case studies gives a wealth of routes into this tantalising nexus. Chapter 2 is a timely investigation into debates around the necessity of excavating Homeric Troy. Anyone concerned by the plight of university archaeological departments or interested in how humanities research is communicated to the public will have something to gain here. Bryant Davies analyses the presentation in the contemporary middle-class press of taxpayer funding for these investigations, along with both Heinrich Schliemann's pivotal discoveries and the Romantics' more imaginative communing with the idea of Troy. Spanning more than a century's worth of activity across several countries, this chapter is an impressively detailed introduction to the portrayal of 'Troy's duality, as both "gone" and yet culturally vital' (123).

Chapter 3 presents Philip Astley's circus, identified here as a quintessentially English institution, offering family-friendly productions (126), which presented to packed audiences several 'mythological equestrian burlesques' based on the Trojan War. These entertainments are a far cry from the scientific exertions described in the previous chapter, but