Classical Review

Date of delivery: 03.03.2020

Journal and vol/article ref:

car

CAR20000(&

Number of pages (not including this page: ')

page 1 of 2

This proof is sent to you on behalf of Cambridge University Press.

Authors are strongly advised to read these proofs thoroughly because any errors missed may appear in the final published paper. This will be your ONLY chance to correct your proof. Once published, either online or in print, no further changes can be made.

Here is a proof of your article for publication in the Journal. Please check the proofs carefully, note any corrections necessary and answer any queries on the proofs.

Please then contact Clare Roberts by email, listing any corrections and answering any queries (quoting page and line number) as soon as possible (no later than 3 days after receipt) to:

classicalreview@classicalassociation.org

Your email will be acknowledged, if you have no corrections please email Clare Roberts to this effect.

Note to author: Offprints are not provided, but you will automatically receive a pdf of your article after the publication of the journal.

Classical Review

Please note:

- The proof is sent to you for correction of typographical errors only. Revision of the substance of the text is not permitted, unless discussed with the editor of the journal. Only **one** set of corrections are permitted.
- Please answer carefully any author queries.
- Corrections which do NOT follow journal style will not be accepted.
- A new copy of a figure must be provided if correction of anything other than a typographical error introduced by the typesetter is required.
- If you have problems with the file please contact

caproduction@cambridge.org

Please note that this pdf is for proof checking purposes only. It should not be distributed to third parties and may not represent the final published version.

Important: you must return any forms included with your proof.

Please do not reply to this email

NOTE - for further information about **Journals Production** please consult our **FAQs** at http://journals.cambridge.org/production_faqs

Author Queries

Journal: The Classical Review

Manuscript: S0009840X20000426jbr

- Q1** The distinction between surnames can be ambiguous, therefore to ensure accurate tagging for indexing purposes online (e.g. for PubMed entries), please check that the highlighted surnames have been correctly identified, that all names are in the correct order and spelt correctly.

CLASSICS, MONSTERS AND POPULAR CULTURE

GLOYN (L.) *Tracking Classical Monsters in Popular Culture*. Pp. x + 228, ills. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020. Paper, £19.99 (Cased, £65). ISBN: 978-1-350-10961-2 (978-1-7845-3934-4 hbk).

doi:10.1017/S0009840X20000426

In the burgeoning field of reception studies, thematic studies – whether focusing on a specific historical period, medium or figure – have become a standard format for exploring particular aspects of reception. A monograph on mythological monsters fits comfortably within this current framework and, considering the ubiquity of monsters in both classical thought and modern popular culture, addresses a gap in current academic knowledge (p. 2). G.'s book, moreover, also engages with the recently intensifying academic discourse within Classics concerning ideological appropriations of antiquity, from outright endorsement to abject rejection of the political *status quo*. G. takes a clear stance against the ideologically patriarchal *status quo*, both academically (her book is dedicated to the 'academic precariat') and methodologically ('I am tired of heroes', p. 1). To this end, a feminist methodology, through which she examines classical monsters as often intersectional Others created with the particular purpose of endorsing or questioning the normative in modern popular culture, runs through the book. While G.'s choice of examples from Anglo-American culture from the 1950s onwards may come across as rather random at first, G.'s maintained 'rhizomatic' (i.e. 'non-unitary, non-linear, web-like') approach to what she calls the 'tendrils' or 'manifestations' (p. 24) of myths does tie them together, as does her consideration of genre and medium throughout the book. Explorations of well-known films such as *Clash of the Titans* (both 1981 and 2010 versions), *O Brother Where art Thou* and *Percy Jackson* thus sit alongside telefantasies such as *Hercules*, *Xena Warrior Princess* and *Doctor Who* as well as more obscure books such as Baxter and Reynold's *The Medusa Chronicles* and Fletcher's *Stoneheart*. Scholars of both classical reception and decolonisation will find thought-provoking arguments in G.'s discussions, particularly with regard to the ideological 'monstering' of minority groups. Indeed, G.'s strongest analyses engage with intersectional discrimination (e.g. against centaurs in *Hercules* [pp. 90–1] and *Xena* [pp. 119–23] and the disabled in Womack's *The Double Axe* and Vine's *The Minotaur* [pp. 189–93]) and the rejection thereof (e.g. in the image of Rihanna on the cover of *British GQ* [pp. 163–7]) by zooming in on the connections made between minority groups (whether political, gender, race etc.) and classical monsters.

The monograph can be separated into three parts. The first two chapters explore theoretical frameworks and spaces for monsters. Chapters 3–6 examine various classical monsters in specific mediums of popular culture. Finally, Chapters 7 and 8 offer discussions of Medusa and the Minotaur in particular. The book ends with a conclusion, endnotes and a selective bibliography.

Chapters 1, 'What Makes a Monster?', and 2, 'Classical Monsters and Where to Find Them', while gathering many tendrils to create a suitable methodology to approach classical monsters in modern popular culture, will probably be most contentious among academic readers. Although Chapter 1 provides a helpful overview of methodologies (monster studies as well as anthropological, psychoanalytical and Foucauldian paradigms, leading up to an outline of the feminist approach G. will take), and while I acknowledge G.'s statement that she 'do[es] not aspire to comprehensiveness or universality' in her

approach, I could not help but miss some definition of a 'classical monster', at least within this book, and particularly its differentiation from the 'monstrous' (e.g. p. 12). For in spite of a focus on 'mortal monsters' (p. 3) such as Medusa, the Minotaur, the Sirens or Cyclopes, there are occasional oddities, such as nympholepts (p. 35) and the Titans (p. 115). However, more importantly, most sections underscore the disturbing issue that the 'monstering' of intersectional deviants is a way of corroborating the patriarchal values of a masculine heteronormative humanity. The true 'monstrous' therefore does not necessarily lie in the appearance or even the behaviour of the monsters, but with their creators, whether the anger of fickle Olympian gods or the transgressions of humans. In this light, and in spite of her insistence that classical monsters defy patriarchal classification, I felt the fact that G. provides classical monsters with agency throughout the book – for example, they 'slip and slide in and out of narratives' (p. 33) and 'are happy to move beyond the bounds of classical mythology' (p. 46) – rather out of place, and some further discussion of the connection between 'monster' and 'monstrous' would have been helpful.

Chapters 3, 'Monsters on Film in the Harryhausen Era', and 4, 'Muscles and Imagination: the Modern Peplum and Beyond', engage with classical monsters in Anglo-American cinema since the 1950s. G.'s historical outline demonstrates the impact of Harryhausen's monsters (Chapter 3), which, through the particular cinematography and depiction, provide the 'spirit ... rather than ... an accurate vision of its appearance' (p. 56). For G., this is preferable to the 'heliotropic gaze' (p. 71) of CGI in the early millennial films such as *Clash of the Titans* and *Immortals* (Chapter 4), which paradoxically render monsters less authentic by pinning them down in hyperrealism: 'just another big monster' (p. 66). I am not quite sure to what extent I agree with the lack of tangibility G. finds fault with in CGI monsters (p. 80), but she does persuasively analyse *O Brother where art thou*, *Argo* and *Pan's Labyrinth* as offering more subtle engagements with classical monsters to explore political, sexual, racial and existential anxieties of the time.

Chapters 5, 'Monsters and Mythologies in *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys*', and 6, 'Tripping the Telefantastic in *Xena: Warrior Princess* and *Doctor Who*', move from cinema to TV and explore the narrative challenges for the representation of monsters in a TV series as well as the opportunities provided by the genre, since 'any available material can be reshaped' (p. 138). Chapter 5 is perhaps a little drawn-out and at times reads a little like a catalogue of monsters that occur in various episodes. Nonetheless, G.'s focus on the perceived three phases of the series offers insights into the various functions of monsters in the American historical context, from the quest for a 'new model of masculinity' (p. 96) in the light of the Civil Rights Act and the conflict in Bosnia (phase one), via a monster-light phase reflecting on the monstrousness of monsters (phase two), to an incorporation of the monstrous into 'normal' characters (phase three). Chapter 6 on *Xena*, read in juxtaposition with *Hercules* (like *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, p. 112) puts the previous chapter into perspective, particularly regarding the possibilities of using monsters in telefantasy to open dialogue concerning difficult ideological issues such as racism (pp. 119–24).

Chapters 7, 'Thoroughly Modern Medusa', and 8, 'Lost in the Minotaur's Maze', trace the various 'tendrils' of the Medusa and Minotaur myths in a variety of modern reception, from Young Adult literature via novels, art and the Versace logo to Rihanna. It is an eclectic mix, and there is some overlap of content with earlier chapters, but it is in these chapters that G.'s rhizomatic approach pays off, as it demonstrates which 'nodes in the narrative pathway' (p. 167) are most open to modern re-imaginings, which locate monsters not only in mundane places but also in new monstrous territory, such as technological space. In this way, these chapters demonstrate a useful methodology for further engagement with classical reception in popular culture.

This study thus succeeds in its aim of providing an introductory study of classical monsters in Anglo-American post-1950s popular culture, and it tracks useful methodologies for future studies.

UGent, Belgium

EVELIEN BRACKE Q1
evelien.bracke@ugent.be