



already been extensively discussed (e.g. V. Sage, *The Gothic Novel* [1990]; F. Botting, *Gothic* [1996]; A. Smith, *Gothic literature* [2007]; and M. Aguirre, *The Grammar of Gothic* [2021]), but a more substantial focus on it would help to explain the parameters within which the corpus of works covered in this study was selected. The differences between the reception in Gothic literature of Greece and of Rome would also seem deserving of greater attention, with a view to exploring the opposition between these two cultures that spread throughout the nineteenth century. Finally, there is a need for greater precision in the way in which contributions made by previous studies are acknowledged, as this would help readers to evaluate properly how far U.'s approach is innovative and how far it derives from other works.

This comprehensive volume evinces the powerful symbolism acquired by the classics in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, from political, aesthetic and literary points of view. Furthermore, U.'s work constitutes an excellent way into Gothic literature, highlighting the key authors and the development of the genre over time. Readers approaching it from the perspective of both classical and English studies are likely to find this work an engaging and thought-provoking study that takes us deeper into a topic that is as fascinating as it is challenging.

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ANCIENT EPICS AND CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

IRBY (G.L.) *Epic Echoes in The Wind in the Willows*. Pp. x + 140, ills. London and New York: Routledge, 2022. Cased, £44.99, US\$59.95. ISBN: 978-1-03-210510-9.

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This volume argues that classical intertexts infuse the riverside Arcadia of Kenneth Grahame's children's classic *The Wind in the Willows* (1908). Through thematic chapters I. explores the 'epic echoes' of works by Homer, Apollonius of Rhodes, Aristophanes, Euripides and more, as they connect with the novel. Close readings of how Grahame draws on epic concepts such as heroism, *katabasis*, wit, *xenia*, *aristeia* and *nostos* offer insights into the characters and exploits of the novel.

The book is divided into nine chapters: an introduction, which sets the scene for Grahame's classical background, and thematically organised chapters on 'The Wind in the Willows and Ancient Epic'; 'The Heroic Landscape'; '*Polymetis* and *Polytropos*: Sage Water Rat and "Clever" Toad of Toad Hall'; 'Adventure: the Wine-dark Sea, Motor Cars, and the Sea Rat'; 'Temptation and Oblivion: Lotus-Eaters and Sirens'; '*Kleos* and *aristeia*: Glory and the Battles for the Halls'; '*Nostos* and *Dulce Domum*' and 'Conclusion: the Spirit of Divine Discontent and Longing'. In these chapters, themselves divided into helpfully titled sections, I. identifies classical and epic precedents for aspects of *The Wind in the Willows*. A Homeric scholar, I. knows her classics and uncovers epic parallels that underscore the character and yearnings of the novel's animal protagonists: Toad's ventureful vaingloriousness; Ratty's wit and trickery; Mole's kind

and brave friendship; Badger's commanding sternness. I. finds parallels for the battle at Toad Hall in the *Batrachomyomachia*; and she is at her best in explicating the epic zest that enlivens a children's novel often considered more an Arcadian Idyll than an *Odyssey* or *Iliad*. Her affection for the book and her enjoyment of epic discoveries spill over into lively drawings, such as her illustration 'Toad tied to the Mast' (p. 83), in which she connects E.H. Shepard's original illustrations of *The Wind in the Willows* with the fifth-century BCE Athenian *Siren Vase* (British Museum #1843,1103.31).

Epic Echoes finds Homer's *Odyssey* 'echoing' almost everywhere. Engagingly, we find comparison of Odysseus' longing to return home with the different nost-algias ('longing for return') of Mole, Rat and Toad, and the episode of the Sea-Rat. Amusingly, Ratty resists the song of the sirens while Toad keeps on succumbing. And so on, with one motif of the *Odyssey*, then another. I.'s analysis adds to the picture of *The Wind in the Willows*' classicism: elements such as Mole's visit to Badger in the ruins of a Roman dwelling, or Ratty and Mole's night-time encounter with the god Pan are well known: the epic echoes will be less so, and readers will appreciate learning of them.

No single thesis runs through these recognitions. We hear of a shared 'thematic arc' or an occasional 'foil' or 'filter'. The heuristic metaphors are not explained. The study is more of a personal appreciation of Grahame's work than a source-criticism or biographical study. At the end the question receives brief address: 'Although none of the observations explored here may be singly persuasive, cumulatively they suggest a link between Grahame and classical epic' (p. 129). That link may not be enough for readers who want to know more about the effect or impact of these multitudes of echoes. I. suggests that much of the intertextuality is likely unconscious, but the playfulness observed throughout the novel and I.'s own delightful illustration suggest to us that the author knew what he was doing (especially given his education and record of using classical motifs in his other writings).

Does I. resist pushing a particular line or thesis on her material, so that readers can think about their own hosts of echoes? Perhaps, but the question arises: what do we *do* with all these glorious findings? I. rounds off by characterising *The Wind in the Willows* as a kind of 'reverential meditation . . . on the cusp between Romanticism (where the Classics are idealized), Victorianism (where the Classics are internalized) and Modernism (where the Classics are adapted to innovation and stylistic experimentation)'. A deeper analysis might have engaged further with these ideas, connecting them to *fin-de-siècle* ideas about pastoral, childhood, masculinity and adulthood, and to the impact of Grahame's classicism on the story.

What does it mean, for instance, that epic echoes enliven a children's novel more often considered an Arcadian Idyll than an adventure story? Does the connection to epic support the homosocial qualities of a novel singularly lacking in female characters (apart from the notorious scenes involving Toad's encounters with the bargewoman and her daughter)? The introduction and conclusion situate Grahame's work in the context of his education (as laid out by his biographer, Peter Green, himself a distinguished Classicist) and the context of the late-Victorian and Edwardian turn to Classics, but casting a broader research net might have garnered more insights. Notably lacking from the book is any reference to the growing body of scholarship on children's literature and classical reception, which shows the benefits of thinking about what classical intertexts offer children's literature – not merely as an introduction to the classical world or in-jokes for learned readers, but as part of the storytelling apparatus for children (and the construction of literary childhood). (See, for instance, B. Murnaghan and D. Roberts, C. Nelson and A. Morey, H. Lovatt and O. Hodkinson, K. Marciniak, L. Maurice, and the ERC-funded project *Our Mythical Childhood*.)

Nevertheless, the book offers a convincing exploration of the novel's classical atmosphere and, further, is a valuable addition to the scholarship on Grahame. It also provides an exciting development for classical reception studies in children's literature: namely, a book-length, detailed investigation of classical intertexts in an influential children's novel – a model that we hope will inspire further such endeavours.

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ANTIQUITY IN FILM

MCGEOUGH (K.M.) *Representations of Antiquity in Film. From Griffith to Grindhouse*. Pp. xiv + 378, b/w & colour ills. Sheffield and Bristol, CT: Equinox Publishing Ltd, 2022. Paper, £45, US\$55 (Cased, £90, US\$110). ISBN: 978-1-78179-981-9 (978-1-78179-980-2 hbk).
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With this book, McG. attempts the ambitious goal of tracing 'how films of various genres have shaped our perceptions of Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Holy Land, Greece, Rome, barbarian Europe, and the Maya' (back cover). Not only is the scope of 'antiquity' large, but so is the range of genres represented: epic, comedy, musical, satire, arthouse, pornography, action and fantasy films as well as television mini-series that fit within these genres. The book aims to answer the question of 'how much ... the presence of competing narratives about the past undermine[s] the enterprise of historical thinking, especially when commodified and entertainment driven versions of antiquity offer more appealing versions of the past than those derived from other work' (p. 43). The answer to this question, McG. proposes, is that 'these films, by representing a pretend version of an authentically real time are hiding their roles in instantiating contemporary values as normative' (p. 42).

In the introduction McG. emphasises that film should be considered seriously by scholars of the ancient world because film is frequently how non-specialists encounter antiquity. Because films claim their depictions of the ancient world are 'true', scholars often have to contend with what audiences have 'learned' from seeing antiquity on screen. Chapter 1 discusses film as history, citing movies such as *JFK* (1991) and *Glory* (1989) to show how screen adaptations of history affect audience thinking about these events. The next three chapters are devoted to 1950s and 60s epic films, depicting biblical or Roman stories. Chapter 2 provides a history of the genre as well as stock characteristics. In Chapter 3 McG. argues that historical films are 'really guarded means of asking questions about the present' (p. 86) and shows that they produce political arguments about the relation of the individual to the state. Chapter 4 builds on this line of thought to show how these films also ensconce heteronormative, conservative ideals as 'eternal'. Chapter 5 looks at parodies and comedies that are clearly based on these films and thus make 'similar presentist arguments like the more serious epics' (p. 150). In Chapter 6 arthouse and pornographic representations of the past are discussed as 'a hellish mirror