

Vanda Zajko, Ellen O’Gorman (eds.), *Classical Myth and Psychoanalysis. Ancient and Modern Stories of the Self*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013 (Classical Presences) ISBN 978-0-19-965667-7, £ 75.00.

The book, edited by Vanda ZAJKO and Ellen O’GORMAN, is a collection of nineteen essays (which were previously presented at a conference) and is divided into four parts, preceded by an “Introduction” written by the two authors. In the “Introduction: Myths and their Receptions: Narrative, Antiquity, and the Unconscious”, ZAJKO and O’GORMAN picture psychoanalysis as “an expertise about the self” (p. 3) as well as associate it with “stories” and “narratives”. Psychoanalysis itself is compared to myth, which immediately suggests a strongly postmodern context for the essays¹. The editors observe that it is Jacques LACAN’s version of psychoanalysis which “has dominated the turn to psychoanalysis in classics” (p. 7), and not the theories of Melanie KLEIN or Anna FREUD. However, the interesting question as to why it is LACAN and not other thinkers (among whom many, such as KLEIN, Ernst KRIS, Donald WINNICOTT or Heinz KOHUT, were interested in literature and art), is not raised at all. It is also somewhat tacitly assumed that psychoanalysis is mainly FREUD and LACAN, which was precisely the impression that LACAN tried to give through most of his life, whereas the idiosyncratic character of his views of psychoanalytic theory and practice deserves at least to be mentioned.

Towards the end of the “Introduction” ZAJKO and O’GORMAN, unfortunately, leave the domain of classical scholarship to enter the domain of politics. They say with approval that there are some “scholars” who “are proposing a turn to a ‘new humanism’ in which texts from the past provide a means for creating change in the present and future by resisting any description of the present as inevitable” (p. 16). After this enigmatic remark, suggesting clearly that our studies of ancient texts may/should cause political or social changes, the reader soon encounters a plethora of *gauchiste* idioms, such as “the imposition of colonialist perspectives”, “hegemonies of knowledge” or “unspoken power structures”. At the very end, the editors distance themselves slightly from that perspective, but it dominates the last essay of the book, so I will come back to this issue towards the end.

Part I of the book has the title “Contexts for Freud” and consists of six essays which have more or less to do with Sigmund FREUD’s interest in ancient culture. In “Chapter 2: Freud’s Empedocles: The Future of a Dualism” (pp. 21–37), Bruce M. KING tries to elucidate the way in which the founder of psychoanalysis used the figure and ideas of Empedocles in formulating his theory of the two drives, Eros and Thanatos, in the twenties and thirties of the 20th century. FREUD’s philhellenism and his use of antiquity is recognized in the essay, which ends with a conclusion that the choice of Empedocles embodies FREUD’s (obviously unconscious) attempt to cross boundaries and embrace change and fluidity (pp. 35 f.). It is even suggested that Empedocles himself tried to cross the boundaries of gender when he famously confessed that in previous lives he was already a boy and a girl (DK 117).

Daniel ORRELLS in his essay (“Chapter 3: Freud’s Phallic Symbol”, pp. 39–57) explores the meaning of the phallus in FREUD’s theory and points to the sources that inspired the father of psychoanalysis to develop this theory. ORRELLS shows that FREUD used a work by the 18th century writer, Richard Payne KNIGHT, called *A Discourse on the Worship of Priapus*, as well as a broad range of mythological material, in his famous interpretation of Leonardo da Vinci’s life and art. The author, however, does not stay with the Greco-Roman world, but focuses even more on other

¹ Cf. a similar methodology in R. BOWLBY, *Freudian Mythologies: Greek Tragedy and Modern Identities*, Oxford 2007.

Mediterranean cultures. Even though, for ORRELLS, KNIGHT deserves praise for being “a champion of counter-cultural politics” (p. 57), FREUD himself, as ORRELLS diagnoses him, suffered from severe “misogyny and homophobia” (p. 56), which, of course, stemmed from his Jewishness, whereas the classical tradition represented for FREUD precisely this “counter-cultural” stance.

“Chapter 4: Myth, Religion, Illusion: How Freud Got His Fire Back” (pp. 59–74) is a very fine essay, written by Richard H. ARMSTRONG, the author of a book about FREUD’s reception and use of antiquity². The author observes that FREUD’s late critique of religion in the 20s and 30s was interestingly anachronistic, whereas he tried to avoid what was really challenging in those years, namely the utopian ideologies of Marxism, Leninism, fascism and National Socialism. An enlightenment style attack on religious superstition, for ARMSTRONG, is a defence against dealing with secular utopias and with his “own illusions” (p. 68). The essay is very interesting, but it hardly illuminates FREUD’s attitude towards antiquity – its subject is rather FREUD’s attitude to Judaism and Christianity.

David ENGELS, in “Chapter 5: Narcissism against Narcissus? A Classical Myth and its Influence on the Elaboration of Early Psychoanalysis from Binet to Jung” (pp. 75–95) gives an excellent example of solid reception studies. He shows the “growing distance between narcissism as a technical term and the contents of the classical myth itself” (p. 75), through analysis of the origins of the concept of narcissism in Alfred BINET, Havelock ELLIS and Paul NÄCKE. ENGELS juxtaposes Otto RANK’s interesting deep reading and “re-appropriation” of the myth of Narcissus, which takes into consideration not only Ovid’s version, but also other ones (pp. 81–85), with more limited approaches of FREUD and JUNG. The author concludes that the myth of Narcissus played “only a subordinate role” (p. 94) in early psychoanalysis, in contrast to the Oedipus myth. The essay ends with FREUD and JUNG, leaving the reader with a “desire for more”, since the real explosion of interest in narcissism begins in the 60s and 70s of the 20th century.

The next chapter (“Chapter 6: Who Cares whether Pandora Had a Large *pithos* or a Small *pyx- is*? Jane Harrison and the Emergence of a Dynamic Conception of the Unconscious”, pp. 97–113), written by Vered Lev KENAAN, concerns the history of classical scholarship. The protagonists of the essay are Pandora and Jane HARRISON, one of the founders of the Cambridge Ritualist school, who published a paper on Pandora in the “Journal of Hellenic Studies” in 1900³. HARRISON interestingly traced the mistaken expression “Pandora’s box” back to Lilius Giraldus of Ferrara, who in 1580 wrote about Pandora’s *pulcherrima pyxis*. Pandora, as HARRISON shows, brought not a box, but a large jar (*pithos*), symbolically representing Mother Earth, who contains not only good things but also the ashes of the dead. KENAAN reflects on Pandora’s *pithos* as a symbol of repressed femininity which has been always a riddle in the patriarchal Western culture. It is Pandora the woman who first “introduces the idea of the unconscious into the history of humanity” (p. 113).

Part II of the book is called “Freud and Vergil” and consists of three essays. Gregory A. STALEY (“Chapter 7: Freud’s Vergil”, pp. 117–131) returns to the famous epigraph of FREUD’s *Traumdeutung*’s first edition in 1900, taken from *Aen.* VII 312: “flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo”. The author interestingly associates FREUD, descending into the Underworld of the psyche in order to reconcile himself with his dead father, with Aeneas: “son of a defeated man, a wandering outcast”, who dares to “descend to the Underworld to confront his past, to reunite with his father Anchises, and to foresee his future, which involves founding a new civilization” (p. 120). What follows is an interpretation of Juno in the *Aeneid*, in which STALEY uses Seneca’s reading of Juno as an allegory of anger (p. 126). Vergil’s masterpiece is seen as a story “about founding a civilization through repressing drives” (cf. Aeneas as “terris iactatus et alto [...] dum conderet urbem”, *Aen.* I 3–7).

² R.H. ARMSTRONG, *A Compulsion for Antiquity: Freud and the Ancient World*, Ithaca 2005.

³ J. HARRISON, *Pandora’s Box*, JHS XX 1900, pp. 99–114.

Whereas STALEY does not go beyond FREUD himself, Jeff RODMAN in his essay (“Chapter 8: Juno and the Symptom”, pp. 133–146) presents the first Lacanian interpretation of an ancient text in this book. The author also tries to read “flectere si nequeo...” but in terms of the Lacanian concepts of “enigma” and “citation”. Here the reader can see “Lacanianism in action”: RODMAN’s close reading of one of the last episodes of the *Aeneid* presents Juno as “an incarnation of impossible enjoyment (*jouissance*)” and Jupiter as the paternal Law (pp. 140–143). The author shows how Jupiter grants Juno what she asked for, namely, the elimination of the memory of Troy: not only does Vergil actually replace *Troia* with *Teucra* in the passage from Book 12, but already in the invocation he uses “ab oris [...] profugus”, which (according to RODMAN) can mean not only “from the shores” but also “from the mouth of men”. Jupiter, at the same time, forbids and grants Juno’s desire, functioning as the Lacanian father. The author suggests that both Vergil and FREUD used Juno to represent a repressed defiance (p. 145).

“Chapter 9: *Tu Marcellus Eris: Nachträglichkeit* in *Aeneid* 6, 147–161” was written by Ika WILLIS. It is one of the finest contributions to the collection, at the same time being deeply embedded in French poststructuralist thought. The author presents a close reading of the passage from the *Aeneid* where the life and death of Marcellus is prophesized by Anchises. She also uses *Vita Vergiliana* by Donatus, where Octavia (Augustus’ sister and Marcellus’ mother) is said to “defecisse [...] atque aegre focolata”, when she was listening to the reading of Vergil’s poem. When Octavia fainted, Marcellus had recently died, whereas for Anchises, he was not born yet.

Those two “texts” (Vergil and Donatus, or possibly an historical event) are interpreted in terms of FREUD’s concept of *Nachträglichkeit*, one of LACAN’s favourites. *Nachträglichkeit* means that a past experience A is given a new meaning by a later past experience B, but the connection between them is unconscious. The emotional reaction to A is therefore, at the same time, a reaction to B, even though the subject does not realize. *Nachträglichkeit* breaks the linear nature of time, since, in a way, the future influences the past – the author shows that the same can be seen in Marcellus’ case. His death in 23 BC influences the literary “past” of the *Aeneid*, and Octavia reacts to the “future” of Anchises by reacting to her own recent “past”. Those are not mere speculations on the part of WILLIS – for example, she points out the strange syntax of lines 881 f. In Aeneas’ *quis ille?*, the verb *esse* is absent, as if Marcellus’ existence had already been erased. After the conjunctive *rumpas*, Vergil gives the future indicative *eris*, in this way breaking the linearity of time (p. 160).

WILLIS exhibits the “French” attitude to interpretation – texts generate texts, interpretation is always all about another interpretation etc. She constructs a whole Lacanian “chain of *signifiants*”, where Vergil is reading Marcellus, Octavia – Vergil, WILLIS – Octavia, and the reader – WILLIS’ text. But this is not the end: the boundaries of scholarship and literature are “transgressed” by the author when she describes her experience of her own father’s death and the mourning that interfered with and delayed the submission of the essay. WILLIS identifies with Octavia, recalling her own fainting in the course of her mourning. She also breaks the “unbroken academic prose” with a “* * *” and an enigmatic sentence: “The phone rings. No-one answers” (p. 157). This essay, however, shows that even an eccentric approach, with all its “transgressions” and “subversions” of traditional classical scholarship, can be defended, if only there is some solid, interesting reading of an ancient text.

Part III (“Beyond the Canon”) consists of three essays. In “Chapter 10: The Mythic Foundation of Law” (pp. 165–182), Victoria WOHL interprets the symbolic role of the father in Athenian inheritance law through a Lacanian lense. The essay is an interesting exposition of some of LACAN’s ideas and points out the meaning of the fact that “only if there is an adopted son, there is a lawsuit” (p. 169) – the often rich inheritance, pursued by the son, is associated with the father’s infertility and impotence and with the symbolic meaning of adoption. The author juxtaposes the biological and the symbolic in the field of Athenian law in terms of LACAN’s theory of the symbolic order.

Kurt LAMPE (“Chapter 11: Obeying Your Father: Stoic Theology between Myth and Masochism”, pp. 183–198) also uses LACAN to reflect on the “masochistic dynamics of Stoicism” (p. 193). He analyzes Musonius Rufus (“Whether You Should Always Obey Your Parents”, fr. XVI

82), pointing out the double, often contradictory relationship of a philosophizing son with the real father and the symbolic father Zeus (p. 196). He concludes that a “sort of violent, irrational, and seemingly ‘unStoic’ exhilaration may be a significant part of actual Stoic lives” (p. 198).

In “Chapter 12: Valerius Maximus and the Hysteria of Virtue” (pp. 199–212) Erik GUNDERSON attempts a close reading of a chapter from Valerius Maximus (IX 11), where Valerius condemns an unnamed attempt to kill the emperor (pp. 202–205). The absence of Sejanus’ name gives the author an opportunity to reflect on the “unplaceable place” and “unnamable name” of the one who, plotting against the Caesar, tried to destroy the order of the cosmos. Ultimately, the author suggests that Valerius consciously represents the Roman tradition as the source of morality and law, but unconsciously as something illusory and dead. The baroque rhetorical form is a symptom which reveals that behind the great Roman tradition of virtue there is emptiness and that this emptiness is covered by the annoying display of rhetoric. The Roman tradition in Valerius is like a father who is dead but doesn’t know that, thinking he is still alive (p. 210). The essay is an interesting attempt at searching for deeper, unconscious meaning in the literary form and style.

The last essay in this part is by Paul Allen MILLER, an already recognized author writing about psychoanalysis and classics⁴ (“Chapter 13: Mythology and the Abject in the Imperial Satire”, pp. 213–230). The essay pursues an idea that “the rejection of the mythological in Persius and Juvenal has a symptomatic value” (p. 214). MILLER uses the concept of the “abject” developed by Julia KRISTEVA and looks for the things that “we enjoy [...] even as we – or rather because we – cringe” (p. 221). He interprets Persius’ *Satire 5* (pp. 223–228) in those terms, showing the symbolic meaning of the “Mycenean tables” of mythology (the abject) which are replaced by the “chaste table” of philosophy, embodied in the figure of Cornutus. MILLER draws wider conclusions about the culture of the Imperial period, where the goal is *libertas*, although this is no longer understood as the freedom to do what one pleases, but rather to “make internal distinctions, to separate the self from its internal other, to become human” (p. 229). Because of political changes, freedom lost its Ciceronian meaning and became merely internal freedom. Persius’ and Juvenal’s satires function as a symptom and “literalization” of this process, which, as author claims, can be revealed only through a psychoanalytical reading. MILLER’s essay is one of the best in the book and it shows how Lacanian psychoanalysis can be used to throw light on ancient literature. MILLER, like WILLIS, is not (only?) preaching *gauchisme*, but actually interpreting literature.

Part IV is entitled “Myth as Narrative and Icon”. This section of the book opens with an essay by Meg HARRIS WILLIAMS (“Chapter 14: Playing with Fire: Prometheus and the Mythological Consciousness”, pp. 233–250). What is worth appreciating in this chapter is that the author reaches beyond the canonical, Lacanian version of psychoanalysis and uses British authors such as Melanie KLEIN and Wilfred BION. Unfortunately, the outcome of it is not felicitous, perhaps because the author is not a classicist. She tries to read the *Prometheus Bound* through the lens of poets such as Milton and the English Romantics. As a result the essay is overloaded with references to various authors (within barely two pages we have Milton, Goethe, Coleridge, Shelley, Freud, Klein, Cassirer and Blake...), which does not make the argument clearer. Some attempts at a symbolic reading of Prometheus’ suffering, which might be interesting (Prometheus as a metaphor of mental development), are clouded by astonishing, gratuitous generalizations such as: “This is a sort of reversal of the *Odyssey*, for in *Prometheus Bound* the male protagonist is bound at home while the female part roams the world” (p. 243). (One might think that basically the same could be said, for example, about the second part of the Amor and Psyche tale in Apuleius, which has not much to do either with Homer or Aeschylus.) The conclusion of the essay is also somewhat banal – Prometheus is a figure of man in general, “always evolving through thinking about himself” (p. 250).

⁴ Cf. his *Subjecting Verses: Latin Erotic Elegy and the Emergence of the Real*, Princeton 2004, and *Postmodern Spiritual Practices: The Construction of the Subject and the Reception of Plato in Lacan, Derrida and Foucault*, Columbus 2007.

“Chapter 15: The Ethics of Metamorphosis or a Poet Between Two Deaths” (pp. 251–264), written by Oliver HARRIS, is one of the best essays in the book, which deserves praise all the more because its author is a doctoral student, writing a thesis on antiquity in LACAN’s works. The chapter deals with the presence of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* in LACAN’s Seventh Seminar (published as the *Ethics of Psychoanalysis*) and is focused on the relationships between the *Metamorphoses*, ethics and tragedy. HARRIS refers to LACAN’s concept of Antigone being in the “zone between two deaths” and desiring to die, as well as to Philip HARDIE’s observations that in Ovid’s poem metamorphosis is a state in between life and death, being neither of the two. The author points out the “un-tragic” character of Ovidian *Metamorphoses*, interpreting this as an impossibility of absolute destruction, which, for LACAN, is the “second death” of the tragic hero. The essay ends with the intriguing suggestions that Ovid’s poem not only threatens “to overflow generic boundaries”, but also threatens to have no “hidden” meaning at all (p. 263). Oliver HARRIS’ competence and intelligence, revealed in this chapter, makes one eager to see his doctoral thesis on LACAN.

Jens DE VLEMINCK (“Chapter 16: ‘In the beginning was the Deed’: On Oedipus and Cain”, pp. 265–282) is interested in the problem of aggression in psychoanalysis and myth. The chapter touches upon FREUD’s interpretation of the Oedipus myth, but also presents the views of a Hungarian analyst, Lipót SZONDI, on the “myth” of Cain and Abel. This essay’s value lies in the fact that the reader can learn about SZONDI and his views, but it also displays major weaknesses. First of all, the biblical story of fratricide obviously goes beyond Greco-Roman tradition (whereas the author is curiously silent about Romulus and Remus), but this is not the main problem. DE VLEMINCK repeatedly claims that “Freud one-sidedly reduces human aggression to sexual aggression” (p. 265), which is true only until the year 1920 (the author focuses exclusively on the *Totem and Taboo*). What about the last twenty years of FREUD’s life and his theory of the death drive, which continued to inspire and annoy analysts and non-analysts throughout the 20th century? Lipót SZONDI is presented as someone who overthrew king Oedipus, replacing him with the archetypal, murderous Cain (pp. 281 f.), but it would in fact be impossible to name here all the analysts, ex-analysts or pseudo-analysts who similarly “overthrew” the Oedipus complex, accusing it of being limited or false (ADLER, JUNG, NEUMANN, FROMM, HORNEY, REICH, GUATTARI, DELEUZE etc.), so this remark gives the impression that the author was not familiar enough with later psychoanalytic literature.

The next essay in the book, (“Chapter 17: Aristophanes’ Myth of Eros and Contemporary Psychologies of the Self”, pp. 283–296) by Marcia DOBSON and John RIKER, reaches beyond FREUD and LACAN in order to interpret Aristophanes’ speech in Plato’s *Symposium*. DOBSON and RIKER use Heinz KOHUT and Philip BROMBERG, who would both agree that “psychopathology is to be equated with fragmentation”, but their understanding of psychological processes is completely different (p. 284). Not only do the interpretations offered in this essay not shed any more light on Plato’s famous myth, they also seem to be often erroneous and simply untenable. For example, BROMBERG’s theory entails the fragmentation of the self into many self-states, whereas in the *Symposium* there is only a division into halves (it would be much more fruitful, for instance, to use this concept to read Plato’s description of the democratic man in the *Republic*). In the end, BROMBERG simply seems to have nothing to do with Aristophanes’ speech.

When it comes to KOHUT, one might even accept statements suggesting that we can know how the protagonists of this myth “felt” (according to the authors, they experienced the Kohutian “ultimate sense of oneness with the parent”, p. 291), but certainly not an interpretation in which Zeus “does not promote a calm and reassuring presence in the face of this challenge, but chooses to punish his overweening children” (p. 291). The authors simply ignore the mythical *hubris* of Aristophanes’ protagonists, who try to conquer Olympus, or else they simply have no knowledge of the ancient concepts of *hubris* and *dike*. According to them, Zeus fails to be an empathic parent to his children. In the end, the authors suggest that Plato reduces the Olympian gods to absurdity: “What is left to revere? Perhaps only Eros himself, representing through desire our fundamental human condition: the yearning for wholeness and completion” (p. 295). It is an obvious distortion

of the text, since the very point of Aristophanes' speech is reverence for the gods, especially for Eros (*Symp.* 193 A–D), even though it is presented in a beautifully comic and ironic fashion.

The fifth and final part of the book ("Reflexivity and Meta-Narrative"), offers two essays. The first was written by Mark PAYNE ("Chapter 18: Aristotle on Poets as Parents and the Hellenistic Poet as Mother", pp. 299–313) and is an attempt to reflect on authors' psychological attitude to their works. PAYNE uses both Harold BLOOM's ideas (from *The Anxiety of Influence*), seeing the poet as the son competing with the father, and Aristotle's remarks (in the *Nicomachean Ethics*) about the poets who behave towards their works like mothers towards their children.

PAYNE analyzes three Hellenistic texts – the first is Hermesianax' *Leontion*, a catalogue of the loves of poets and philosophers, the second is Apollonius' apostrophe to his own character, Medea, and the third is Callimachus' episode about Acontius and Cydippe from the *Aetia*. The author demonstrates how the poets are angry at their own creations and treat their characters as mothers would treat their children, revealing "the parental desire for unlimited participation in the life of one's children" (p. 310). The common idea that PAYNE tries to explore is that the authors complain about the character's behaviour as being contrary to the poet's expectations. This intriguing situation, according to PAYNE, manifests itself with unusual explicitness in Hellenistic poetry. He gives an intriguing interpretation – those poets respond "to their characters... [with the] frustration of parents with visitation rights rather than full custody...", because "their fictional inventions belong to a larger family of mythological narratives, sired by the super-poets of the past..." (p. 311). Unfortunately, PAYNE does not develop this interesting view on the relationship of the poets to tradition as it is reflected in their attitude to their own works, but ends the essay with comments on Flaubert and Emma Bovary and Dickens and David Copperfield.

The last essay of the book ("Chapter 19: Listening, Counter-Transference, and the Classicist as 'Subject-Supposed-to-Know' ", pp. 315–329) brings to mind some of the issues that appear towards the end of the "Introduction". This text's presence in the collection is astonishing. The author herself, Page duBOIS, reveals that this essay is in fact "a set of musings on questions that arise when I think about psychoanalysis and myth" (p. 315). This warning should be taken with extreme seriousness, because it is hard to find any coherent plan or any leading idea in the essay.

The author confesses that she is "haunted [...] not only by the long-dead ancient Greeks [...] but also by more recent dead" (p. 317). These "dead" are FOUCAULT and DERRIDA, and in this context it is hard to disagree with Harold BLOOM, who wrote in 1997 that so called "French theory", sometimes referred to in America simply as "theory" (*sic!*), "now dominates the ruined shards of the Anglo-American academic world"⁵. BLOOM saw this as a destruction of literary criticism and, more generally, academic research and education as a whole, a destruction caused by politicizing those studies. Page duBOIS is actually an excellent example of a classicist who became, as BLOOM put it, not a scholar, but "a commissar or an ideologue, Left *or* Right"⁶. Here, of course, Left(ist)⁷.

It is not surprising then that soon the reader hears nothing about antiquity, myths or ancient literature, but a lot about psychoanalysis as a "colonial discipline" (p. 317) as well as about capitalism,

⁵ H. BLOOM, *Anxiety of Influence. A Theory of Poetry*, New York 1997, p. XXV.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. XXII.

⁷ Page duBOIS is an author of a book which, from a certain point of view, seems to be amusing, were it not a sad symptom of the phenomenon described by BLOOM in the nineties. The book, entitled *Trojan Horses: Saving the Classics from Conservatives* (New York 2001) leaves little doubt that the author has chosen a path of an ideologue instead of a scholar. She openly states her purpose – the classics should be taken away from dangerous conservatives who use them to promote: "so-called family values, restriction of women to their homes and requirement of obedience to their husbands, and the dissolution of separation between Christianity and the state, while arguing for homophobia, militarism, xenophobia, and the restriction of immigration" (p. 4). Page duBOIS goes to war, then, and *inter arma silent Musae*.

nationalism, colonialism, patriarchalism and ethnocentrism, which all stem, of course, from oppressive “Judaic and Christian ideologies” (p. 326). The reader, however, should not despair, because the author shows the pathway to salvation: “hybridity, fusion, and diaspora”, “cosmopolitanism, multiplicity, de-territorialization, rupture, disconnection, and heterogeneity” (p. 320) as well as “plenitude, proliferation, enriching variety, and multiplicity” (p. 327). DuBois is also being haunted by other ghosts from the past (which, sadly for classical scholarship, do not want to stay in their graves), namely, Gilles DELEUZE and FÉLIX GUATTARI, who in the seventies published a book called *Anti-Oedipus*⁸, where they preached “schizoanalysis”. It is a way to liberate humanity from the oppression of civilization and culture by means of turning everyone into schizophrenics and thus destroying nuclear “mommy-daddy-me” families, which are the seedbed of neuroses.

The presence of anything connected with ancient culture in this essay is reduced to a set of lengthy quotes from Sappho (fr. 58), from the Homeric *Hymn to Aphrodite*, the *Iliad* and Plato’s *Phaedrus*. It is hard to see what point the author wants to make by juxtaposing these texts, apart from the statement that Eos represents the “devouring mother” in the myth. We learn instead that psychoanalysis “reinscribes those narratives into the Abrahamic, monotheistic, patriarchal family” (p. 325) and DuBois immediately comes back to her revolutionary musings. She does not like ancient Greece and Rome because of the “patriarchalism”, but a Vedic myth – which was quoted at the beginning of the essay (pp. 315 f.) – is also no good, because Hindu culture enforces “the class system” (p. 328).

The essay is filled with banalities and clichés, such as: “we cannot be objective towards the past”, which, once we reject the oppressive Aristotelian logic, leads the author to the conclusion that, as scholars, we simply cannot tell the difference between true and false, accurate and misguided, in our reading of ancient literature. When we study literature, we should listen to the text as the analyst does, “hear with a special attentiveness what is being said or expressed” (p. 328). It is good to be reminded of that, since we, as classicists, usually read inattentively, without paying much attention to “what is being said or expressed”. Soon, however, we learn that, after all, we cannot listen properly, because we should “be listening for difference, for example, to the presence of other forms of identity...”. Towards the end of the essay, after the author has “subverted” the authority of classical philology and other disciplines which study the culture of the past as patriarchal, biased and presumptuous, we meet the true authority at last. It is Judith BUTLER, a radical American lesbian feminist, who calls upon us to destroy the hegemony of “a nuclear, heterosexual family, and a law of the father that produces the superego”, “reinforcing compulsory normative heterosexuality” (p. 329).

I have devoted so much space to DuBois’ essay, even though I think that its presence in any scholarly book is a scandal, because she seems to have been included in the *Classical Myth and Psychoanalysis*, not because her readings of ancient literature are interesting or enlightening, but because she shares the same ideology as the two editors. The presence of this essay in the book, as well as its form and content, is very disturbing, in that the author is not interested at all in reading and interpreting ancient literature by applying any discipline or method. The essay is a manifesto, a political sermon, and scholarship is traded for ideology. For Polish scholars it can be a sad reminder of the time in our history when politics invaded literary criticism, to the obvious detriment of the latter⁹. Even though I may strongly disagree with the political views not only of DuBois, but also of other contributors (WILLIS, ORRELLS, MILLER etc.) and be highly skeptical about applying

⁸ *L’anti-Oedipe*, Paris 1971. English edition: *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, transl. by R. HURLEY, S. MARK and H.R. LANE, Minneapolis 1983.

⁹ However, Jan SOWA and Michał Paweł MARKOWSKI, in a recent discussion, both believe that literary criticism is political, to a greater or lesser extent. The difference between them is that SOWA sees academic work as a part of anti-capitalist revolution (in the Slavoj ŽIŽEK style), whereas MARKOWSKI argues for politics of multiplicity, differences, and relativity, much in a “French” spirit

postmodern, poststructuralist (and other post-) methodologies to the reading of literature, the other essays in the book, with all their “transgressions” and “subversions”, actually provide some new insight into ancient texts and are a solid work of scholarship. DuBois’ essay is none of those things, and if this were the future of classical studies, then it would be a very sad one.

In conclusion, this collection of essays is an interesting book which gives the reader a sense of how psychoanalysis is nowadays being applied in classical studies. It also contains texts valuable for classicists, especially those interested in Latin literature. On the other hand, however, the approach to psychoanalysis here is one-sided (“French”, we might say – cf. a different methodology in the studies of G. DEVEREUX, J. GLENN or R. CALDWELL) and sometimes bordering on ideology. Also the very notion of “classical” is rather vague – it is not explained why the Bible and Middle Eastern mythology should be considered as “classical” along with Plato, Vergil or Persius. The greatest weakness of the book is the uneven quality of the contributions.

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(see J. SOWA, *Humanistyka płaskiego świata*, Teksty Drugie I 2014, pp. 192–207; M.P. MARKOWSKI, *Lewica akademicka: między hipokryzją i iluzją*, ibidem, pp. 208–214).