# **Classical Myth in Alfred Hitchcock’s Wrong Man and Grace Kelly Films**, Mark William Padilla, Hardcover, xl & 371 pages, Lexington Books (2019), $120.00, 978-1498563505.

For most classicists, the films of Alfred Hitchcock are perhaps not the first place to look for traces of “classical reception”. However, sceptics may be disabused by Mark Padilla’s recent monograph, where six Hitchcock films are analysed and discussed from the background of ancient models. Padilla’s main interest lies in the realm of classical mythology and texts connected to mythology (viz., literary myths), and how these stories and texts shaped Hitchcock’s modes of narration and the characters in his films.

The first “triptych” (as the author calls it) deals with films that share the narrative motif of the wrong suspect. The style and the narrative development of *The 39 Steps* (1935) are viewed from the backdrop of Homer’s *Odyssey*; the Parthenon sculptures as exhibited in the British Museum are regarded as models for several characters in *Saboteur* (1942); and *North by Northwest* (1959) constitutes, as the author puts it, “a reception of the Oedipus myth as viewed through multiple lenses” (123; Cambpell, Freud, Nietzsche, and Sophocles).

The second “triptych” incorporates three chapters on films that feature Grace Kelly in the lead role. It is argued that *Dial M for Murder* (1954) reenacts the ménage à trois of Hephaestus, Aphrodite and Ares; *Rear Window* (1954) borrows the plot of the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* as its archetype; and *To Catch a Thief* (1955), finally, does not so much follow the story line of a literary myth, but is based on topics and symbols that are associated with the god Dionysus.

It goes without saying that readers will find certain claims and interpretations more convincing than others; but on the whole, there can be no doubt that this is a book with a sound methodology and (for the most part) valid and (in any case) thought-provoking results. All chapters offer a plot summary of the films discussed, and all quotes from Greek are provided in translation – which makes the book accessible for readers across the disciplines.

If there is a general point of criticism to be made, it is this: Padilla repeatedly attempts to support his claims and interpretations by using evidence from Hitchcock’s classical erudition and his real-life experiences, for example when he states that as “a young London director, Hitchcock lived […] on 153 Cromwell Road” and thus on his way to work he “probably passed through the southeast corner of Hyde Park, site of the large neoclassical structure, *Hyde Park Screen*, erected in 1825” (78). From a reader-response perspective, this sort of connection is only tangentially relevant (if at all).

Padilla’s book can be recommended to classicists and to film historians likewise (and to Hitchcock enthusiasts anyway). Selected chapters may also be used as background reading in advanced courses on classical reception.

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