

THE POLITICS OF THE CLASSICAL: LANGUAGE AND AUTHORITY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

This paper offers a historical sociology of Classics, defined as the product of a form of social action that resists change and relativity by stressing timeless exemplary models of culture. In the nineteenth century, the enduring authority of Classics was eroded by nationalism, vernaculars and historicism. The operation of these cultural formations is analysed in relation to class and gender. The internal fissure between Latin and Greek within Classics is also explored. The emergence of disciplinary Classics is traced through a discussion of institutions and the veneration of academic heroes.

KEYWORDS

*institutions, historicism, gender, cultural transfer,
politics, language, authority, classicising*

For several centuries, the languages and civilisations of classical antiquity occupied an exemplary status in European culture and society. This paper looks at the maintenance of and challenges to this status, and the ways in which its demise led to new forms of knowledge and to new kinds of intellectual authority. It is intended as an exercise in historical sociology.¹

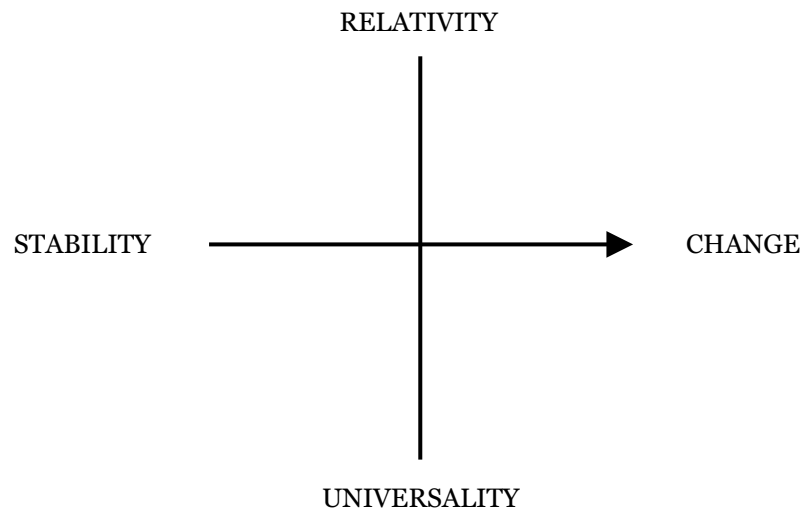
Classics has been with us for so long as a field of study that we may assume that we know what it is. It may be useful, therefore, to de-familiarise it, to ‘make it strange’.² One way to do this is to find out just

¹ This paper is based on a lecture given at a Genealogies of Knowledge conference at the University of Manchester in September 2019. My thanks to Stephen Todd, who invited me to speak at the meeting, and to other participants for their comments; also to the two anonymous referees for this journal.

² On ‘making strange’, see H. Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967). The writings that come nearest to this goal, apart from those of Nietzsche, are those of Sally Humphreys: S.C. Humphreys (ed.), *Cultures of Scholarship* (Ann Arbor MI: University of Michigan Press, 1998), including her ‘Let’s hear it for the magpies’, 1–20; ‘De-modernizing the Classics’, in A. Chaniotis et al. (eds.), *Applied Classics* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 2009), 197–205; eadem and R.G. Wagner, ‘Introduction’, in S.C. Humphreys and R. Wagner (eds.), *Modernity’s Classics* (Berlin: Springer, 2013), 1–19.

when and where the word took on its modern meaning, standing alongside and eventually replacing the older term ‘The Classics’, which referred to the classical authors. My own view is that this happened in about 1838 in the new University of London, an institution in which a plurality of subjects was taught and examined, and each became centrally labelled and commodified.³ But I think we need something more general to achieve defamiliarisation, and my preferred way of doing this is to give a sociological definition of Classics: to achieve distance through conceptual generalisation. ‘Classics’, then, is the product of a form of social action which I will call ‘classicising’, in which exemplary pasts are deployed in the present to maintain stability and universality against change and relativity. The diagram shows the axes of time (horizontal) and space (vertical).

Classicising: Time and Space Axes



³ The term is used in internal discussions on examinations: University of London Archives, Senate House Library, London, ST 2/2/1, Minutes of Senate, 4 March 1837–21 June 1843. The new (teaching) university was inaugurated in 1836 as an umbrella body for London University (which then became University College London) and King’s College. For a discussion of earlier uses of the term ‘Classics’, see E.M. Hall, ‘Classics invented: books, schools, universities and society’, in S.J. Harrison and C.B.R. Pelling (eds.), *Classical Scholarship and its History: Essays in Honour of Christopher Stray* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2021), 38–59.

Stability resists change in time; universality resists relativity in what we could call the spatial dimension. It was in the second half of the nineteenth century that change and relativity began to corrode the authority of Classics in Britain. Up to that point, the dominant past deployed in this way was that of Greek and Roman antiquity. Its only serious rival was Christianity, whose early years of course historically belonged to the same antiquity, but whose later history had had a variety of relationships with it. Greek philosophy was often seen as prefiguring Christianity, but the Romans as persecutors of Christians. The celebrated Hellenist Sir Kenneth Dover once asked his mother what she associated in her mind with the Romans; she answered ‘cruelty’.⁴ In recording this, Dover added that had she had a moment longer, she might have mentioned aqueducts.

In the nineteenth century the authority of Classics was further undermined by the normalisation of change through the notion of historicity, and by the emergence of powerful alternative sources of value, among them nationalism and scientific naturalism, and of alternative subjects of academic study in both the sciences and the humanities. Its declining status led to the characteristically pluralised academic formations of the twentieth century, realising the potential that had first emerged in London in the 1830s, the subject curriculum.⁵ In an interim phase, formally equivalent areas of academic knowledge were seen as exemplified by the rigours of Latin. By mid-century, however, this gave way to the formal parity of all academic knowledge, the exemplary role of Latin having been abandoned.⁶ Now, in the twenty-first century, this formal parity is overshadowed by the *de facto* dominance of STEM

⁴ K.J. Dover, ed., *Perceptions of the Ancient Greeks* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), ix. Dover commented that the association of the Romans with cruelty ‘had been put there by fiction such as *Ben Hur* and *Quo Vadis*’. J.C. Stobart claimed that ‘at the first mention of [Rome’s] name the average man’s thoughts fly to the Colosseum and the Christian martyr “facing the lion’s gory mane” to the music of Nero’s fiddle’: Stobart, *The Grandeur that was Rome* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1912), 4.

⁵ ‘Subject’ can be seen as a short form of ‘subject for study’ (*OED* s.v. *subject* n., B.12). *OED* cites it first from 1805, but the meaning referred to here is best captured in an 1843 citation from the *Penny Cyclopaedia*, ‘An examination for honours is held in each subject...’. Cf. n. 2 above. The *Cyclopaedia* was published by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, a body closely associated with the London University.

⁶ This process was described in my *Classics Transformed: Schools, Universities, and Society in England, 1830–1960* (OUP, 1998), and in Françoise Waquet’s *Latin, ou l’empire d’un signe* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1998), whose spatial and temporal reach was wider, but which was confined, as its title indicated, to Latin.

subjects: science, technology, engineering and mathematics.⁷ Language played an important part in maintaining the authority of Classics, both by facilitating communication within elite groups and by promoting social inclusion and exclusion. Consider the use of classical mottoes, which transmit their messages only to those who are able to decode them. The phenomenon is both named and exemplified by the phrase *Verb sap* — the abbreviated form of a Latin tag which is itself abbreviated by the omission of a verb: ‘verbum sapienti satis [est]’, ‘A word to the wise is enough’. Where knowledge is shared between transmitter and receiver, allusion is sufficient to make a point; and abbreviation is by its nature allusive. It is also sufficient, at the same time, to exclude outsiders;⁸ hence, in mixed environments, to split an audience into those who understand and those who do not.

Let me give an example of the technique in action. A City of London alderman was boasting of the splendours of the Corporation’s official dinners to the early nineteenth-century liberal cleric and wit Sydney Smith. Smith replied, ‘I do not judge them by the test you do’. Now the published report of this exchange does not explain the joke, and is thus itself an excluding text which assumes the competence of the reader. But I take it that the alderman was referring to the turtle soup for which corporate dinners were famous, and that Smith was punning on *testudo*, the Latin for turtle. The report was published by Richard Monckton Milnes, Lord Houghton, a classically-educated author and politician who clearly expected his readers to understand the point of the allusion.⁹

Greek and Latin had been used both for communication and for various kinds of boundary maintenance, including disciplinary separation as well as social exclusion. Together they constituted a symbolic field that was both coherent and internally differentiated. Here the Christian

⁷ The definition of STEM subjects has varied. In the US, the National Science Foundation includes Psychology and Sociology. In the UK, the Department for Education in 2018 excluded Engineering.

⁸ A less opaque example is provided by the US marine Corps motto ‘Semper fidelis’, whose common abbreviation ‘Semper fi’ is well known. Exclusion is often practised via slang and other localised usages: see R.D. Abrahams, *Everyday Life: A Poetics of Everyday Practices* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 48–52. British public-school slangs provide striking examples of linguistic inclusion and exclusion; the richest and densest of these was ‘Notions’, the slang of Winchester College: see C.A. Stray, *The Mushri-English Pronouncing Dictionary: A Chapter in 19th-century Public School Lexicography* (Reading: The Textbook Colloquium, 1996), 2–34.

⁹ Lord Houghton, *Monographs, Personal and Social* (London: John Murray, 1873), 267. The previous owner of my copy of the book certainly took it this way: *testudo* is written in the margin. Cf. the discussion in ch. 3 of *Classics Transformed*, esp. 75–6.

and the classical were mutually reinforcing. To begin with, both Hebrew and Greek were sacred languages, the languages of the Old and New Testaments respectively, Hebrew having more powerful connotations of reverence. These two languages co-existed with Latin and Aramaic in Roman Palestine in the third century CE, when Rabbi Jonathan of Beit Guvrin gave his opinion on their individual functions. He declared that

Four language are appropriately used in the world. And these are: Greek for song. Latin for war. Syriac (Aramaic) for mourning. Hebrew for speaking.¹⁰

The medley of languages in the area is also visible in the naming of Rabbi Jonathan's home town Beit Guvrin, for which the Roman occupiers chose a Greek name, Eleutheropolis.

One might contrast Rabbi Jonathan's statement with that of Ernest Renan, perhaps the best-known French scholar of the nineteenth century, and author of a life of Jesus and of a history of the Jews:

A quiver of steel arrows, a cable of stout links of twisted steel, a brass trombone rending the air with two or three sharp notes — that is the Hebrew. Such a language will not express a philosophical thought or a scientific doubt.¹¹

Another nineteenth century French writer, Gustave Flaubert, included an entry on Latin in his dictionary of platitudes (*Dictionnaire des idées reçues*), giving not his own opinions but the clichés of others. The interest here is in the contradictions:

LATIN Language natural to man. Harmful to good writing. Is useful only for reading inscriptions on public fountains. Beware of Latin quotations: they always conceal something improper.¹²

¹⁰ The Talmud, Y. Megilla I 71b, col. 748. See B. Isaac, 'Latin in cities of the Roman Near East', in *From Hellenism to Islam: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East*, ed. H.M. Cotton et al. (CUP, 2009), 43–72, at 43. For modern Israel, see H. Herzog and E. Ben-Rafael, *Language and Communication in Israel* (London: Routledge, 2018).

¹¹ Ernest Renan, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Henriette Psichari, vol. 6 (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1953), 91. See Renan, *Vie de Jésus* (Paris: M. Lévy, 1863); *Histoire du peuple d'Israël* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1887).

¹² G. Flaubert, *A Dictionary of Platitudes* (London: Rodale Press, 1954), 83. The material was collected by Flaubert, mostly in the 1870s, and published posthumously in 1913.

Here the conflicting sentiments of the different apophthegms show very clearly that this is a repertoire of social hieroglyphs whose code the aspirant bourgeois has not cracked.

Three of the four languages mentioned by Rabbi Jonathan were taught in the college named for them, the Collegium Trilingue established in Leuven in 1517, with which that exemplary premodern intellectual Erasmus was associated from its foundation. Chairs of what the founding statutes called ‘the three holy, learned and classical languages’, Hebrew, Greek and Latin, were founded, and the professors of Hebrew and Greek were given salaries twice as large as that of Latin for the first ten years. The differential presumably reflected Latin’s status as a language essential for communication and pedagogy but, unlike the other two, not sacred — perhaps ‘semi-sacred’ describes it best.¹³

A little later, Regius (royal) Chairs of Divinity, Hebrew and Greek were founded at Cambridge in 1540, and at Oxford in 1546. They have long been described as founded by Henry VIII (hence ‘royal’) but this is now doubted. The evidence for their foundation is very patchy, but the order I have just given seems to have been original. Divinity, after all, was seen as the queen of the sciences, and Hebrew and Greek (in that order) as her servants.¹⁴ Chairs in Physics, Civil Law and Medicine were also founded, but ‘These three subjects — divinity, Greek and Hebrew — were three pillars in the edifice of the new learning. Their place was special.’¹⁵

¹³ See J. Papy (ed.), *The Leuven Collegium Trilingue 1517–1797. Erasmus, Humanist Educational Practice and the New Language Institute Latin–Greek–Hebrew* (Leuven: Peeters, 2018).

¹⁴ In the Philip and Mary statutes of Trinity College (J.W. Clark, *Endowments of the University of Cambridge* (CUP, 1904), 158), Divinity is dealt with in the second paragraph, Hebrew and Greek following in the third. In the section on Chairs in the *Historical Register of the University of Cambridge to the Year 1910* (Cambridge: CUP, 1917), 74–9, the three Chairs are listed in the same order (pp. 74–9), as they are in the comparable Oxford volume: *The Historical Register of the University of Oxford* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888), 46–9. By Henry VIII: D.A. Winstanley, *Unreformed Cambridge* (CUP, 1935), 101. Actually by Thomas Cromwell: Morgan, *History of the University of Cambridge 2* (CUP, 2004) 349–50. Cf. H. Kearney, *Scholars and Gentlemen: Universities and Society in Pre-Industrial Britain, 1500–1700* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1970), 35–6.

¹⁵ F.D. Logan, ‘The origins of the so-called regius professorships: an aspect of the Renaissance in Oxford and Cambridge’, in D. Baker (ed.), *Renaissance and Renewal in Christian History* (OUP, 1977), 271–8, at 277. The order in which Logan mentions the Chairs may be simply alphabetical.

Unlike the other chairs, they were built into the founding statutes of specific colleges: Christ Church at Oxford, Trinity at Cambridge.¹⁶

If we step back from these local or national particulars, we can view European classicising, the use of its exemplary pasts, as a single coherent symbolic field. Here Greece represented an originating, creative source which became politically subordinated and culturally peripheral to a Europe centred on the unifying power of the Latin culture of Rome and the Catholic Church. This made Greece something exotic, powerful but ambivalent: a source at the edge. Reactions against the power of the Catholic Church, above all the protestant reformation of the sixteenth century, emphasised unmediated access to the Scriptures and thus valorised the vernacular via translations. But ambiguities persisted: Latin had become a vehicle of social status, and remained institutionally embedded as a sacred language. In the long sixteenth century, 1485–1603, the Tudors standardised and controlled its teaching as they did that of English and religion. The generalising power of Latin associated with the Church was also adopted by France, which adopted Rome as a source of self-recognition. This in turn led to the oppositional or reactive revalorisation of Greece as a source for nationalist resistance to that power. This was the case especially in Germany, where a weak bourgeoisie and a fragmented political identity made the vernacular unavailable as an ideological source for patriotic campaigns.¹⁷

Vernacular Languages

What was the role of vernacular languages in relation to Latin and Greek? It varied from subservience to rivalry. In the case of Germany, the growth of a vernacular literature in the late eighteenth century led to a German literary canon which was maintained by a process of classicising that rivalled the status of Classics.¹⁸ Here Greek became as so often the patron

¹⁶ Hebrew had died out as a spoken language in the second century CE, to be revived in the late nineteenth century: J. Fellman, *The Revival of a Classical Tongue: Eliazer ben Yehuda and the Modern Hebrew Language* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973).

¹⁷ This paragraph is based on p. 16 of my *Classics Transformed* (1998).

¹⁸ The canon was centred on the work of Goethe, Schiller, Herder and Wieland: P. Hohendahl, *Building a National Literature: The Case of Germany* (Ithaca NY: Cornell UP, 1989). We could compare the assembly of an English literary canon in the period from F.W. Palgrave to F.R. Leavis, the 1860s to the 1920s. For Palgrave, see Christopher Ricks's annotated edition of *The Golden Treasury* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1991); for Leavis, N. Hilliard, *English as a Vocation: The Scrutiny Movement* (OUP, 2012).

saint of the vernacular, and the mutual reinforcement of the two languages could be seen from the 1780s in the development of Greek–German dictionaries, breaking away from a long Greek–Latin tradition. In Britain there is some evidence of a reaction against that tradition in the widely-used anthology *Pentalogia* assembled by the Oxford scholar John Burton. This very popular edition of the three Theban plays of Sophocles, the *Phoenician Women* of Euripides and the *Seven against Thebes* of Aeschylus, provided the Greek text without any Latin crib.¹⁹ In his (Latin) preface, Burton declared that if an adequate translation were available, pupils would use that instead of the text and fail to learn Greek well.²⁰ The prestige of German scholarship in Britain was such that the publication of Greek–German dictionaries served as a legitimating exemplar for the Greek–English dictionaries that began to appear from the 1820s, most famously Liddell and Scott’s Greek–English lexicon of 1843.²¹

One of the most striking aspects of the Preface to the first edition is Liddell and Scott’s defence of their decision to use English rather than Latin for their glosses and explanations. ‘It may be asked’, they write, ‘whether such a Lexicon should not be in Latin, as in the old times; whether the other is not an unworthy condescension to the indolence of the age.’ Their response distinguishes between the needs of a lexicon and of notes to classical authors. The latter, they claim, are best couched in Latin, which has an established technical vocabulary and is universally understood; English, however, is far better equipped to render the ‘richness, boldness, freedom, and variety of Greek words’. They conclude

¹⁹ The selection of plays was probably designed to collect versions of stories about Oedipus and his family.

²⁰ J. Burton, *Pentalogia sive tragoediarum Graecarum delectus* (Oxford, 1758; later editions in 1779 and 1801); Burton’s discussion of Latin translations is on pp. 13–16; he seems to have assumed that any translation would be made by someone else. See R. Darwall-Smith, ‘In the centre and on the periphery: the paradox of Classics in Georgian Oxford’, in R. Darwall-Smith and P. Horden (eds.), *The Unloved Century: Georgian Oxford Reassessed* (forthcoming); T. Charles-Edwards and J. Reid, *Corpus Christi College Oxford: A History* (Oxford, 2017), 238, and P.A. Quarrie, ‘Classics’, *History of Oxford University Press I: Beginnings to 1780*, ed. I. Gadd, 371–84, at 380–1.

²¹ See C.A. Stray, M.J. Clarke and J.T. Katz (eds.), *Liddell and Scott: The History, Methodology, and Languages of the World’s Leading Lexicon of Ancient Greek* (OUP, 2019); on the use of English, chapters by Christopher Stray (‘Liddell and Scott in historical context: Victorian beginnings, twentieth-century developments’, 3–24) and by Margaret Williamson (‘Dictionaries as translations: English in the lexicon’, 25–44).

that ‘A Frenchman may have reason for using a Greek–Latin lexicon; an Englishman can have none’.²²

Liddell and Scott’s distinction between lexicons and commentaries constitutes an intervention in a contemporary debate about the use of English in classical books. This was to become common over the next two decades but in 1843 was controversial, denounced by conservatives as a surrender to modernity and populism.²³ The controversy was largely focused on the language used in schoolbooks, and Liddell and Scott’s preface aims to deflect potential conservative objections by distinguishing between this genre and that of lexicons.²⁴ Two prominent conservative scholars advocating the retention of Latin in schoolbooks were Charles and Christopher Wordsworth, nephews of the poet, who published parallel Latin and Greek grammars. In his autobiographical memoir, Charles quotes approvingly his brother’s declaration that ‘*uniformity in grammar is no inconsiderable step towards uniformity in religion*’.²⁵

In the 1843 preface to their Greek–English lexicon, Liddell and Scott go on to refer to the Greek–German lexicon on which they based their work, that of Franz Passow (first edition 1819–24). It was Passow who had urged that a dictionary entry for a word should tell its history, a principle adopted not only by Liddell and Scott, but also later on by James Murray for the *OED*.²⁶ They also refer to the earlier book by Johann Gottlob Schneider on which Passow had drawn (last edition 1819). Though they do not make the point explicitly, this represents another justification for their decision to use the vernacular: that their German predecessors, working within the dominant European scholarly formation of the era, had followed the same path. The shift to the vernacular

²² H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek–English Lexicon* (OUP, 1843), iii. Both Didot’s edition of Estienne’s *Thesaurus* (Paris, 1831–65) and that of Abraham Valpy (London, 1816–26) had main texts in Latin.

²³ Stray, *Classics Transformed*, 96–104; S.J. Harrison, ‘John Conington as Corpus Professor of Latin at Oxford’, in Pelling and Harrison, *Classical Scholarship*, 155–74.

²⁴ Liddell and Scott, *A Greek–English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), iv n.a. It is worth noting that politically or religiously radical precursors like Gilbert Wakefield, who had planned a Greek–English lexicon in the 1790s, and John Jones, whose pioneering lexicon appeared in 1823, are not mentioned in the 1843 preface: see C.A. Stray, ‘Liddell and Scott: myths and markets’, in id., ed., *Classical Dictionaries: Past, Present and Future* (London: Duckworth, 2010), 94–118, at 102.

²⁵ C. Wordsworth, *Annals of My Early Life 1806–1846* (London: J. Murray, 1891), 186–7: italics in original.

²⁶ J. Considine, ‘John Jamieson, Franz Passow, and the double invention of lexicography on historical principles’, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 75 (2015), 259–79.

in Germany formed part of a wider movement in Europe involving changes of fashion in publishing and the emergence of large-scale dictionaries fuelled by ideologies of romantic nationalism.²⁷ But Liddell and Scott's own choice of the vernacular belonged to a revalorising of English and Englishness which led to the exploration of regional dialects, the study of Anglo-Saxon by John Kemble and others, and the celebration of Shakespeare as a national treasure.²⁸

I have already mentioned the links between the classical languages and religion — the sacred status of Greek, second only to Hebrew. Latin too had overtones of religiosity, if not sacredness, since it was the language of the Church. In the early nineteenth century, the classical and the religious were intertwined in Germany, where the philological seminars of universities developed from earlier seminars in pedagogy which functioned in a theological context.²⁹ Suggestions that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* might have originated as collections of lays created by different poets alarmed conservative theologians, since what could be said of Homer could also be said of the Bible. Similarly, scepticism about such historical sources as Livy's history of Rome invited parallel questioning of sources for the history of Jews and Christians: here the scepticism of Barthold G. Niebuhr was a crucial influence, raising questions of authorship and authority. Hence admiration for German scholarship at times gave way to alarm at its theological implications.

A good example of this mixture of admiration and alarm is provided by the preface to an edition of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* by the conservative classical scholar Thomas Mitchell, published in 1841 by the

²⁷ For publishing, see L. Febvre and H.-J. Martin, *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing, 1450–1800* (London: Verso, 1997); for dictionaries, U. Hass, ed, *Grosse Lexika und Wörterbücher Europa: europäische Enzyklopädien und Wörterbücher in historischen Porträts* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012); cf. J. Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 200–1. The nationalist current also interacted with the tradition of academy dictionaries which had begun in the early seventeenth century: J. Considine, *Academy Dictionaries 1600–1800* (CUP, 2014).

²⁸ Dialects: P. Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional: Antiquarians, Historians and Archaeologists in Victorian England 1838–1886* (CUP, 1986, rev. ed. 2008). Anglo-Saxon: A.J. Frantzen, *Desire for Origins: New Language, Old English, and Teaching the Tradition* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1990), 50–61. Shakespeare: G. Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare: A Cultural History from the Restoration to the Present* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1990), 162–230.

²⁹ Stray, *Classics Transformed*, 25–6; cf. W. Clark, *Academic Charisma and the Origins of the Research University* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

equally conservative publisher John Murray.³⁰ (The reader is warned in advance that this English sentence rivals the longueurs for which English writers often criticised their German counterparts.)

Synoptical views of all that has been done great and glorious in literature since the world began — inquiries ethical, oeconomical, political, all in short that enables nations to become wiser and better — deep investigations into the origin and tendencies of the fine arts; in the drama, searching inquiries as to the great principles on which it is founded — in metre, what are the laws of harmony by which the passions may be excited and regulated — in mythology, by what methods history may be disentangled from fable, and new rules gained for purifying the annals of nations — such are some of the pursuits in which the scholars of Germany* occupy themselves.

The asterisk takes us to a footnote in which Mitchell added: ‘It is perhaps unnecessary to add, that I speak exclusively of the classical literature of Germany; with her disgraceful and offensive productions, her novels and her divinity, I have nothing to do’.³¹

Such cultural chauvinism ran alongside conflicts within Britain over the use of the native vernacular, the use of English being entangled with a range of political agendas. Radicals such as William Cobbett and George Jacob Holyoake engaged in both political and linguistic activity. From the 1790s to the 1840s, the campaign for the respectability of English formed part of their wider campaign for political representation. A long series of petitions to Parliament advocating universal male suffrage, from the 1780s to the 1820s, were rejected as being written in unsuitable language.³² The English grammar produced by Cobbett in the 1810s, and by Holyoake in the 1840s, were written to help working men participate in public debate without being derided for their failure to produce well-formed sentences. The English grammar Cobbett published in 1814 declared its reforming motive in its title: *A Grammar of the English*

³⁰ Mitchell became a family friend of the Murrays. His religious views, surprisingly enough, appear not to have been conservative. After graduating at Cambridge in 1806, he hoped to gain a lay fellowship at his College, but was blocked because one was already held by someone from his old school; he therefore went in 1809, when he gained his MA, to an open fellowship at Sidney Sussex College. This he was forced to vacate in 1812 as a result of refusing to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England. See C.A. Stray, ‘Mitchell, Thomas (1783–1845)’, in R. Todd, ed., *Dictionary of British Classicists*, 3 vols. (Bristol: Thoemmes, 2004), 655–7; G. Goodwin rev R. Smail, ‘Thomas Mitchell’, *ODNB*.

³¹ T. Mitchell, *Sophocles, Oedipus Tyrannus* (London: J. Murray, 1841), v–vi.

³² O. Smith, *The Politics of Language 1791–1819* (Oxford: OUP, 1984), 30–4.

Language, In a Series of Letters: Intended for the Use of Schools and of Young Persons in General; But More Especially for the Use of Soldiers, Sailors, Apprentices, and Plough-boys; To Which are Added, Six Lessons, Intended to Prevent Statesmen from Using False Grammar, and from Writing in an Awkward Manner. Cobbett's examples of bad English were drawn, scandalously enough, from the writings of eminent dignitaries, including the national hero the Duke of Wellington and even King George III himself. In the 1840s Holyoake declared that grammar was as essential to democracy as self-help and Magna Carta, and in 1848 wrote a 'Bill for the better security of grammar' for his Parliamentary Grammar class.³³

Cobbett and his successors saw that grammatical power led to social power. But while they struggled to make English respectable, Latin remained a barrier between mere respectability and something higher. Entrance requirements in Latin and Greek operated to control entry into the public schools, which became important as the major vehicles for the creation of a new social elite. In the 1830s and 40s, as the new railway network expanded, these schools came to serve a national upper-middle class catchment. At Rugby, Shrewsbury, Harrow and their rivals, 'savage boys' were transformed, as Thomas Arnold of Rugby put it, into 'Christian gentlemen', and while Greek formed the crown of a gentleman's education, Latin served as its basis. It was Latin which set this education apart from its immediate inferior — what was commonly called 'a middle-class, or English education'.³⁴

Nation vs Nation

In the 1843 preface to their Greek lexicon, Liddell and Scott supported their preference for English by identifying France as the Other — the French were widely seen as an alien threat in the 1840s and 1850s, when invasion scares were common in England and a series of forts was built on the south coast.³⁵ In France itself an even more explicitly nationalist

³³ This survives as a lithographed MS: British Library 1865 c.1.

³⁴ See E. Hughes, 'Sir Charles Trevelyan and Civil service reform, 1853–5', *English Historical Review* 64 (1949), 53–88, 206–34, especially 219, where Trevelyan is quoted as linking 'the highest achievements of an English Liberal Education', i.e. university education, to higher-status posts, and 'a good English education', including 'arithmetic, book-keeping and *English composition*' [Trevelyan's italics] to the inferior level. Here 'English' is used in two different senses: first, characteristic of England, second, based on the use of English.

³⁵ Cf. C.A. Stray, 'From *odium* to *bellum*: Classical scholars at war in Europe and America, 1800–1924', *Classical Receptions Journal* 10 (2018): 356–75, at 361.

agenda operated. In the late 1820s the Parisian publisher Ambroise Firmin-Didot commissioned a new edition of the *Thesaurus Graecae Linguae* of the sixteenth-century French scholar Henri Estienne, usually known as Stephanus (and in England, bathetically enough, as ‘Henry Stephens’). The intention was to subvert more recent German scholarly supremacy by going back beyond it to the Renaissance, hailing Estienne as a heroic founder and retaining his use of Latin for the Lexicon’s glosses. Liddell and Scott’s reference to the French using a Greek–Latin dictionary is presumably to Didot’s lexicon. Unfortunately the French team which began work on revising the Lexicon made such slow progress that Didot was obliged to seek help from a scholar and teacher in Paris, Charles Benoît Hase. Hase had in fact been born Karl Benedikt Hase in Germany, but had established himself at the *École royale* in Paris as a teacher of Greek, and in 1812 was put in charge of the education of Napoleon’s nephews. Hase brought in two other German classicists, the brothers Karl and Ludwig Dindorf of Leipzig, to work on the project, and the rate of production accelerated, though the last of the Lexicon’s nine folio volumes did not appear till 1865.³⁶ The case of the *Thesaurus* illustrates how the history of fields of study is inflected by the cultural dynamics of nationalism; Hase’s career was investigated in the early work of Michel Espagne and his colleagues in Paris, who have now been exploring Franco-German and other cultural transfers for over thirty years.³⁷ For Didot’s project a community of scholars was set up with a mixture of intellectual, economic and patriotic motives, but its personnel changed in a way that undermined and indeed controverted Didot’s nationalist agenda.³⁸

³⁶ P. Petitmengin, ‘Deux têtes de pont de la philologie allemande en France: le *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* et la *Bibliothèque des auteurs grecs* (1830–1867)’, in *Philologie und Hermeneutik im 19. Jahrhundert*, 2, ed. M. Bollack et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 76–107; S. Maufroy, ‘Pour une étude du philhellénisme franco-allemand. Une approche de la question à partir des cas de Karl Benedikt Hase et de Friedrich Thiersch’, *The Historical Review / La Revue Historique* 6 (2009): 99–127; cf. A.T. Grafton, ‘Speaking volumes’ [review of H. Bloch, *God’s Plagiarist*], *New Republic* 30 Jan. 1995, 36–40. An informal census of the Didot Estienne lexicon in the US and UK shows considerable variation between copies; the bibliographical story is yet to be told.

³⁷ M. Espagne and M. Werner, *Transferts: les relations interculturelles dans l’espace franco-allemand (XVIIIe et XIXe siècle)* (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1988).

³⁸ An unusual case of French adherence to Germanic philology is that of the Lille classicist Jean Bollack (1923–2012): ‘Lire les philologues’, in his *La Grèce de personne: Les mots sous les mythes* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1997), 25–8, where he discusses ‘M. W-M en France’. ‘M. W-M’ is Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1848–1931), the most celebrated German classicist of the early 20th century. For context, see the

Gender

The cultural authority of Classics has been historically entangled with gender issues. The exclusion of girls from formal schooling in the first half of the nineteenth century put them at a disadvantage in attempting to master areas of knowledge conventionally presented in Latin. In the case of post-Linnaean botany, the use of Latin discouraged amateurs, especially women. One of them, Elizabeth Kent, referred in the 1820s to ‘the dead language obstacle, that language, not being generally studied by ladies, [...] has power to scare them from an attempt, of which it leads them to overrate the difficulties’.³⁹ It was not just Latin that was foreign to women; the same could be said of German, the language of scholarship. In fact it was also foreign to most men, and it was reported in the 1820s that only a handful of Oxbridge dons could read German books and articles.⁴⁰ It is therefore remarkable that through the nineteenth century a large number of German scholarly books were translated into English by women. The most famous, indeed notorious example is the translation of David Friedrich Strauss’s critical life of Jesus by George Eliot, the pen name of Marian Evans, in the 1840s.⁴¹ But many more works were translated by women, working at home and publishing with initials rather than first names on title pages, to conceal their gender.⁴² The exclusion of women was rendered visible in public settings where both sexes were present, such as the annual degree ceremony in the Senate House at Cambridge. In 1832 Richard Shilleto went up to the Vice-Chancellor to take his degree, and is said to have recited a Latin poem impromptu. He then remarked, ‘which for the benefit of the Vice-Chancellor and the

spirited account of French classical scholarship, Pierre Vidal-Naquet, ‘Antiquity revisited’, in *Columbia History of Twentieth-Century French Thought*, ed. L. Kritzman (Columbia UP, 2006), 143–9, whose comparison of Bollack and his Lille colleagues to a community of monks is at 146–7.

³⁹ F. Waquet, *Latin, or the Empire of a Sign* (London: Verso, 2001), 238.

⁴⁰ E.B. Pusey, Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford 1828–82, told his biographer Henry Liddon that before he went to Germany in 1825, only two Oxford men knew German: H.P. Liddon, *Life of E.B. Pusey*, 4 vols. (London: Longmans, 1893), 1.72. In fact there were three: M.G. Brock, ‘The Oxford of Peel and Gladstone, 1800–1833’, in Brock and M.G. Curthoys (eds), *The History of the University of Oxford VI: Nineteenth-Century Oxford, Part 1* (OUP, 1997), 38.

⁴¹ D.F. Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu kritisch bearbeitet* (Tübingen: C.F. Osiander, 1835–6); Strauss, *The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined*, 3 vols. (London: Chapman, 1846).

⁴² S. Stark, ‘Between Inverted Commas’: *Translation and Anglo-German Cultural Relations in the Nineteenth Century* (Clevedon, UK: Multilingual matters, 1999), 31–63.

ladies, I will give in the vernacular'.⁴³ Rarely did a woman take the initiative in this kind of setting, but we do hear of a woman addressing the headmaster of Charterhouse school in Greek. He responded by rebuking her, in Greek, for speaking in that language.⁴⁴

When in 1750 Rousseau denounced the Parisian salons in favour of masculine scholarship, he was referring to scholarship practised by men,⁴⁵ but in Victorian England the phrase 'masculine scholarship' referred more precisely to a style of work based on rigorous adherence to linguistic rules, and often contrasted with the aesthetic practice of verse composition. This was widely practised and admired in the period, but seen by some as feminine: Thomas Arnold of Rugby, who was inspired by Niebuhr and steeped in the German tradition of historiography, called it 'a contemptible prettiness of the understanding'.⁴⁶ A generation later, a review of a history of Eton College referred to a recent headmaster's 'sound and masculine scholarship, the want of which was [his predecessor's] chief defect'.⁴⁷

In late nineteenth-century Britain, gendered assumptions of this kind interacted with racial stereotypes. In the examinations for entry to the Indian Civil Service, regulations were constructed to encourage the recruitment of classically-educated Oxford and Cambridge graduates, Indians being discouraged. English gentlemen were contrasted with

⁴³ C.A. Stray, 'The wooden spoon: rank (dis)order in Cambridge 1753–1909', *History of Universities* XXVI/1 (2012), 163–201, at 174.

⁴⁴ H.E. Haig Brown (ed.), *William Haig Brown of Charterhouse* (London: Macmillan, 1908), 160.

⁴⁵ R. Watts, *Women in Science: A Social and Cultural History* (London: Routledge, 2007), 62. For women classical scholars in 18th-century Britain, see P. Wilson, 'Women writers and the classics', in D. Hopkins and C. Martindale (eds.), *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature 3: 1660–1790* (Oxford: OUP, 2012), 495–518. For the 19th and 20th centuries: R. Wyles and E.M. Hall (eds.), *Women Classical Scholars: Unsealing the Fountain from the Renaissance to Jacqueline de Romilly* (OUP, 2016), 153–404; C. Stray, 'Women and Classics in Victorian Oxbridge: parallels and contrasts', in D. Lateiner, B. Gold and J. Perkins (eds.), *Roman Literature, Gender and Reception: Domina Illustris* (London – New York: Routledge, 2013), 252–66.

⁴⁶ M.L. Clarke, *Classical Education in Britain 1500–1900* (CUP, 1959), 79.

⁴⁷ Anon., review of H. Maxwell Lyte, *History of Eton College*, *Edinburgh Review* 146, Oct. 1877, 506. The predecessor was Edward Hawtrey, headmaster 1834–53. The Etonian context included the struggles of an intellectual/aesthetic minority on the staff against the majority of games-mad philistines: see C.J. Dewey, 'Socratic teachers. Part I, the opposition to the cult of athletics at Eton, 1870–1914', *International Journal of the History of Sport* 12.1 (1995), 51–80; 'Part II, the counter-attack', *International Journal of the History of Sport* 12.3 (1995), 18–47.

Bengali candidates, who were seen as effete and effeminate. The introduction of a horse-riding test in the entry examinations has been seen as an attempt to discourage Indian candidates — to separate the men from the girlish boys.⁴⁸ A feature of the Indian Civil Service regulations that might have worked in the opposite direction came with the recognition of Asian languages as ‘classical’: in particular, Persian and Sanskrit. This came as a belated result of the discovery by Sir William Jones in the 1790s that Sanskrit, Latin and Greek were related. Jones’s discovery laid the foundation for a comparative philology with the potential for a decentring of Greek and Latin; this worked directly against the classico-centrism of Macaulay’s famous minute of 1835, which declared that a single shelf of Greek and Latin literature was worth more than the whole of Indian intellectual production.⁴⁹ Among the results was the foundation of largely classical societies in Oxford and Cambridge called Philological Societies — Oxford in 1870, Cambridge in 1871.⁵⁰ Oxford set up a Chair of Sanskrit in 1832 as a result of a large donation; Cambridge followed suit in 1867, but without a donation.⁵¹ By 1900, comparative philology had become detached from Classics, except in the optional subject introduced into the Cambridge classical degree course in 1880, which however remained centred on Latin and Greek.⁵²

Modernity

Some of the issues around the impact of modernity can be seen in the foundation in 1879 of the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies.

⁴⁸ P. Vasunia, ‘Greek, Latin, and the Indian Civil Service’, in J.P. Hallett and C.A. Stray (eds.), *British Classics outside England: The Academy and beyond* (Waco TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 61–93, at 92–3; cf. M. Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The ‘Manly Englishman’ and the ‘Effeminate Bengali’ in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester UP, 1995).

⁴⁹ In the event, however, the disproportionate weighting of marks in ICS examinations toward Latin and Greek stifled this initiative.

⁵⁰ Jones: G.H. Cannon, *The Life and Mind of Oriental Jones: Sir William Jones, the Father of Modern Linguistics* (CUP, 1991); M. Franklin, *Orientalist Jones: Sir William Jones, Poet, Lawyer, and Linguist, 1746–1794* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995).

⁵¹ The relative chronology was similar, but for different reasons, for chairs of Latin: Oxford 1854, Cambridge 1869.

⁵² A Chair of Comparative Philology was founded only in 1931, after a bequest was made to the Faculty of Classics (cf. the Oxford bequest for the Chair of Sanskrit). For the history of comparative philology in Cambridge, see J.P.T. Clackson, “‘Dangerous Lunatics’: Cambridge and Comparative Philology”, in Harrison and Pelling, *Classical Scholarship*, 131–54.

The Hellenic Society, as it is usually called, was the first classical society to be founded for the study of a single subject; its journal, the *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, founded in 1880, was the first classical journal established in Britain which is still published today. In its support for archaeology it dethroned textual scholarship and offered a new vision of Classics — a renaissance in fact — based on archaeology. The local hero who played a crucial role in its foundation was Charles Newton, Keeper of the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities at the British Museum. Newton gave a lecture at the inaugural meeting of the Hellenic Society on 16 June 1879 which was seen as a manifesto for the new archaeological style of classical scholarship; it was printed in full at the beginning of the first volume of the Society's journal. In it, Newton declared that

by Hellenic Studies we do not mean merely the study of texts, grammars and lexicons [...]. The monuments of the Greeks, their architecture, sculpture and other material remains, deserve our study not less than the texts of the classics [...] We all know that without the illustration of ancient art, the texts of the classics lose half their force and meaning [...] and we must bear in mind that the history of the Hellenic language itself may be traced for at least twenty-five centuries.⁵³

The place of the new Society in the symbolic field of Classics was nicely plotted by the Oxford Homerist David Binning Monro in a review of the first volume of the *Journal of Hellenic Studies*.⁵⁴ He pointed out that eleven of its sixteen articles were archaeological, 'classical scholarship' (work on language and literature) being represented by just one article and one review.⁵⁵ He went on, 'The society was brought into existence in London, which is, for obvious reasons, the centre of archaeological study; hence it is dominated by the spirit of the British Museum rather than that of the Oxford and Cambridge lecture-rooms.' Monro expressed the hope that in future the balance would be redressed, since 'if Greek things are to hold their place in the field of study, it will be chiefly [...] through the literature, in which alone the ideas and aims of Greek civilisation find sufficient expression'. This sounds like an old-style linguistic and literary

⁵³ C.T. Newton, 'Hellenic studies. An introductory address', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 1 (1880): 1–6, at 1.

⁵⁴ *The Academy*, 15 January 1881, 38.

⁵⁵ Diplomatically, Monro argued that the undue proportion of archaeology was due to the existence of the *Journal of Philology*, founded in Cambridge in 1868, which confined itself to language and literature.

scholar speaking, and indeed Monro published a Homeric grammar in 1882. As Oxford institutions, he and his grammar were inevitably the subjects of undergraduate jokes, one of which referred to the entry in his Grammar for *λούμαι*, the middle of *λούω*: 'I wash myself. This is comparatively rare.'⁵⁶ But Monro also took account of archaeological evidence in his editions of Homer, and he was clearly comfortable reviewing the archaeological articles in the inaugural volume of the *Journal of Hellenic Studies*.⁵⁷

In his review, Monro quoted the Society's Rules, the first of which declared that its main object would be 'to advance the study of Greek language, literature and art, and to illustrate the history of the Greek race in the ancient, Byzantine, and neo-Hellenic periods'. The new features he finds are first, 'the idea of development, which impels us to look at the continuous history of a literature or a nation, rather than to dwell exclusively on brilliant epochs'. Secondly, 'the idea of science, which tends to put all phenomena on the same level, rather than choose out this or that portion as especially worthy of study'; thirdly, the idea of nationality 'which is satisfied by the long historical life of the Greek people'.

All these ideas are distinctively modern; and their influence may be seen in the province marked out by the new *Renaissance*. That province is not classical antiquity, or even antiquity as a whole; it is best described by the word 'Hellenism' — Hellenism of every period and in every exhibition of its spirit. And the success which has so far attended the movement is due, not merely to the literary *prestige* of 'Hellenic Studies', but still more to the consciousness that what they offer is in a supreme degree the conditions of scientific interest.

A Cambridge scholar offered a more detailed account of the new spirit a few years later: 'the true key-note of the change which has come over classical studies is the introduction of the scientific spirit; and of the reverence for facts, the patient accumulation of facts, the cautious testing of each step which that spirit implies.'⁵⁸

⁵⁶ D.B. Monro, *A Grammar of the Homeric Dialect* (OUP, 1882), 9. One might compare the jokes made about Liddell and Scott's Greek lexicon. In their article on *ἄλοχος*, bedfellow (from *λέχος*, a bed), they explained the initial alpha as 'copulative': Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (1843), 62.

⁵⁷ Monro's editions led to the Oxford Classical Text of Homer, published in 1902 with T.W. Allen.

⁵⁸ A. Tilley, 'The development of classical learning', *The National Review* 4 (1884), 163–76, at 173.

Monro's point about the contrast between development and 'brilliant periods' may have been fuelled by his personal focus on Homer, to whom no more than lip service was paid by those scholars for whom fifth-century Athens was the peak of Greek civilisation. For the Oxford scholar Alfred Zimmern, for example, 'This short half century [was] perhaps the greatest and happiest in recorded history'.⁵⁹ The more fundamental point about development was that it undermined the crucial argument for classical antiquity, that it provides timeless exemplars of value, the core of the type of social action I have called 'classicising'. Once the notion of historical change was introduced, that centre could not hold. Monro's second point referred to another corrosive of the classical ideal: what the late Frank Turner succinctly described as 'the amoral world of scientific naturalism'. As this emerged in the later nineteenth century, it set up a powerful alternative to the world of literary and humanistic value of which Classics had been a central part. Monro's final point, about nationalism, pointed to another serious challenger to the world of universal value which had been manifested in the history of Latin as a European lingua franca which underpinned the *res publica litterarum*. Nationalism, as I have suggested, went along with the shift to vernacular language and publishing, both of which had made significant advances in the eighteenth century. Particularism, then, worked against the universal value seen by so many as exemplified by Classics, the bulwark against change and relativity. Vernacular classicising can be seen, for example, in the celebration of ethnic or regional pasts within Britain. The Celtic past is perhaps the most obvious example of this, and has recently been the subject of considerable research exploring its relationship with classical pasts.⁶⁰

The reference to Latin above points to a faultline in the classical ideal, in which the status of Greek as a patron saint of vernaculars, an exemplar of individualism and freedom, as opposed to the regularity and universality of everything Latin and Roman. And it was this new exemplar that emerged from the later eighteenth century in the form of romantic

⁵⁹ A.E. Zimmern, *The Greek Commonwealth* (OUP, 1911), 195; cf. 367 n. 2. On Zimmern and his book, see P. Millett, 'Alfred Zimmern's *Greek Commonwealth* revisited', in C.A. Stray, ed., *Oxford Classics: Teaching and Learning 1800–2000* (London: Duckworth, 2007), 168–202.

⁶⁰ R. Kaminski-Jones, 'True Britons: ancient British identity in Wales and Britain 1680–1815', PhD thesis, University of Wales, 2017; F. and R. Kaminski-Jones (eds.), *Celts, Romans, Britons: Classical and Celtic Influence in the Construction of British Identities* (OUP, 2020); N. Groom, 'Romantic poetry and antiquity', in J. Chandler and M.N. McLane (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to British Romantic Poetry* (CUP, 2008), 35–52.

Hellenism, and that lay behind the creation of the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies. The values embedded in Latin and in Roman civilisation did not disappear, as Jonathan Sachs has usefully emphasised, but they took second place to the glory that was Greece.⁶¹ One of the most remarkable statements of their relationship was made by J.W. Mackail, an Oxford socialist and son-in-law of the painter Edward Burne-Jones, at the inaugural meeting of the Classical Association of England and Wales in 1904:

While Rome stands for the constructive side of life, Greece represents the dissolving influence of analysis and the creative force of pure intelligence. [...] While Rome has laid down for a realised standard of human conduct, Greece rears aloft, wavering and glittering before us, an unrealisable ideal of superhuman intelligence.⁶²

I referred just now to ‘the glory that was Greece’. This is the title of a once famous book by John Clarke Stobart published in 1911, followed in 1912 by his *The Grandeur that was Rome*. The introduction to the first book carries a remarkably explicit formulation of the idea of classicising that I introduced at the beginning of this paper:

My claim for the study of Hellenism would not be founded on history. I would urge the need of constant reference to some fixed canon in matters of taste, some standard of the beautiful which shall be beyond question or criticism; all the more because we are living in eager, restless times of constant experiment and veering fashions.⁶³

The order of publication of Stobart’s books was significant: Greece came first. Stobart was writing for a new audience which could not be assumed to know Greek or Latin; but he was also trying to give an integrated picture of classical civilisation at a time when he saw scholarship fragmenting into specialisms. As he put it in the preface to *The Glory That Was Greece*, ‘Real students are now like miners working underground,

⁶¹ J. Sachs, *Romantic Antiquity: Rome in the British Imagination, 1789–1832* (OUP, 2010).

⁶² The text of Mackail’s speech was printed in *Proceedings of the Classical Association* 1 (1904), 10–22; the quotations are from pp. 15, 17. For the contemporary context, see Stray, *Classics Transformed*, 229–31; Stray, ‘The foundation and its contexts’, in id. (ed.), *The Classical Association: The First Century 1903–2003* (Oxford: OUP, 2003), 3–22, at 20.

⁶³ J.C. Stobart, *The Glory that was Greece* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1911), 4.

each in his own shaft, buried far away from sight or earshot of the public, so that they even begin to lose touch with each other'.⁶⁴

As with Stobart's books, so with societies, Rome followed Greece. The Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies was founded in 1910, over 30 years after the Hellenic Society. Its founders appealed to the loyalty of 'patriots and professors alike', a formulation which reflected the growth of imperialist ideology from the 1880s.⁶⁵ The foundation of the Roman Society cannot of course help to explain the foundation of its elder sister, but it can certainly throw light on it in a longer time scale, by reminding us of the absence of a powerful enthusiasm for things Roman in 1879.

Institutions

I have been looking at the symbolic field occupied by Classics, and in particular by Hellenism, but we need to remember that such fields operate in relation to institutions, some of which I have just mentioned.⁶⁶ Let me turn back to Monro's statement that

the society was brought into existence in London, which is, for obvious reasons, the centre of archaeological study; hence it is dominated by the spirit of the British Museum rather than that of the Oxford and Cambridge lecture-rooms.

To begin with London, and to return to Charles Newton. Newton held a crucial position in the post-foundation history of the Society. He could be called the first professional archaeologist in Britain; he became the first Keeper of the new Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities at the British Museum in 1861, and in 1880 became the first holder of the Yates Chair of Classical Archaeology at University College London, a post which he was allowed to hold in combination with his keepership. Between them, College and Museum formed a powerful institutional force, maintained in part by their geographical closeness, which in the last third of the nineteenth century built up a centre of scholarship capable of rivalling the long-established institutions of the two ancient universities. Newton was followed by younger scholars like his successor Alexander

⁶⁴ Stobart, *The Glory that was Greece*, v.

⁶⁵ See C.A. Stray, "'Patriots and professors": a century of Roman Studies, 1910–2010', *Journal of Roman Studies* 100 (2010): 1–31 = *Britannia* 41 (2020): 1–31.

⁶⁶ See F. Kermodé, 'Institutional control of interpretation', *Salmagundi* 43 (1979): 72–86.

Murray, the numismatist Percy Gardner, and the palaeographers Edward Maunde Thompson and Frederic Kenyon.

Cambridge witnessed similar developments, its classical honours course, the Classical Tripos, being divided into two in a reform of 1880.⁶⁷ The new Part II was divided into five sections: Literature, Philosophy, Ancient History, Archaeology and Comparative Philology. Its first Archaeology teacher was the German-American Jew Charles Waldstein, a friend of Karl Marx, George Eliot and the royal families of Britain and Greece, who specialised in Greek sculpture. Waldstein's ashes are interred in a glass urn from Herculaneum donated by the Italian government after his death in the bay of Naples in 1929. Here was a true internationalist, though also, like his King's College colleague Oscar Browning, a terrific snob who loved to emphasise his closeness to royalty.

Oxford, by contrast, was dominated by the philosophers and historians who ran its Greats course, the equivalent of Cambridge's Part II. Percy Gardner, professor of Classical Archaeology from 1887, campaigned in vain for the admission of his subject to Greats, though he succeeded in collaboration with Arthur Evans in developing the collections of the Ashmolean Museum. The Museum gave its name to a group of Oxford dons pressing for a shift from collegiate and tutorial teaching to professorial lectures and research; they were known collectively as 'the Museum vote'. This movement arose from the report of a Royal Commission of the 1850s, which had recommended setting up Chairs in several subjects, funded from college revenues. Among them was the Corpus Christi Chair of Latin, named after and funded by the college of the same name, which was set up in 1854. I mentioned earlier that in institutional history and in Stobart's books, Rome followed Greece. So too with chairs, Latin following Greek at a distance of 300 years. This Germanising tendency represented the influence of the authority of *Wissenschaft*, systematic scholarship, transferred from Germany to England. This trend was fiercely resisted in Oxford by the college fellows and tutors who dominated university discussions, and who maintained this dominance up to World War II.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ C.A. Stray, 'Renegotiating Classics: the politics of curricular reform in late-Victorian Cambridge', *Échos du Monde Classique / Classical Views* 42, 449–70 (= *Classics in Britain: Scholarship, Education and Publishing 1800–2000* (OUP, 2018), 108–24).

⁶⁸ The nineteenth-century history can be traced in H.S. Jones, *Intellect and Character in Victorian England: Mark Pattison and the Invention of the Don* (CUP, 2007); for the 20th century, see J. Morrell, *Science at Oxford 1914–1939: Transforming an Arts University* (OUP, 1997).

In 1884 the Cambridge classical scholar Arthur Tilley published an article on the history of classical scholarship from which I have already quoted. In it he described the passing of a long-established tradition of scholarship:

The old type of ‘scholarship’, the name by which we have been accustomed to honour ‘a minute acquaintance with the niceties of two dead languages’,⁶⁹ is rapidly falling away from us. No longer is the skilful emendation of a Greek play the royal road to a bishopric; no longer do grave statesmen and men of learning beguile their leisure moments with doing *Humpty Dumpty* into Latin verse; a classical quotation in the house of Commons is almost an event; a false quantity there falls on unheeding ears. Yet, on the other hand, we have Greek plays, and museums of casts from ancient sculptures, and Hellenic societies; and Professor Jebb says that ‘probably the study of classical antiquity in the largest sense has never been more really vigorous than it is in the present day’.⁷⁰

Who was ‘Professor Jebb’, who appears to need no introduction? The Greek scholar Richard Jebb was the most celebrated classical scholar of late Victorian England, famous for his complete edition of Sophocles, which brought him a knighthood in 1900. He was also MP for his university, and became the leading champion of the Humanities in national and parliamentary debates; in 1905 he was awarded the Order of Merit. In a Romanes Lecture he gave at Oxford in 1899, Jebb stated that

Within the last fifty years, many special branches of classical study have either sprung into existence, or become more methodical; comparative philology; epigraphy; palaeography; archaeology. [...] In quite recent times, the exploration of ancient sites [...] has yielded results of

⁶⁹ The quotation is from Hartley Coleridge’s life of Richard Bentley, in his *Lives of Illustrious Worthies of Yorkshire, &c* (Hull: J. Noble, 1835), 66. Tilley was referring to the Porsonian tradition of minute linguistic scholarship: see Stray, ‘The rise and fall of Porsonism’, *Cambridge Classical Journal* 53 (2007), 40–71.

⁷⁰ Tilley, ‘The development of classical learning’, 163. Bishopric: see A. Burns and C.A. Stray, ‘The Greek-play bishop: polemic, prosopography and nineteenth-century prelates’, *Historical Journal* 54.4 (2011), 1013–38. ‘Humpty Dumpty’ probably refers to Henry Drury, whose published collection included his own Latin elegiac version of the rhyme (H. Drury, *Arundines Cami, sive Musarum Cantabrigiensium Lusus Canori* (Cambridge: Deighton Bell, 1841), 110–11). Greek plays were produced from 1882 in Cambridge, which was also the home of a cast museum opened in 1884. Both plays and museum belong to the emergence of the supra-textual formation discussed above. Jebb is quoted from his *Bentley* (London: Macmillan, 1882), 223–4.

fascinating interest. All these developments have lent new life and freshness to classical studies generally; they have given a new reality to antiquity. The ideal of humanism has thus been reinforced in a manner which brings back to us something of the spirit of the Renaissance. [...] For the enthusiasm of the Renaissance was nourished by the monuments of classical art scarcely less than by the masterpieces of classical literature. [...] But the very progress made in recent times has brought us to a point at which the larger aims of humanism become harder to harmonise with the new standards of special knowledge.⁷¹

Jebb went on to suggest that the competing claims of humanism and special knowledge could be reconciled by a degree course which began with the study of classical literature, then went on to specialised courses. As should be clear from my earlier reference to it, he was in fact describing the classical honours course of his own university, the Cambridge Classical Tripos. What he did not say in his Romanes Lecture was that he was becoming alarmed at the extent of the specialisation in the second part of the Tripos. Just how alarmed is evident from his response to a letter from the Secretary of the new British Academy, Israel Gollancz. The Academy was organised into specialist sections, and Gollancz suggested that Jebb should join the Philology section. In his reply, Jebb asked if he could join the section of History and Archaeology as well. His letter ended,

I have long felt that the extremely rigorous specialisation fostered by part II of the Classical Tripos has had the effect of narrowing our scholarship and partitioning the field in a rigid manner which has scarcely a parallel in any other University. I do not want to see this view of literary studies [...] reproduced in the Academy.⁷²

In the early twentieth century the authority of Classics was further eroded by two new developments. One was the fragmentation of scholarship to

⁷¹ R.C. Jebb, *Essays and Studies* (CUP, 1907), 524–5. The passage, from Jebb's 1899 Romanes lecture at Oxford, echoes a statement in the preface to his *The Attic Orators* (1876), 1.xv, which I identified, I now think mistakenly, as the source of his 1907 text in my 'The rise and fall of Porsonianism', *Cambridge Classical Journal* 53 (2007): 40–71, at 64 n. 78.

⁷² R.C. Jebb to I. Gollancz, 15 Dec. 1902: see C.A. Stray, *Sophocles' Jebb: A Life in Letters* (Cambridge Philological Society, 2013), 254. Section A (literature) of Part II of the Tripos was at first compulsory, but was made optional in 1895. At first there was no limit on the number of sections which could be chosen, and a few candidates gained distinctions in three, but in 1892 a maximum of two was imposed. No candidates achieved distinctions in more than one section after 1894.

which Jebb referred, and which Stobart denounced a few years later in his books on Greece and Rome. The other was the marginalisation of Classics in British culture, symbolically marked by the abolition of compulsory Greek requirements for Oxford and Cambridge in 1920, followed in 1960 by a similar move for Latin.

The first years of the Hellenic Society coincided with the emergence in Germany of what Theodor Mommsen in 1890 was to call *Grosswissenschaft*, big scholarship.⁷³ This was the age of large-scale collaborative projects like the *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum*, the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* and the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*. These were funded by the five German-speaking academies, four in Germany and one in Vienna. These were the grand enterprises referred to by the celebrated Hellenist Wilamowitz in a letter to his friend Hermann Diels as ‘DMWissenschaft’, a term interpreted by the editors of this correspondence, doubtless thinking of epigraphic evidence, as ‘Dis manibus wissenschaft’. They were clearly thinking of the common inscriptional abbreviation on graves, *D M S*, that is, *Dis manibus sacrum*, sacred to the spirits of the dead. The problem is that this makes no obvious sense. Much better sense was offered by Robert Fowler in a review of the edition: ‘Dampfmaschinewissenschaft’, ‘steam-engine scholarship’, a vivid evocation of the industrial scale of *Grosswissenschaft*, large-scale scholarship.⁷⁴ These enterprises, as Suzanne Marchand has pointed out, involved specialisation and hierarchy, and thus the suppression of the individual personality whose cultivation lay at the heart of the older ideal of *Bildung*.⁷⁵ The new modern form of classical scholarship threatened to destroy the individual self-fashioning basis on which it had been built.⁷⁶

⁷³ This use of ‘big’ in the 20th century is not surprisingly confined to science: see D. de Solla Price, *Little Science, Big Science* (NY: Columbia UP, 1963).

⁷⁴ M. Braun, W.M. Calder III, and D. Ehlers (eds.) ‘Lieber Prinz’. *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Hermann Diels und Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1869–1921)* (Hildesheim: Weidmann, 1995). Fowler’s 1997 review is online at *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* (BMCR) 97.3.13.

⁷⁵ S.L. Marchand, *Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750–1970* (Princeton UP, 1996), 75–115, at 76.

⁷⁶ A wider perspective on Classics and modernity than I can attempt here would need to take account of the analyses in S.C. Humphreys and R. Wagner (eds.), *Modernity’s Classics* (Berlin: Springer, 2012). For a taste of Classics and postmodernity, one might begin with work by Don Fowler: a review essay in *Greece and Rome* 1993, 226–30, and his postscript to C. Martindale and D. Hopkins (eds.), *Horace Made New* (CUP, 1993), 268–75.

Disciplinary Heroes

The new disciplinary formation of classical scholarship did in fact look back to past exemplars: these were not classical writers, but classical scholars. Inspiration came not just from Greece and Rome, but more immediately from the scholars of the Renaissance and later who founded the discipline of Classics.⁷⁷ In Britain, this commonly involved reverence for the triptych of Bentley, Porson and Housman. These three are the subjects of Charles Brink's 1986 book *English Classical Scholarship*. Brink, born Karl Levy in Berlin in 1907, was the youngest of the Jewish classicists who ended up in Oxford after fleeing Germany in the 1930s. He converted to Anglicanism and married an Englishwoman, and his book might be seen as a product of the process of going native. I mention Brink because he is among the last representatives of the grand tradition of German scholarship which as we have seen had previously been so dominant. In the nineteenth century it was the great exemplar for British scholars; in the twentieth many of its practitioners (of whom about 20 percent were Jewish) fled from Germany to Britain. We thus have a 150-year history of Germano-British interaction with three stages: the absorption of the tradition of *Altertumswissenschaft* in the early nineteenth century, the influence of the developed system of professoriate and seminar in the second half of the century, and the influx of refugee scholars in the 1930s.

The most famous scholar of the pre-refugee generation was Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, professor of Greek at Berlin, who died in 1931. He was widely regarded as the model of a classical scholar, and it has been suggested that a footnote referring to his work has been seen as almost mandatory for an article published by a classical scholar. The suggestion comes from the American scholar Steve Nimis, in an article published in 1984 entitled 'Fussnoten: das Fundament des Wissenschaft', where he refers to the 'Wilamowitz footnote' as an archetypal example.⁷⁸ The title of Nimis's article, which is in fact in English, can be translated

⁷⁷ See C.A. Stray, 'Disciplinary histories of Classics', *History of Universities* 29.1 (2016): 112–34. A. Anderson and J. Valente (eds.), *Disciplinarity at the Fin de Siècle* (Princeton, 2002) discuss a range of disciplines which does not include Classics.

⁷⁸ S. Nimis, 'Fussnoten: der Fundament des Wissenschaft', *Arethusa* 17 (1984), 105–34. It may be worth mentioning that in 1872 the young Wilamowitz issued a pamphlet attacking Nietzsche entitled *Zukunftphilologie!* ('The philology of the future!'); Nietzsche's friend Erwin Rohde replied with *Afterphilologie* ('Philology my backside').

‘Footnotes: the basis of scholarship’.⁷⁹ The focus on the footnote belongs to a world in which the authority of Classics is exercised within a largely self-enclosed sphere of professional scholarship — a far cry from the clouds of cultural glory which surrounded it in earlier centuries. To find classical scholars who have engaged in the public sphere, we have to go back to Gilbert Murray and his pupil and successor in the Oxford Chair of Greek E.R. Dodds, who between them held it from 1908 to 1960. Murray was a leading figure in the League of Nations, the precursor of the United Nations; Dodds in postwar German educational reconstruction.⁸⁰ Both had visions of a reformed Oxford curriculum, and both were heavily involved in investigating the paranormal. Both were excellent scholars, yet also more than scholars. The marginalisation of Classics in British culture makes it unlikely that we shall see their like again. And yet in the current century we can see examples in Britain of classicists as public intellectuals, albeit of a different kind. The use of print, radio and television to bring classical culture to mass audiences, developed in different ways by Moses Finley and Kenneth Dover in the 1970s and 1980s, has been pursued by their successors, notably by Mary Beard, who has herself investigated Finley’s achievement in this sphere.⁸¹

Conclusion

In this paper I have offered a sociological definition of Classics as the product of a form of social action I have called classicising, which sets up exemplars of thought and action taken from antiquity, and defines them as valid for all space and all time. The exemplary status of Classics, however, was eroded in the nineteenth century by the emergence of historicism, vernacular nationalism and competition from new knowledge. The resultant process of marginalisation began with the retention of Latin as exemplary academic knowledge in a pluralised curriculum, and ended with the collapse of that final bridgehead in the early 1960s. Since then,

⁷⁹ It has been suggested that he was playing on an alternative meaning of ‘fundament’, that is ‘backside’, but Steve Nimis has assured me that this was not in his mind when he wrote it.

⁸⁰ For Murray, see M. Ceadel, ‘Gilbert Murray and international politics’ and P. Wilson, ‘Gilbert Murray and international relations’, both in C.A. Stray (ed.), *Gilbert Murray Reassessed: Hellenism, Theatre, Theatre, & International Politics* (OUP, 2007), 217–60; for Dodds, D. Phillips, ‘Dodds and educational policy for a defeated Germany’, in C.A. Stray, C.B.R. Pelling, and S.J. Harrison (eds.), *Rediscovering E.R. Dodds: Scholarship, Education, and the Paranormal* (OUP, 2019), 244–63.

⁸¹ M. Beard, ‘Finley’s Journalism’, in D. Jew, R. Osborne and M. Scott (eds.), *M.I. Finley: An Ancient Historian and his Impact* (CUP, 2016), 151–81.

Classics has entered a new phase in its history, after the collapse of the social and institutional linkages which maintained its cultural authority for so long. This new era has called forth new accounts of Classics which look forward as well as back, and are rooted in temporality rather than eternity.⁸²

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⁸² For representative examples, see N. Morley, *Why Classics Matters* (Cambridge: Polity, 2018), and The Postclassicisms Collective, *Postclassicisms* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020).