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Classics in Education after 1880

Matthew Arnold's lecture 'Literature and Science' (1882) identifies the 'ideal' version of the Victorian study of Greek and Roman antiquity as 'knowing the Greeks and Romans, and their life and genius, and what they were and did in the world; what we get from them, and what is its value'. Such an understanding of classical culture and its reception in the modern world is 'more than a knowledge of so much vocabulary, so much grammar, so many portions of authors, in the Greek and Latin languages.'¹ In his allusion to the prosaic reality of memorising grammar, vocabulary and fragments of classical texts chosen more as examples of style than content, Arnold articulates a dissatisfaction with the established methods of classical teaching that his audiences in British and American universities might well have shared. 'Clearly something went profoundly wrong with the study of the classics in the nineteenth century', writes Gilbert Highet in 1949, noting how frequently even genuine lovers of classical culture complained of the dull and repetitive lessons they endured at school and university. For example, in a class on Homer at Yale in the 1883-4, the tutor 'never changed the monotonous routine, never made a remark, but simply called on individuals to recite or to scan, said "That will do," put down a mark; so that in the last recitation in June, after a whole college year of this intolerable classroom drudgery, I was surprised to hear him say, and again without any emphasis, "The poems of Homer are the greatest that have ever proceeded from the mind of man, class is dismissed"'.² Even as Arnold lamented the alienating effect of the text-based grind, innovations in learning and teaching classics were developing both inside and outside educational institutions. By the early years of the twentieth century, the idea that it would be possible to know who the Greeks and Romans were, and what they did, was reinvigorated by classicists exploring new areas of study, and by translators who sought to ensure that classical texts would be available to all readers.

Between the 1870s and the 1920s, the idea of classical education changed in response to social, economic and cultural pressures. Gradual developments were accelerated by the impact of the First World War, after which Greek became an increasingly rare and specialised subject in schools and universities; students continued to need at least a few years of Latin to secure a university place until the 1960s. The place of the classical languages in secondary education was threatened by those who believed that science should be a priority. In the context of advances in science, industry and international trade, subjects such as chemistry, physics, economics, political philosophy and modern languages were easier to justify as part of a modern education than Latin and Greek. At the same time, scientific methods facilitated the development within classical studies of new approaches based on anthropology, linguistics and comparative religion. Higher emphasises the nineteenth century's unprecedented accumulation of knowledge about classical antiquity and the increasing availability of such knowledge. In 1814, he asserts, a man could master 'the whole of classical knowledge'; a century later he might own ten times as many classical books and have access to fifty times as many in an academic library but could not know 'all that was to be known about Greece and Rome'. Classical knowledge had developed 'along dozens of divergent lines, too varied and specialized for anybody to master them all'.³

In Britain, the increasing diversity of classical studies in the second half of the 19th century is clearly shown by reforms to Cambridge's Classical Tripos and Oxford's *Literae Humaniores*, the two most notable classical honours courses. The Tripos was reorganised into a two-part structure, with a traditional emphasis on translation and prose and verse composition in Part I, designed to test accurate linguistic knowledge: Christopher Stray observes that Cambridge scholars prided themselves on the 'close linguistic analysis of texts', in a style influenced by the 'relationship between classics and mathematics'.⁴ Students could be awarded a degree having taken only Part I. In 1887, Agnata Frances Ramsay, a student at

Girton College, achieved the highest mark in the Cambridge classical Tripos, and was the only student to be placed in the first division of the first class. As a woman, she was not officially a member of the University and so was not awarded a degree, but her achievement reached a wider public through George du Maurier's cartoon in *Punch*. Ramsay was represented entering a railway carriage marked 'First Class – For Ladies only', and her triumph was all the more notable as it was in Part I of the Tripos. The optional Part II reflected the broadening of professional knowledge in classical studies: literature (compulsory until 1895), philosophy, history, archaeology and comparative philology.⁵ A scholar such as Jane Ellen Harrison could take advantage of new opportunities to integrate 'archaeological, ethnological and sociological theories into Hellenic studies' despite her 'deficiencies in literary-linguistic knowledge'.⁶ Nevertheless, the idea that serious scholarship meant philology remained dominant. In 'The Continuity of Greek Culture', one of his provocative lectures on *The Oldest Dead White European Males* (1982), Bernard M. W. Knox describes his own experience of studying Greek at school, and then at Cambridge in the early 1930s. His training was typical of the period, 'rigidly linguistic in emphasis', and apparently designed to produce 'scholars who could write near-perfect Platonic prose and correct (but dull) Sophoclean iambic verse.' Knox comments that his tutors had no interest in modern Greek, a subject that was thought to be useful only for archaeologists, as it might interfere with the pure prose style learned from practising composition in ancient Greek.⁷

After 1850, an Oxford classics degree had two parts: Honour Moderations, based on literary and linguistic studies, followed by philosophy and ancient history, or Greats.⁸ Classical literature, philosophy and history were treated not as antiquarian interests but as the vital sources of modern thought. Iain Ross suggests that that Oscar Wilde's habit of drawing analogies between ancient and modern authors was encouraged within the Oxford classical curriculum: one of Wilde's examinations included a discussion of Aeschylus, Shakespeare,

Walt Whitman and Aristotle's *Poetics*.⁹ Linda C. Dowling connects the development of the tutorial system (fostering close relationships between tutors and students) and the increasingly tough curricular requirements of the 1850s and 1860s with influential tutors who worked to replace 'narrowly grammatical and rhetorical training' with 'the full range of philosophical and historical implication within the Greats texts'. Benjamin Jowett used Plato's *Republic* as basis for 'transforming Oxford into a school for national and imperial leaders'.¹⁰ Jowett also maintained connections between the university with the wider world, with weekend parties that brought Oxford together with 'poets and Prime Ministers.'¹¹ Although the Oxford curriculum was a useful preparation for literary or public life, classical scholars found that they needed to supplement their training by attending German universities: Henry Nettleship spent four months in 1865 going to lectures in Berlin and discovered that while Oxford had taught him 'to read the classics, to translate them on paper, to think and talk about them, to write essays on them' he had learned 'next to nothing' of 'the higher philology, of the principles and methods of textual criticism'.¹²

A. E. Housman's progress from a failure in Oxford Greats in 1881 (after a promising undergraduate career) to a chair in Latin at Cambridge underlines significant differences in the universities' approaches to classical studies. Housman's inclinations towards the Cambridge method left him awkwardly placed in Oxford. He achieved a first in Moderations, the part of the degree devoted to language and literature, but was uninterested in the ancient history and philosophy of the Greats syllabus, and devoted his time to private study of Propertius. Norman Page suggests that Housman should still have been able to pass the translation papers, and failed in philosophy because he wrote 'practically nothing', whether from overconfidence, contempt for the Oxford establishment or distress over his father's illness.¹³ F. W. Bateson argued in 1968 that no student 'with Housman's command of Latin and Greek could possibly have failed to scrape through Greats in 1881, when standards were

decidedly lower than they are today, unless he had *wanted* to be ploughed.’¹⁴ Housman left Oxford with a pass degree; he spent the next eleven years working at the Patent Office and establishing such a distinguished reputation for scholarship that his successful application for a chair in Latin at University College in London was accompanied by a booklet of testimonials from notable classical scholars.¹⁵ An anecdote about Housman’s University College lectures on Horace’s lyrics suggests that he kept a stern focus on text, syntax, prosody and a little commentary, and was embarrassed by his emotional aberration when he once spent five minutes discussing a poem as poetry.¹⁶ By moving to Cambridge, Housman completed the decisive rejection of the Oxford style that characterised his complicated classical career. His 1911 inaugural lecture set up a contrast between Cambridge’s ‘scholarship with no nonsense about it’ and Oxford’s misguided inclusion of literary appreciation into classical studies.¹⁷ Later assessments of Housman’s work by critics such as J. P. Sullivan and Edmund Wilson emphasise that supremacy in the traditional field of textual criticism (following the example of Bentley and Porson) might be considered a limitation when contrasted with the opportunities opening up in classical studies at the time. Wilson describes ‘the modern English classical scholar of the type of A. W. Verrall or Gilbert Murray’ as a ‘critic not merely of texts but of the classics in their quality as literature in its bearing on history. This school [...] sometimes merges with the anthropology of J. G. Frazer; and it deals with ancient Greece and Rome in relation to the life of its own time, restates them in terms of its own time.’¹⁸ By comparison, Highet dismisses Housman’s painstaking attempts to establish the original text of Propertius, Juvenal, Lucan and Manilius as ‘ultimately a glorified form of proof-reading’.¹⁹

Some of the classicists whose influence on a wider culture is most apparent are those who promoted the translation of classical texts. Gilbert Murray, in his inaugural lecture as Professor of Greek at Glasgow in 1889, supported the use of translations, asserting ‘There is

more in Hellenism than a language, although that language may be the liveliest and richest ever spoken by man'.²⁰ Murray's own translations are praised by Gilbert Highet, who argues that there was a conflict in the Victorian period 'between scholarship and literature, between knowledge and taste', resulting in a series of 'dull' or even 'excruciatingly bad' translations by classical scholars with a 'killing touch'. In contrast, Highet commends the 'interesting and vital ideas' coming from 'amateurs' such as Matthew Arnold, Andrew Lang, Samuel Butler and T.E. Lawrence.²¹ It was precisely Benjamin Jowett's lack of pretensions to great scholarship as it was defined in his era, E. F. Benson suggests, that enabled him to focus on a practical aim, the production of 'readable English versions of exceedingly interesting books, which gave very fairly the sense of the original.' Aware of his tendency to translate inaccurately, Jowett had his translations of Thucydides and Plato's dialogues 'carefully revised by other scholars' including students like A. C. Swinburne.²²

That there was abundant enthusiasm for classical studies outside the universities was clear from the success of University Extension teaching, which might enable working-class men and middle-class women to prepare for university entrance requirements when their formal schooling proved inadequate. A former student of Jowett's, John Churton Collins read English literature in his leisure time rather than as a subject for study, yet he developed a preoccupation with literary influence and came to believe that ancient and modern literature must be studied together. Following his experience of lecturing for University Extension societies and coaching classics graduates to enable them to pass the English Literature part of the Indian Civil Service exams, Collins campaigned for English literature to be recognised as an academic discipline and to be added to the curriculum at universities. He insisted on the connections between classical and English literature.²³ Others wanted the academic study of English to focus on philology or Anglo-Saxon, the model that enabled Cambridge reformers to give their English course the 'appearance of strenuousness and difficulty proper to a

serious branch of study'.²⁴ Collins was appointed Professor of English in 1904 in the recently instituted School of English Literature at Birmingham University, and his experience of extension teaching informs his published lectures, *Greek Influence on English Poetry* (1910). Collins speaks of an era of 'great change' in which men and women pursue education 'collaterally with the hard work of adult life', and there is a need for a 'clear conception' of 'civil liberal education', based on 'Literature, Philosophy and History, rationally and intelligently defined and interpreted'. His thinking is noticeably Arnoldian when he speaks of 'the best poetry, the best rhetoric, the best criticism', identifies Greek texts as 'the best' that can be offered, and argues that the influence of the Bible over British culture should be balanced by making Greek thought as available to the masses as to the educated.²⁵

Concerns about extending higher education to students who would not previously have been admitted to university were accentuated by the evident difficulty of assimilating students whose secondary education had not prepared them for the philological emphasis of a traditional classical education. Many of the middle-class women who first established the women's colleges that gradually gained acceptance and ultimately membership at Oxford and Cambridge were the sisters or wives of university men.²⁶ Emily Davies, the founder of Girton, Cambridge's first college for women, required her students to take the same examinations as their male peers even though they would not be awarded degrees. Several Girton students went on to become classics lecturers at women's colleges such as Girton and Newnham, Bedford College and Royal Holloway (London), Somerville and Lady Margaret Hall (Oxford). For women's colleges, the greatest challenge was to provide intensive coaching to make up for the lack of ten years or more of grammar, syntax, memorisation and translation of set texts. Claire Breay observes that in those girls' schools that did offer instruction in the classics, 'Greek was often sacrificed to the cause of a broad curriculum. Although Latin was usually retained, girls were generally not taught it until they were twelve,

whilst Greek was not begun until the age of fifteen, if at all.' Boys began Latin at 8 and Greek at 12, and devoted between 12 and 15 hours per week to classical studies, compared with 3-7 hours in girls' schools.²⁷ Vera Brittain wrote self-deprecatingly to a male peer (who had given up a prestigious classical scholarship to fight in the First World War) about her rapid and relatively superficial preparations for the Pass Mods preliminary examination.²⁸ Still more difficult was the requirement to write Latin and Greek prose, and tutors at women's colleges often decided that teaching verse composition would take too much time away from other preparation for examinations. Breay notes that Helen Magill, who arrived at Cambridge in 1877 with a PhD in Greek from Boston University, was better prepared than her female peers but still ended up with a third-class degree because she omitted the verse composition papers and did poorly in prose composition.²⁹ In Part II at Cambridge, women students might choose to explore areas such as archaeology, which called for skills other than linguistic accuracy.

One of the most contentious issues at Oxford and Cambridge was the abolition of 'Compulsory Greek' in preliminary examinations for students pursuing courses in subjects such as law, history or sciences. The proposal to give students the option of substituting another subject for Greek in the Previous Examination, or 'Little-Go',³⁰ was raised in the 1870s at Cambridge, passionately debated and defeated in 1903 and finally resolved with relatively little controversy in 1919. Judith Raphaely explains that the debate surrounding compulsory Greek raised questions about the role of a university and its relationship to schools, other universities and the Church of England. In 1878, for example, headmasters of prominent schools and notable intellectuals such as Matthew Arnold, Thomas Carlyle, Charles Darwin and T. H. Huxley signed a memorial asking for the abolition of a Greek requirement that excluded 'a large and increasing number of able and deserving students from the benefits of a University Education'.³¹ Some of the fiercest opponents to such a

change were not classical scholars but Cambridge-educated clergymen, who wished to preserve the principle that all Anglican clergy should be able to read the New Testament in Greek. These non-resident MAs mobilised in sufficient numbers at each vote to delay abolition for forty years, but in the postwar world ‘the needs of a greater section of the nation were widely accepted as important.’³² The debate in Oxford followed a similar pattern, with the abolition of Compulsory Greek in 1920 (only a few weeks after women had been admitted as full members of the University). Some commentators feared the end of Oxford’s reputation for classical learning, and were not slow to blame women (and scientists) for the ‘death-blow to classical learning in Oxford.’³³ A correspondent who signed himself ‘Onlooker’ noted that 300 years of ‘Greek Philosophy, Greek and Latin Literature, and Greek and Roman History’ at Oxford had come to an end, and prophesied darkly:

Year by year fewer schools will teach Greek, fewer classical scholarships will be offered, and fewer classical scholars will come up; till at last we are face to face with study of the Drama without Aeschylus or Sophocles, of Poetry without Homer, of History without Thucydides, Philosophy without Plato or Aristotle [...]. Translations are sorry substitutes indeed.³⁴

Not all classicists lamented the prospect of abolishing compulsory Greek: Gilbert Murray, for example, argued that he wanted students to choose classical studies rather than being compelled to undertake them. Some suggested that rote-learning passages to fulfil the Greek requirement had little to do with a serious study of the classics, and tutors who were relieved of the obligation to prepare all students for Responsions would be able to focus on more specialised work. A letter published in the *Oxford Magazine* asserts that students with years of classical schooling behind them did not find these examinations difficult to pass, and

‘should not be called upon to sacrifice the best part of an extra year which might be devoted to studies which have at any rate the interest of novelty.’³⁵ Before the First World War, as Elizabeth Vandiver observes, a boy who had received a traditional classical education might have read ‘large selections of Aristophanes, Caesar, Demosthenes, Euripides, Herodotus, Homer, Livy, Lucian, Lucretius, Ovid, Sallust, Theocritus, Thucydides, Virgil, and Xenophon’.³⁶ Many of the prospective students who chose to go to war in 1914 instead of to university, some of whom wrote Greek and Latin as fluently as English, would have found the first year at least easy and repetitive. Robert Graves quotes a disparaging comment made by a Charterhouse School contemporary who, like Graves, was accepted to study classics at St John’s College, Oxford: ‘we have spent fourteen years of our lives principally at Latin and Greek, not even competently taught, and now we’re going to start another three years of the same thing’.³⁷

Neither at Oxford nor Cambridge did the disadvantages that compulsory Greek created for women or other non-traditional students carry the debate; the impact of the First World War on the education of boys forced a shift in priorities. The dominance of classics in the curriculum was already decreasing by the turn of the century. In 1860, 26 of the 32 masters at Eton had taught classical subjects, but by 1905 classicists made up only half of the teaching staff.³⁸ When young classics masters went to the war, there were few qualified to take their places. The study of Greek in schools never returned to its pre-1914 status, and ‘classics other than Latin became largely the preserve of the public schools’.³⁹ The more immediately accessible study of Latin continued to perpetuate a sense of class identity, while Greek was ‘choicer fare’, a marker of particular exclusivity.⁴⁰ After the Second World War, there was pressure to reduce the amount of time allocated to Latin in grammar (selective state secondary schools) and public schools. Oxford and Cambridge continued to require entrants to have passed an O-level qualification in Latin until 1960.⁴¹ In 1968 46,000 candidates (the

majority approximately 16 years old) took O-level Latin, and 6,500 A-level (at 18, in their final year of secondary school). By 1979, the numbers were 33,000 O-level candidates and 3,000 taking A-level Latin.⁴²

The development of classical education in America has many similarities with Britain's, with decisive changes often originating in periods of postwar reassessment. The Civil War was 'the great turning point', after which subjects such as engineering, economics and science were prioritised for their relevance to contemporary issues.⁴³ Laurence R. Veysey notes that continual conflict and debate over the purpose of the university and the kind of leadership it required furthered the development of higher education in America. If 'the American university of 1900 was all but unrecognizable in comparison with the college of 1860', many of the 'visible changes lay in the direction of concessions to the utilitarian type of demand for reform.'⁴⁴ At the beginning of the period covered by this volume, access to classical learning was relatively widespread: Craig Kallendorf observes that classical education was central to college education in America from the foundation of Harvard in 1636 until the 1880s, and that students in colleges and preparatory schools spent half their time on Greek and Latin.⁴⁵ Carl J. Richard writes of the antebellum period as the golden age of the classics in America, an era in which classical discourses were used in the way that the 'founding generation' had used them, 'to communicate, to impress, and to persuade', and to create 'a sense of identity and purpose'. At the same time, the influence of the classics was expanding 'far beyond the narrow confines of the eastern aristocratic elite, affecting new economic classes and geographical regions', as an exponential increase in the number of schools and universities made Latin and Greek available to the middle classes. Frederick Rudolph argues that pre-war efforts to devise 'an American alternative to the classical college' intensified after the conflict, with the demand for practical courses of study that would help in the reconstruction of the South.⁴⁶

Defenders of the classics argued that learning Latin and Greek trained students in habits of mental discipline that could be applied to any other subject, and that grammar was intrinsically useful. However, teaching methods were no more inspiring in American colleges than in England: it was hard to find competent professors when the work was largely dull hearing and grading of memorised recitations, with little attention to ancient history or culture.⁴⁷ Nicholas Murray Butler, who later became the president of Columbia College, recalled his own experience of studying classics in 1879 with a Greek professor whose teaching was ‘of the dry-as-dust type which has pretty nearly killed classical study in the United States’, characterised by insistence on minute details of grammar and not allowing students to develop a sense of ‘the beauty and larger significance of the great works’. He recalls that in one term of his sophomore year, his class read only 246 lines of a single play by Euripides, and ‘never came to know what the *Medea* was all about or to see either the significance of the story or the quality of its literary art’. In Latin, he was taught by the ‘pedant’ Charles Short (who boasted of his ‘thoroughness’ in contributing entries for the letter A to the Lewis and Short lexicon, leaving the rest of the alphabet to his co-editor), and complains that Short’s attention was always drawn to the ‘less important aspects’ of the authors they studied. Despite Butler’s disappointment in the classical teaching on offer at Columbia, he praises an adjunct professor, Augustus Merriam, for inviting students to join a voluntary class on Homer, in which they learned to read Greek fluently and enjoy the story at the same time.⁴⁸ Writing in 1945, Herbert Newell Couch laments the passing of ‘grammatical orgies for their own sake’, but acknowledges that the discipline was harmed by the strict insistence on philology. Critics continued to attack ‘grammatical methods and minutiae’ long after they ceased to represent the reality of classical studies ‘in all save specialized philological courses’.⁴⁹

Edwin Cornelius Broome's comparison of the entrance requirements in the academic year 1869-70 (for Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Columbia, Cornell and Michigan) gives an idea of the amount of classical reading expected of applicants to elite universities.⁵⁰ At Harvard, for example, students were examined in 'the whole of Virgil', Caesar's Commentaries, eleven orations of Cicero (from Folsom's edition), Latin grammar and prosody, and Latin grammar. In Greek the examination was based on 'Felton's Greek Reader' (written by the Eliot Professor of Greek at Harvard),⁵¹ Xenophon's *Anabasis*, Books I-III of Homer's *Iliad* (omitting the catalogue of ships), Greek grammar, prosody and writing Greek 'with the accents'. The other universities' requirements are strikingly similar (Harvard is unusual in requiring the whole of Virgil – 6 books of the *Aeneid* plus the *Eclogues* and *Georgics* is typical), apart from the addition of Sallust at Princeton and Yale. Broome observes that the requirements increased substantially between 1800 and 1870, and that the amount of reading 'became very definitely specified.' Between 1870 and 1900, the range of specified texts sometimes included additions or substitutions, such as sections of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* replacing passages from Virgil. Broome also notes an increasing emphasis on 'sight translation', and comments that both the wider range of set texts and the inclusion of previously unseen passages for translation demand a 'mastery of the subject'. Changing university entrance requirements therefore 'revolutionized both the aims and the methods of teaching classics in the preparatory school'.⁵² The high-school curriculum began to influence university entrance in the twentieth century, when schools began to award diplomas based on subjects such as modern languages, applied science, agriculture, domestic science and manual training, and Western state universities were the first to admit students with such diplomas.⁵³ Caroline Winterer describes a shift in secondary education by which the traditionally 'masculine' classical curriculum was replaced by the sciences, and girls began to outnumber boys in the study of Latin (a subject needed by those who wanted to become

teachers themselves). In 1915, Latin was still one of the most popular high-school subjects, with enrolments exceeded only by English, history and algebra; Greek, on the other hand, was 28th in a list of 30 subjects. 45 years later, Latin had lost its privileged status in American high schools, making up only 7% of enrolments (the numbers continued to decline, reaching 1% in 1978).⁵⁴

The 1880s and 1890s saw the ‘Battle of the Classics’, an intense debate over the abolition of Greek and Latin entrance requirements. This battle was largely fought in the universities of the eastern states, and those that took in middle- and upper-class students from private high schools maintained their requirements the longest.⁵⁵ Harvard was one of the first institutions to offer alternative courses of study. The system of electives was introduced to allow students to broaden their education without setting up a false opposition between science and humanities subjects.⁵⁶ The system of electives and the idea of liberal arts worked to enable an expansion from a classical base (Greek, Latin, mathematics, philosophy, science and English) to a wider range of subjects by 1900.⁵⁷ Advanced mathematics and physics as were seen as worthy alternatives to Greek, despite protests from the presidents of Yale, Brown, Dartmouth, Williams and other elite colleges in the North East, who argued that students who graduated without studying Latin and Greek had not really earned a Bachelor of Arts degree.⁵⁸ Harvard’s President Charles William Eliot pressured the faculty to give up required freshman courses in Latin and Greek from 1884, and then the Greek entrance requirement in 1886-7. His influence made it possible for students to enter one of the country’s most prestigious colleges without Greek, and Harvard attracted students from public schools while Princeton or Yale remained largely the preserve of privately-educated entrants.⁵⁹ Columbia ceased to require Greek for entrance or for graduation in 1897; in 1900 the Latin entrance requirement was also removed, but those students who entered without Latin had to study it for three years. These innovations enabled a substantial expansion of the

student body.⁶⁰ Samuel Eliot Morison notes that ‘the average student who entered Harvard College before 1900 had already studied Greek for four, Latin for six, and Mathematics for ten years; he had already been given a fair classical education, whether he had prepared at an endowed school like Exeter, Andover or St Paul’s, or at one of the excellent classical high schools of the era’. Such students could take full advantage of the freedom offered by Harvard’s system of electives. However, they were not the only ones affected by the abolition of the compulsory study of the classical languages, which Morison calls ‘the greatest educational crime of the century against American youth – depriving him of his classical heritage.’⁶¹ Yale’s President Timothy Dwight responded to Harvard’s removal of the Greek entrance requirement by stating that Yale would take the opposite approach, returning to an earlier and more stringent standard.⁶² By 1903, however, students no longer had to study Greek at Yale.⁶³ The institutions that had protested against Harvard’s abolition of Greek requirements gradually made similar concessions. Williams abolished Greek entrance requirements in 1894, but retained Latin as a compulsory element of the BA degree for the following forty years. Preceded by Princeton, Yale, Bryn Mawr and Amherst between 1930 and 1932, Williams was one of the last colleges in America to stop requiring students to take Latin.⁶⁴

A notable development after the Civil War was the expansion of education for women, in public high schools, women’s colleges and coeducational universities. Some women writers studied classics: Willa Cather attended the University of Nebraska between 1890 and 1895, spending the first year catching up on the entrance requirements before matriculation. Later she taught Latin at a Pittsburgh high school before pursuing a literary career. Hilda Doolittle, later known as the poet H.D., began studying Greek literature at Bryn Mawr, but left after a year with failing health and poor grades in mathematics. Caroline Winterer observes that the definition of high culture as the opposite of business and industry (and

therefore as a province for feminine values) contributed to a 'feminization' that was particularly noticeable in higher education, so that by 1910 'women made up 40 percent of collegians in America, up from just 21 percent in 1870.'⁶⁵ As in Britain, the founders of women's colleges had to decide whether to establish academic credibility by showing that their students could succeed in a classical curriculum for which their secondary education had inadequately prepared them, and which had already been attacked as an outdated mode of education for men. The founders of women's colleges such as Vassar (1865) and Wellesley (1875) discovered that most potential students were not prepared for college entrance, so they set up preparatory departments. Bryn Mawr (founded 1885) had entrance requirements identical to Harvard's. Judith Hallett argues that a Bryn Mawr graduate, Edith Hamilton, deserves 'major credit for the survival of classics as a field for college-level study in the United States' through the influence of her popular books about Greek and Roman civilisation, literature and classical mythology. Hamilton 'paved the way for other key American endeavors to spread and legitimate the study of ancient Greco-Roman culture in English translation', such as Gilbert Highet's books, reviews and weekly radio programmes.⁶⁶ She was educated at home with her sisters and female cousins, learning Latin, German, Greek, French, the Bible and theology, before attending Miss Porter's School for Young Ladies for two years. Hamilton entered Bryn Mawr at the age of 27 and went on to earn BA and MA degrees in Latin and Greek within 4 years, planning to study for a doctorate in classics at a German university. She remained in America for family reasons, and in 1896 became headmistress of the Bryn Mawr School, a private school for girls at which all the pupils were expected to prepare for college entrance. Advanced students learned Greek, and Latin was compulsory at all levels.⁶⁷ The school was 'a model institution intended in part to inspire women in other cities to establish similar schools for girls'.⁶⁸

Another significant innovation in American higher education was Columbia's Core Curriculum, which began with a course on 'war issues' in 1917. Postwar reformers replaced the required history and philosophy courses with an interdisciplinary 'peace issues' syllabus, 'a comprehensive introduction to a social scientific and historical analysis' of the problems of the contemporary world. The classes met for one hour, five days per week, for discussion rather than lectures.⁶⁹ In 1920 a two-year General Honors course was established for a select group of students who would read a selection of 'great books', often in translation. Columbia's model of seminars on great books was imitated by many American colleges, including the University of Chicago, Notre Dame and St John's College. John Erskine, Professor of English, claimed that his method of teaching the course was to 'treat the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and other masterpieces as though they were recent publications, calling for immediate investigation and discussion'.⁷⁰ In 1937, the core curriculum expanded to include a required freshman course ('Humanities A', later 'Literature Humanities'). Each section met with two instructors to discuss one literary, philosophical or theological text per week, without any lectures or secondary sources. Classical authors included Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, Plato, Aristotle, Herodotus, Thucydides, Lucretius, Virgil, Tacitus and Marcus Aurelius. Sappho (along with other women writers) was not added to the course until some years after Columbia began to admit women as students in 1983.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, Gilbert Highet and his colleague Moses Hadas worked to ensure the continuing presence of classical studies in the teaching of the humanities, despite demands from educational reformers for the removal of Latin and Greek from the liberal arts curriculum. They attempted 'to integrate classics into a broadly based brand of higher education for [...] the huge influx of students taking advantage of the 1944 GI Bill, which funded 36 months of schooling for all US military veterans.'⁷¹ Like his former

tutor Gilbert Murray, Highet believed that classical texts in translation had much to offer those who did not learn the classical languages, and he offered a variety of courses on ancient literature and civilisation. His charismatic lecturing — in which he exhibited ‘a showmanship perhaps unparalleled in the American college classroom’ — and activities such as his weekly radio broadcasts on ‘People, Places, and Books’ in the 1950s made him, Robert Ball suggests, ‘the most recognized and most talked-about classical scholar of his generation’ in the United States. Although his popularity was viewed with suspicion by some classicists, his interest in the classical tradition and enthusiastic participation in the Great Books or ‘Humanities A’ curriculum enabled him to develop relationships with scholars in Columbia’s ‘exceptional liberal arts professoriate’, including Mark Van Doren, Lionel Trilling and Jacques Barzun.⁷²

In 1940, B. L. Ullman writes that Greek has ‘practically disappeared from the high school’, but Latin remains an important subject. At the college level, the numbers studying Latin and Greek are small, so that for most American students the study of antiquity is confined to ‘two years of high-school Latin study, which is supplemented to some extent by courses in ancient history in high school and college’. Although high-school courses began to pay attention to ancient culture to a greater degree than in the past, students still needed to spend the majority of their time on learning the language and could not (in two years) achieve an understanding of the ancient world equivalent to that of their predecessors, who had ‘six to eight years of Latin and four or more years of Greek, assisted by ancient history’.⁷³ Ullman describes the response of college teachers who began to offer courses in ancient civilisation, art and literature in translation. These courses succeeded in persuading some students to learn the classical languages, particularly Greek. At Princeton, for example, Greek Literature in English Translation, taken by about 180 students each year, ‘differs from most such courses in concentrating on a few works in complete form instead of reading brief selections from many. All of Homer, eight Greek tragedies, two comedies, several dialogues of Plato,

Aristotle's *Poetics*, and some of Lucian and Plutarch are studied. One-third of the time is devoted to lectures.' At Yale, all BA candidates had to take 'either Greek, Latin, or classical civilization', with the last option attracting the highest number of students. The reading for the course was 16 books of the *Iliad*, 8 of the *Odyssey*, 'two-thirds of Herodotus and Thucydides', 4 books of Xenophon, 'selections from the Greek orators, about a dozen plays, and five or six dialogues of Plato', and some of the lectures were concerned with art and archaeology.⁷⁴ Liberal arts colleges were also adapting to students whose high-school education in the classics was limited. The 14 set books for a required course in 'the humanities' at Amherst in 1948 included 'Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Thucydides, and Plato, and selections from the Old Testament during the first semester; the second semester is devoted to Shakespeare, Montaigne, Voltaire, Goethe, and Samuel Butler.'⁷⁵

In both Britain and America, the beginning of the period covered by this volume represents a high point in the number of people learning Latin and Greek, although only a relatively small elite could ever afford the intensive teaching that would enable them to read ancient texts fluently. As classical scholarship became specialised and professionalised in the universities, as women and working-class men sought access to higher education, and as demands for schooling in more practical subjects increased, classics as a self-sufficient academic discipline rapidly lost ground. The content of ancient texts came to matter more than the language to the majority of students, as classicists found ways of ensuring that Latin and Greek texts would be read in translation as part of a wider humanities curriculum, so that the ideal of 'knowing the Greeks and Romans' could extend further than Matthew Arnold ever anticipated.

¹ Matthew Arnold, *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold: Vol. 10: Philistinism in England and America*, ed. R.H. Super, (Ann Arbor, 1974), pp. 57-8. See also Simon Goldhill, *Who Needs Greek? Contests in the Cultural History of Hellenism* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 217. Virginia Woolf's acute critique of Victorian Hellenism in her essay 'On Not Knowing Greek' (1925) draws attention to the limited knowledge available to those who experienced even the fullest version of a formal education in Greek. Emily Dalgarno notes that Woolf's title 'mimics' Arnold's repetition of 'knowing Greek' in 'Literature and Science', where he plays on the phrase 'some thirty times': Emily Dalgarno, *Virginia Woolf and the Migrations of Language* (Cambridge, 2012), p. 21.

² Gilbert Highet, *The Classical Tradition: Greek and Roman Influences on Western Literature* (London, 1949), p. 492. William Lyon Phelps, *Autobiography with Letters* (New York, 1939), pp. 136-7 (qtd. by Highet pp.491-2). See also Gerald Graff, *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* (1987; Chicago, IL, 2007), pp. 27-35.

³ Highet, *The Classical Tradition*, p. 466.

⁴ Christopher Stray, *Classics Transformed: Schools, Universities, and Society in England, 1830-1960* (Oxford, 1998), p. 122.

⁵ Christopher Stray, 'The First Century of the Classical Tripos (1822-1922): High Culture and the Politics of Curriculum', in *Classics in 19th- and 20th-Century Cambridge: Curriculum, Culture and Community*, ed. Christopher Stray (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 1-14.

⁶ Shanyn Fiske, *Heretical Hellenism: Women Writers, Ancient Greece, and the Victorian Popular Imagination* (Athens, OH, 2008), pp. 150-1.

⁷ Bernard M. W. Knox, *The Oldest Dead White European Males* (New York, 1993), pp. 110-1.

⁸ See W.H. Walsh, 'The Zenith of Greats', pp.311-26 and Richard Jenkyns, 'Classical Studies, 1872-1914', pp. 327-31 in *The History of the University of Oxford: Vol. 7: Nineteenth-Century Oxford, Part 2*, ed. M.G. Brock and M.C. Curthoys (Oxford, 2000).

⁹ *Oscar Wilde and Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 18-40. In a series of appendices (pp. 194-215), Ross reproduces valuable archival evidence including outlines of the classics degrees at Trinity

College Dublin and Oxford, marginal annotations in Wilde's copies of classical texts, and samples of Wilde's Greek verse composition exercises and notes on philosophy.

¹⁰ Linda C. Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (London, 1994), pp. 62-6; 71-3. Almost half of those recruited into the Indian Civil Service between 1892 and 1914 were Oxford graduates: see Phiroze Vasunia, *The Classics and Colonial India* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 216-22.

¹¹ Benson, *As We Were*, p. 148.

¹² Henry Nettleship, *Lectures and Essays on Subjects Connected with Latin Literature and Scholarship* (Oxford, 1885), pp. 1-2.

¹³ Norman Page, *A. E. Housman: A Critical Biography*, new edn (Houndmills, 1996), p. 44.

¹⁴ F. W. Bateson, 'The Poetry of Emphasis', in *A. E. Housman: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Christopher Ricks (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1968), p. 135.

¹⁵ Page, *A. E. Housman*, p. 62.

¹⁶ Highet, *Classical Tradition*, p. 497.

¹⁷ A. E. Housman, *The Confines of Criticism: The Cambridge Inaugural 1911*, ed. J. Carter (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 25-6. See Stray, *Classics Transformed*, pp. 121-4, and David Butterfield and Christopher Stray, eds., *A. E. Housman: Classical Scholar* (London, 2009).

¹⁸ Edmund Wilson, 'A. E. Housman', in *A. E. Housman*, ed. Ricks, p. 17. See also in this volume J. P. Sullivan, 'The Leading Classic of His Generation', pp. 146-62.

¹⁹ Highet, *Classical Tradition*, p. 496.

²⁰ Gilbert Murray, *The Place of Greek in Education, an Inaugural Lecture* (Glasgow, 1889).

²¹ Highet, *Classical Tradition*, pp. 489-90.

²² E.F. Benson, *As We Were: A Victorian Peep-Show* (London, 1930), p. 150.

²³ Fred Hunter, 'Collins, John Churton (1848–1908)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32504>>. 26 January 2014.

²⁴ Chris Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Criticism, 1848-1932* (Oxford, 1983), p. 197.

²⁵ John Churton Collins, *Greek Influence on English Poetry*, ed. Michael Macmillan (London, 1910), pp. 2-4.

²⁶ Janet Howarth, “‘In Oxford but ... not of Oxford’: The Women’s Colleges’, in *The History of the University of Oxford: Vol. 7i*, pp. 237-307. See also Isobel Hurst, *Victorian Women Writers and the Classics: The Feminine of Homer* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 81-94.

²⁷ Claire Breay, ‘Women and the Classical Tripos 1869-1914’, in *Classics in 19th- and 20th-Century Cambridge: Curriculum, Culture and Community*, ed. Christopher Stray (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 51-3. See also an account by the headmistress of Manchester High School for Girls: S.A. Burstall, *English High Schools for Girls: Their Aims, Organisation and Management* (London, 1907), p. 13; pp.108-10. In *Schools for Girls and Colleges for Women: A Handbook of Female Education Chiefly Designed for the Use of Persons of the Upper Middle Class* (London, 1879), Charles Eyre Pascoe gives sample questions from examinations that women might take before entering one of the new women’s colleges. For example, the Oxford Senior Local for 1879 required students to read Cicero, *De Amicitia*; Virgil, *Aeneid* I or Herodotus V; Aeschylus, *Prometheus Vincitus*, and the examiner’s report stated that ‘no one will obtain a place among the first twenty in either language unless she satisfies the Examiners in unprepared work as well as in the books here specified’ (p. 91). For Latin, the University of London Matriculation Examination required one of the following texts: Virgil, *Georgics* (1 book), *Aeneid* (1 book); Horace, *Odes* (2 books); Sallust, *Conspiracy*; Caesar, *Gallic War* (2 books); Livy, 1 book; Cicero *De Senectute / De Amicitia* and 1 oration; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (1 book), *Heroides* (1 book). The exam included passages for translation into English, with questions in history and geography arising from them, short and easy passages for translation, grammar questions and ‘simple and easy sentences of English to be translated into Latin’ (p. 98).

²⁸ See Hurst, *Victorian Women Writers and the Classics*, pp. 211-19.

²⁹ Breay, ‘Women’, p. 54.

³⁰ For details of the preliminary examinations, Cambridge’s ‘Little-Go’ and Oxford’s ‘Responsions’, see Paul R. Deslandes, *Oxbridge Men: British Masculinity and the Undergraduate Experience, 1850-1920* (Bloomington, IN, 2005), p. 129.

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- ³¹ Judith Raphaely, 'Nothing but Gibberish and Shibboleths? The Compulsory Greek Debate 1870-1919', in *Classics in 19th- and 20th-Century Cambridge: Curriculum, Culture and Community*, ed. Christopher Stray (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 74-8.
- ³² Raphaely, 'Nothing but Gibberish', p. 84; p. 90.
- ³³ A. H. S., 'A Note on the Teaching of Greek in Translation', *Oxford Magazine* 38 (5 March 1920), 259-60 (p.259).
- ³⁴ 'Onlooker', *Oxford Magazine* 38 (28 May 1920) pp. 362-4.
- ³⁵ G. B. Grundy, *Oxford Magazine* 39 (29 October 1920), p. 47.
- ³⁶ Elizabeth Vandiver, *Stand in the Trench, Achilles: Classical Receptions in British Poetry of the Great War* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 56-9.
- ³⁷ Robert Graves, *Goodbye to All That* (Harmondsworth, 1960), p. 37.
- ³⁸ Françoise Waquet, *Latin or the Empire of a Sign: From the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Centuries*, tr. John Howe (London and New York, 2001), p. 27.
- ³⁹ Stray, *Classics Transformed*, p.274. For the emergence of Latin as a 'symbolic exemplar of disciplinary authority in the tripartite system of secondary schooling', see pp. 271-97.
- ⁴⁰ Sidney T. Irwin, *Why we Learn Latin and Greek: Two Addresses to Public School Boys* (London, 1904), p. 20.
- ⁴¹ Martin Forrest, 'The Abolition of Compulsory Latin and its Consequences', *The Classical Association: The First Century 1903-2003*, ed. Christopher Stray, (Oxford, 2003), pp. 42-66.
- ⁴² James Morwood, 'Small Latin and less Greek: Oxford Adjusts to Changing Circumstances', *Oxford Classics: Teaching and Learning 1800-2000*, ed. Christopher Stray (Bristol, 2007), pp. 239-49.
- ⁴³ Carl J. Richard, *The Golden Age of the Classics in America: Greece, Rome, and the Antebellum United States* (Cambridge, MA, 2009), p. x; p. 205.
- ⁴⁴ Laurence R. Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University* (Chicago, IL, 1965), pp. vii-viii; p. 2; p. 60.

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- ⁴⁵ Craig Kallendorf, 'Education', in *The Classical Tradition*, ed. Anthony Grafton, Glenn W. Most, and Salvatore Settis (Cambridge, MA, 2010), p. 294.
- ⁴⁶ Frederick Rudolph, *Curriculum: A History of the American Undergraduate Course of Study since 1636* (San Francisco, CA, 1977), p. 75; p. 109.
- ⁴⁷ Veysey, *Emergence of the American University*, p. 6.
- ⁴⁸ Nicholas Murray Butler, *Across the Busy Years: Recollections and Reflections* (New York, 1939), 1. 65-7.
- ⁴⁹ Herbert Newell Couch, 'The Classics in the Liberal-Arts College', *The Journal of Higher Education*, 16:5 (1945), 227-32 (p. 231).
- ⁵⁰ Edwin Cornelius Broome, *A Historical and Critical Discussion of College Admission Requirements* (New York, 1903), pp. 48-53.
- ⁵¹ C. C. Felton, *A Greek Reader For the Use of Schools, Containing Selections in Prose and Poetry, with English Notes and a Lexicon. Adapted particularly to the Greek Grammar of E. A. Sophocles, A.M.* (Hartford, CT, 1840).
- ⁵² Broome, *Historical and Critical Discussion*, p. 54; pp. 63-4.
- ⁵³ Rudolph, *Curriculum*, p. 159.
- ⁵⁴ Caroline Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism: Ancient Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life, 1780-1910* (Baltimore, MD, 2002), pp. 180-1. Winterer also notes a 30% decline in number of college majors in Latin between 1971 and 1991, and that only 600 classics degrees were awarded in the USA in 1994 (p. 178).
- ⁵⁵ Rudolph, *Curriculum*, p. 215.
- ⁵⁶ Rudolph, *Curriculum*, p. 136.
- ⁵⁷ Barbara M. Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven, CT, 1985), p. 79.
- ⁵⁸ Rudolph, *Curriculum*, p.181.
- ⁵⁹ Samuel Eliot Morison, *Three Centuries of Harvard 1636-1936* (Cambridge, MA, 1936), p. 354. Rudolph, *Curriculum*, p. 213.

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- ⁶⁰ Rudolph, *Curriculum*, p. 213.
- ⁶¹ Morison, *Three Centuries*, pp. 398-90.
- ⁶² Brooks Mather Kelley, *Yale; a History* (New Haven, CT, 1974), p. 292.
- ⁶³ Rudolph, *Curriculum*, p. 182.
- ⁶⁴ Rudolph, *Curriculum*, p. 214.
- ⁶⁵ Caroline Winterer, *The Mirror of Antiquity: American Women and the Classical Tradition, 1750-1900* (Ithaca, NY, 2007), p. 202.
- ⁶⁶ Hallett, 'Edith Hamilton', p. 105; pp. 111-12.
- ⁶⁷ Judith P. Hallett, 'Edith Hamilton and Greco-Roman Mythology', in *American Women and Classical Myths*, ed. Gregory A. Staley (Waco, TX, 2009), pp. 106-9.
- ⁶⁸ Andrea Hamilton, *A Vision for Girls: Gender, Education, and the Bryn Mawr School* (Baltimore, MD, 2004), pp. 2-3.
- ⁶⁹ J.W. Smit, 'The Core Curriculum: Wisdom, Training, and Contemporary Civilization', in *Living Legacies at Columbia*, ed. W. Theodore de Bary (New York, 2006), pp. 529-41.
- ⁷⁰ John Erskine, *My Life as a Teacher* (New York, 1948), p. 166.
- ⁷¹ Hallett, 'Edith Hamilton', p. 112.
- ⁷² Robert Ball, 'Gilbert Highet and Classics at Columbia', in *Living Legacies at Columbia*, ed. W. Theodore de Bary (New York, 2006), pp. 13-25. Highet and other Scottish classicists such as J. A. K. Thomson studied classics twice at undergraduate level, first in Scotland and later at Oxford or Cambridge. The extra years of study may help to explain their readiness to move into new areas of study such as the classical tradition. Highet was a distinguished student at Glasgow and then at Balliol College, Oxford, where he was taught by Cyril Bailey, Maurice Bowra and Gilbert Murray. He became a fellow and tutor at St. John's College, Oxford before moving to Columbia in 1937. Thomson was educated at Mackie Academy and Aberdeen University, then Pembroke College, Oxford. His later career included a year at Harvard and another at Bryn Mawr before he settled in London. See Barbara F. McManus, 'J. A. K. Thomson and Classical Reception Studies: American

Influences and “Classical Influences”, in *British Classics Outside England: The Academy and Beyond*, ed. Judith P. Hallett and Christopher Stray (Waco, TX, 2009), pp. 129-48.

⁷³ B. L. Ullman, ‘Classical Culture in the College Curriculum’, *The Journal of Higher Education*, 11:4 (1940), 189-92 (p. 189).

⁷⁴ Ullman, ‘Classical Culture’, p. 190.

⁷⁵ Horace W. Hewlett, ‘Amherst’s New Curriculum in its First Year’, *The Journal of Higher Education*, 19:7 (1948), 365-8 (pp. 367-8).