

## Embodied Knowledge

This volume brings together leading experts from across the humanities to consider the place of the Ancient Greco-Roman world in the formation of different orders of knowledge. Since at least the eighteenth century, the study of Greece and Rome has played a pivotal role in both the institutional and intellectual partition of disciplines from philology to theology, aesthetics to anthropology.<sup>1</sup> *Altertumswissenschaft* as the prototype of the modern university discipline, established much of the vocabulary, the techniques and the values of academic study.<sup>2</sup> Although although Greece and Rome have been the objects of intense study more or less continuously since antiquity, the formalisation of ‘Classics’ as a discipline in the nineteenth century redrew the boundaries of the field and set up new contours. The tensions between the *longue durée* of the study of antiquity and the self-conscious modernising of the pioneers of the discipline make ‘Classics’ a particularly compelling case study for exploring knowledge formation. “Classical knowledge and the study of antiquity has a long history, but as a discipline of higher education, attached to specific qualifying sites and practices, classics is a phenomenon of modernity”.<sup>3</sup> These oppositions between antiquity as a source of old knowledge and ‘Classics’ as a paradigm of *Wissenschaft* continue to animate debates within the broader humanities. Thus, as Geoffrey Lloyd shows in this volume, the very concept of *Wissenschaft* or “science” itself has an ambivalent ancient genealogy. On the one hand it is understood to be essentially a modern phenomenon, initiated in the so-called scientific revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries. On the other hand, the Greeks have often been invoked as the authorising antecedent to modern notions of science as a paradigm of reliable knowledge. This claim, as Lloyd argues, not only complicates the chronologies and teleologies of the western histories of science but also marginalises other ancient knowledge traditions from Mesopotamia to India and China.

The name of one figure conventionally appears on the birth certificate of ‘Classics’: Johann Joachim Winckelmann.<sup>4</sup> Surprisingly, given the discipline’s association with philology, this genealogy places material culture at the source of Classics’ formation as a discipline. In Winckelmann’s aesthetic investment in Greece, its intellectual and political ideals are a by-

---

<sup>1</sup> For this ordering of knowledge in the nineteenth century see paradigmatically Foucault (1970)&(1976).

<sup>2</sup> See Clark (2006) and Wellmon (2015).

<sup>3</sup> Postclassicism Collective, 66

<sup>4</sup> See Harloe (2013).

product of its artistic prowess. It is the beauty of Greek sculpture which allows us to extrapolate to the beautiful culture that created it. Winkelmann's discourse on Greek art is launched by a materialist, environmental explanation:

To the Greek climate we owe the production of taste, and from thence it spread at length over all the politer world. Every invention, communicated by foreigners to that nation, was but the seed of what it became afterwards, changing both its nature and size in a country, chosen, as Plato says, by Minerva, to be inhabited by the Greeks, as productive of every kind of genius. But this taste was not only original among the Greeks, but seemed also quite peculiar to their country: it seldom went abroad without loss, and was long ere it imparted its kind influences to more distant climes.

Winkelmann thus establishes a proto-racial rationalization for the superiority of Greek "taste". Greek culture may owe its existence to foreign inventions and it may, in turn, have spread its innovations abroad, yet, there is something proper to Greek soil which gets lost in translation. Greece is a chosen land, a land chosen for its physical attributes:

The most beautiful body of ours would perhaps be as much inferior to the most beautiful Greek one, as Iphicles was to his brother Hercules. The forms of the Greeks, prepared to beauty, by the influence of the mildest and purest sky, became perfectly elegant by their early exercises. Take a Spartan youth, sprung from heroes, undistorted by swaddling-cloths; whose bed, from his seventh year, was the earth, familiar with wrestling and swimming from his infancy; and compare him with one of our young Sybarites, and then decide which of the two would be deemed worthy, by an artist, to serve for the model of a Theseus, an Achilles, or even a Bacchus.

The "mildest and purest sky" endowed the Greek body with its characteristic beauty – a beauty derived from an unmediated relationship to rugged natural surroundings. To the Spartan youth of antiquity, Winckelmann opposes the sybaritic adolescent of modernity. No studied self-fashioning could compete with the gifts freely given by Greek nature. But if ecology is the source of Greek taste, Greek art is in turn the fount of Greek liberty:

Art claims liberty: in vain would nature produce her noblest offsprings, in a country where rigid laws would choke her progressive growth, as in Egypt, that pretended parent of sciences and arts: but in Greece, where, from their earliest youth, the happy inhabitants were devoted to mirth and pleasure, where narrow-spirited formality never restrained the liberty of manners, the artist enjoyed nature without a veil.

Again, we see a plea for Greek exceptionalism: Egypt is the pretender that authenticates Greece. The aetiology of Greek politics is art. Greek freedom may historically have pre-existed the production of Greek art, but in Winckelmann's teleological scheme aesthetics ultimately precedes ethics. The Greek body, it would seem, explains the Greek mind rather than the other way round. A similar preoccupation with art and the body is at play in the figure of *Prosopopeia* (personification) explored by Jaś Elsner and Mike Squire in this volume. The trope of personification straddles the metaphorical and the somatic – placing ideas in strange bodies and bodies in strange ideas.

Despite Winckelmann's notorious *philhellenism*, it is the rediscoveries of Pompeii and Herculaneum in the middle of the eighteenth century which are contemporaneous with his writings. Winckelmann never visited Greece, but personally – and critically – observed the excavations of the Southern Italian cities. While he praised the “beautiful form” and “good taste” of many of the unearthed paintings and household vessels, he was deeply concerned about the methods of excavation and preservation. Yet, Pompeii and Herculaneum were the scene of an alternative vision of antiquity: less “noble grandeur and calm simplicity” than carnal licentiousness. The excavations foregrounded antiquity as an erotic utopia rather than the origin of “polite taste”.<sup>5</sup> In her essay in this volume, Suzanne Marchand gives an insight into this more “trivial” and *sensual* eighteenth-century classicism in her exploration of ‘libertine’ porcelains and their risqué vision of a pagan world. This ‘libertine’ investment in antiquity might appear antithetical to Winckelmann's, yet, their shared emphasis on the corporeal legacy of antiquity stands against any ideal of a disembodied classicism. If Winckelmann can be associated with the foundation of ‘Classics’ as a discipline, this foundation was bound up with the body in its many forms. Regimes of knowing are deeply embedded in materialities that were once seen as alien to Classics.

As feminists and post-colonial critics have long argued, the knowing subject is at the same time a gendered body whose experience of the world is refracted by race and class.<sup>6</sup> The “situatedness” of knowledge is integral to its historical organisation. This volume explores these questions from a theoretically acute perspective and shows how the ancient world continues to prompt some of the most pressing questions in the humanities today. It contains second-order reflections on the manifold ways that classical knowledge is amassed, stored, processed and archived, materialised and embodied. A group of world-leading experts in classics, the humanities and anthropology has been assembled to explore these issues from a number of different angles. The first group of essays explores the central ‘tropes’ that thinkers use to aggregate and order knowledge (‘empiricism’, ‘science’, ‘rigour’, ‘allegory’, ‘ontologies’). In this first section we seek to embrace, but also move beyond the familiar Foucauldian/Kuhnian idea that modern-western epistemologies have their own history, both by exploring alternative genealogies of the latter: thus Daston re-examines the shifting role that the concept of ‘rigour’ has played in the European university; Strathern explores the ways in which Frazer's *Golden Bough* is built on the assumption that readers were saturated

---

<sup>5</sup> See Hales and Paul (2011) and Orrells (2015).

<sup>6</sup> See Haraway (1988), Gallop, J. (1988), Ahmed (2012&2017).

in classical cosmology; Prins explores classical metres as an idiosyncratic 'form' of Victorian knowledge. We also explore different, particularly non-modern-western genealogies of knowledge-construction: Lloyd revisits the problematic category of 'science' in ancient Greece; Boyarin highlights key differences between ancient Jewish and Christian constructions of 'allegory'.

The second part considers how (classical) knowledge takes on a corporeal or material form, both in antiquity and in later periods. This section opens with Elsner's discussion of art as the embodiment of knowledge, a phenomenon that is theorised in the work of the Roman-era sophist Philostratus of Lemnos; Whitmarsh investigate ancient scars and wounds and how their changing representation mark the many transitions of late antiquity. The volume closes with a triad of papers that consider ways in which classical knowledge is embodied in surprising ways in the modern era: Jacobus considers a series of receptions of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, with an emphasis upon the voice; Marchand considers the role of porcelain (a highly tactile, eroticised medium) in transmitting classical knowledge; Peter de Bolla explores the role of the haptic in art criticism.

A Festschrift seems a fitting place to think about questions of embodied knowledge. In honouring an individual we turn the spotlight on the networks of relationships which are the conductors of intellectual inquiry. In his recent book *What is a Jewish Classicist?*, Simon Goldhill devotes his first chapter to what he calls 'the personal voice'.<sup>7</sup> Paying homage to the feminist and psychoanalytic scholar Teresa Brennan, Goldhill invokes the idea of the 'sado-dispassionate', the stance of many academic colleagues who 'enact[] the desire for objective distance by a form of perverse aggression, a wilful disregard of the personal'.<sup>8</sup> Such a stance marks the continuation of the discourse of rigour, which Lorraine Daston shows was preciously cultivated by classical scholars in the nineteenth century. Yet as Daston argues in this volume, this near-universal scholarly 'virtue' has always existed in tension with the equally coveted attribute of 'intuition'. The idiosyncratic brilliance of the individual scholar remains in conflict with the demands of objectivity.<sup>9</sup>

In the book, Goldhill explores how the 'Jewish classicist' inhabits a particularly vexed subject position. An opposition between Hellenism and Judaism has long existed as a

---

<sup>7</sup> For discussion of the this idea in Classical scholarship see Hallett/Van Nortwick (1997).

<sup>8</sup> Goldhill (2022), 19 and Brennan (2004).

<sup>9</sup> A topic also brilliantly discussed by Güthenke (2020).

structuring discourse of the West. For the German-Jewish convert and satirist Heinrich Heine writing in the nineteenth century ‘all men are either Jews or Greeks’.<sup>10</sup> Matthew Arnold would translate Heine’s adage into a diagnostic of Victorian Culture and European modernity: ‘Hellenism and Hebraism -between these points of influence moves the world. At one time it feels more powerfully the attraction of one of them, at another time of the other; it ought to be, though it never is, evenly and happily balanced between them’.<sup>11</sup> Arnold’s statement exemplifies a world-view which, despite the experience of Empire and the contact it offered with religions and peoples who have little to do with either Greeks or Jews, persists in dividing the world between two parochial anachronisms. Arnold’s easy identification with Greek culture and his ability to use it as a prism for understanding the vast complexities of modernity was shared with many other Victorian intellectuals. The chapters in this volume by Yopie Prins and Marilyn Strathern give us deep insights into this classical habitus. Prins shows us how Arnold and his contemporaries developed a passion for translating not merely the content but also the form of classical knowledge, experimenting obsessively with the poetic metres of Greece and Rome. Marilyn Strathern explores how the classical training of James Frazer tacitly organises his ethnographic narration to an extent that makes his insights appear quite remote to contemporary anthropologists. Hellenism is one of “the shared assumptions” of Victorian culture which make sense of statements such as Heine’s and Arnold’s and the anthropological practice of Frazer.

Heine and Arnold could, of course, draw on a discourse of conflict between Hellenism and Judaism which stretches back to antiquity. The Second Book of second Maccabees (2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE) recounts the imposition by the Seleucid King Antiochus IV of a Greek way of life antithetical to the Jews – the book includes not just the first attested use of the word Judaism but also, more surprisingly, the earliest appearance of the word Hellenism.<sup>12</sup> These two terms, then, exist from the outset as mutually constitutive expressions of identity. But it was in Early Christianity that the opposition becomes formalized as Paul imagines a Christian universalism which transcends existing particularities: ‘In Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus’ [*Galatians* 3].<sup>13</sup> Later in the late 2<sup>nd</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Heine (1968-76), 11:18-9.

<sup>11</sup> Arnold (1993), 126.

<sup>12</sup> See Gruen (1998) and Alexander (2001).

<sup>13</sup> See Lieu (2002).

century CE, Tertullian, a Christian writing in Latin in Carthage, would catchily ask ‘What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?’ [*De Praescriptione Haereticorum* 7.9]. His question which follows ‘what has the Academy in common with the Church?’ is perhaps equally animating. In opposing Plato to Christ, Tertullian opens up a whole series of binaries: faith and knowledge, reason and religion, the secular university and the Church. In this volume, Daniel Boyarin looks at related antithesis in ancient wisdom (*Sophia*) ‘literal and allegorical’ interpretation. Boyarin argues that behind this apparent dichotomy lies a more complex one which subtly differentiates the organisation of religious knowledge. He posits a distinction between the Christian understanding of the text as an incarnation of Wisdom and the Jewish practice of viewing the Torah itself as the body of knowledge. The body is the site of an age-old fissure between Christianity and Judaism and the charge of materialism animates polemics against the Jews from John Chrysostom to Karl Marx. As Goldhill explains in his book, early Christianity, with its polemical partitions between Christian and pagan knowing, and between Christian and Jewish practices, is the source of so many of the enduring tropes of both Classicism and anti-Semitism. This is one more reason why being a ‘Jewish classicist’ might be complicated.

If the origins of the opposition between Athens and Jerusalem lie in antiquity, we have seen how it became increasingly formalised in the nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup> Such divisions were mapped onto an institutional segregation between Classics and theology. Meanwhile research in ethnography and linguistics further hardened the divide by underpinning it with an increasingly racial vocabulary. Matthew Arnold was at once influenced by Heine’s (partially (self-) satirising) psychological categories and by Ernest Renan’s decidedly more ‘scientific’ taxonomies: “Science has now made visible to everybody” writes Arnold “the great and pregnant elements of difference which lie in race, and in how single a manner they make the genius and history of an Indo-European people vary from those of a Semitic people. Hellenism is of Indo-European growth, Hebraism is of Semitic growth; and we English, a nation of Indo-European stock, seem to belong naturally to the movement of Hellenism.”<sup>15</sup> The first volume of Martin Bernal’s *Black Athena* insistently tracks how embedded in this rhetoric the Classical scholarship of the second-half of the nineteenth century became.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> The division was never absolute. There were many theologians who read Hebrew and Greek, and saw Christianity as the perfect fusion of the two traditions (‘religion’ and ‘rationality’). Classicists who read Hebrew were fewer in number, Jacob Bernays is an exception see Marchand/Grafton (1997).

<sup>15</sup> Arnold (1994), 95. For background see also Said (1978).

<sup>16</sup> Bernal (1987). See also importantly Marchand (2010).

Arnold's statement appears to anticipate the racializing theories of the twentieth century, yet it also shows how the desire to create in the Greeks an Aryan ancestor was not exclusively a German pathology. In *What is a Jewish Classicist?* Goldhill tracks how the advent of Nazism and the experience of the Shoah further shaped the discipline of Classics as he narrates the stories of refugee scholars such as Eduard Fraenkel and Arnaldo Momigliano, and the biography of Pierre Vidal-Naquet who lost his parents in the camps. For Goldhill, these "personal voices" matter to the discipline. Although the relationship between biography and scholarship is never a simple one, to deny the *inclination* of scholarly endeavour is wholly disingenuous. Such perspectives inevitably inform the urgent debates about the shape of the field today. The call to acknowledge the complicity of 'Classics' in racism and the demand to decolonise the curriculum are born from the recognition that biography and knowledge are mutually-implicated.

If Goldhill's recent book provides historical depth to enduring questions of scholarly identity, his earlier essay published in *Critical Inquiry* 'On Knowingness', explores a different alignment of embodiment and knowledge. He sets the scene by taking us back to the sex education lessons at his school "in early 1970s North London". Although these lessons purported to offer knowledge they were a toxic performance of bravura and awkwardness. Goldhill brings this spectacle into dialogue with the Greek novel *Daphnis and Chloe*, a faux-naïve tale of sexual initiation where no amount of formal instruction can lead the protagonists to the consummation that only nature can teach. At stake in these examples is the question of what it is to know the body and conversely what it is that the body knows. In this volume Tim Whitmarsh explores this problem through the example of the scarred body and how wounds are used as a form of testimonial. He invokes the classic reading of Odysseus' scar by Erich Auerbach – another refugee scholar (and to add to Whitmarsh's discussion of tattoos one could think of the Auschwitz inkings which played such a significant role in the politics of testimony in the twentieth century). Whitmarsh contests Auerbach's claim that the scene represents the epitome of Homeric narrativization in its privileging of surface over depth. Quite the reverse, he argues: it is a unique passage, dramatizing the moment when knowledge of the body's intimate truths is acquired haptically. Homer writes of Eurycleia 'this scar the old woman took into the flat of her hand, and she knew as she felt' (*Odyssey*, 19.468).<sup>17</sup> Whitmarsh reveals that the opacity of what it is she knew as she felt proves the psychological

---

<sup>17</sup> See Montiglio (2018) and more generally Purves (2018).

stratification of the Homeric narrative. The scar is the surface which simultaneously conceals and exposes depth. Peter de Bolla in his essay is also preoccupied with touch as he looks at a Greek-inflected series of postcards written between the art historians John and Katya Berger. De Bolla foregrounds John Berger's essay about the sculptor Henry Moore's hands to show how the metaphorical experience of being touched by a work of art is related to the touch that produces art. This somatic dimension of aesthetic knowledge leads, as in the case of Eurycleia's touch, to a "collapse between inner and outer, self and other". In Mary Jacobus' essay about three contemporary translations of Aeschylus, it is the materiality of language itself which is at stake. Jacobus quotes Anne Carson: 'A translator is someone trying to get in between a body and its shadow.'<sup>18</sup> In Carson's translation of the Cassandra scene, tragic wailings offer the experience of language as a wound, a trauma. These extra- metrical screams often appear in the text within parentheses— they are parenthical to meaning yet deeply meaningful. Such language parallels Cassandra's wider predicament, it "vocalize [s] a prophetic gift that is no gift at all: expressiveness without the ability to be understood." Each of these essays speak of what Goldhill understands to be "knowingness" as opposed to knowledge. Knowingness for Goldhill is a form of situated understanding, a social and en fleshed mode of meaningful communication: "It becomes a marker not of knowledge but of [...] a willingness to continue in an exchange at a particular level of intimacy, a desire to form a bond of shared experience or common understanding of the world."<sup>19</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

My father was fond of telling this joke. Somerset Maugham once visited a school and gave a talk in assembly about the necessary components of a perfect story: it needed to include a little bit about religion, something about aristocracy, some sex and some mystery. He set the attentive boys to their task and was surprised after a few minutes when some bright Charlie raised his hand to indicate that he had completed the exercise. Astonished, Maugham told him to read out his story. The boy stood up and read: "My God, said the Duchess, I'm pregnant, I wonder who did it?". Perhaps a little less laconically, Simon Goldhill's oeuvre would certainly fulfil Maugham's criteria. Greek tragedy, the subject of his early work, is arguably a potent concoction of religion, aristocracy, sex and mystery. While tragedy has remained an abiding concern, his interests have expanded so much that it is impossible to

---

<sup>18</sup> Carson (2001), 41.

<sup>19</sup> Goldhill (2006), 722



capture them under any one heading. The broad themes of religion, aristocracy, sex and mystery track a career which has ranged widely over genres and periods. A preoccupation with religion ties together his hugely varied work on the Temple of Jerusalem, his explorations of the Victorian Bible, the institutional relationship between Classics and theology and more recently his work on late antiquity. Goldhill's first book *Language, Sexuality, Narrative* initiated a career long preoccupation with questions of sex and gender which subtends so much of his writing from his analysis of the Second Sophistic in *Foucault's Virginity* to his psychobiography of the Bensons in *A Very Queer Family Indeed*. His desire to unearth the lives of aristocratic Victorians verges on an obsession! As to mystery – his forensic archival research together with the verve of his narrative style recall the best kind of detective fiction. But more than a set of recurring preoccupations, Simon Goldhill's work is characterised by a restless desire to ask harder questions combined with a sense of the sheer *jouissance* of intellectual inquiry.

This volume is offered as a testament to and an expression of gratitude for what we in the Humanities owe Simon Goldhill. Since the start of his career, he has worked tirelessly to bring Classics into a fruitful dialogue with the theoretical humanities. This work was cemented during his tenure as the Director of the Cambridge Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH). Between 2011 and 2018, Simon Goldhill ran the centre as a model of intellectual collaboration. This Festschrift is, therefore, not an attempt to chart the immense influence Simon has had on the many students to whom he has given so generously over his career. Rather it is motivated by a desire to register the impact that his work and presence has had on different modes of thinking across the disciplines. It brings his work into contact with leading figures from fields adjacent to Classics in a manner which we hope mimics the quintessential Goldhill research seminar. In the sad absence of the post-seminar epicurean feast that Simon so often hosted - we offer instead a ten-course symposium of words followed by a vintage *digestif*.

### Works Cited

Ahmed, S. 2012 *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in University Life*, Durham NC.

2017 *Living a Feminist Life*, Durham NC.

- Alexander, P. 2001 'Hellenism and Hellenization as Problematic Historiographical Categories,' in *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide*, ed. T. Engberg-Pedersen  
Louisville, 63–80
- Arnold, M. 1993 *Culture and Anarchy and Other Writings*. Edited by Stefan Collini.  
Cambridge.
- Auerbach, E. 1953. *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Art*. Trans. Trask, W.  
R. Princeton.
- Bernal, M. (1987) *Black Athena the Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization: The  
Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785-1985*. London
- Brennan, T. 2004 *The Transmission of Affect*, Ithaca NY
- Carson, A. 2001 'Screaming in Translation', in Sophocles, *Electra*, trans. Anne Carson,  
Oxford
- Clark, W. 2006 *Academic Charisma and the Origins of the Research University*. Chicago
- Gallop, J. 1988 *Thinking through the Body*, New York
- Hales, S. and J. Paul 2011 eds. *Pompeii in the Public Imagination from its Rediscovery to  
Today*. Oxford
- Hallett, J. P. and T. Van Nortwick 1997 *Compromising Traditions: The Personal Voice in  
Classical Scholarship*. London and New York
- Haraway, D. 1988 'Situated Knowledge: The Science Question in Feminism and the  
Privilege of Partial Perspectives', *Feminist Studies*, 14. 575-99
- Heine, H. 1968-76. *Sämtliche Werke*. Edited by K. Briegleb et al., Munich
- Foucault, M. 1970 *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. Trans A.M.  
Sheridan-Smith. London
- 1976 *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Trans A.M. Sheridan-Smith. London

Goldhill, S. 2021 *What is a Jewish Classicist*, London.

2006 'On Knowingness', *Critical Inquiry*, 32.6.4, 2006, 708-723

Gruen, E. S. 1998 *Heritage and Hellenism: the reinvention of Jewish tradition*. Berkeley

Güthenke, C. 2020 *Feeling and Classical Philology: Knowing Antiquity in Nineteenth-Century Germany, 1790-1920*, Cambridge

Harloe, K. 2013 *Winckelmann and the Invention of Antiquity: History and Aesthetics in the Age of Altertumswissenschaft*. Oxford

Lieu, J. (2002) *Neither Jew nor Greek?: constructing early Christianity*. London

Marchand, S. 2010 *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship*. Cambridge

Montiglio, S. 2018. 'Hands Know the Truth: Touch in Eurycleia's Recognition of Odysseus'. In Purves, A. ed. 2018. *Touch and the Ancient Senses*. London and New York: 21–33.

Orrells, D. 2015 *Sex: Antiquity and Its Legacy*. London

Postclassicisms Collective 2020 *Postclassicisms*, Chicago

Purves, A. ed. 2018. *Touch and the Ancient Senses*. London and New York

Said, E. 1978. *Orientalism*. London

Wellmon, C. 2015 *Organizing Enlightenment: Information Overload and the Invention of the Modern Research University*. Baltimore