VI. (RE-)EVALUATIONS: (WHY) DO RECEPTION STUDIES MATTER?

There has been a paradox at the centre of much of the discussion in this book. On the one hand, much of the material analysed and the issues raised have been shown to be central to public, artistic, political, and cultural processes. In some cases (for example, Chapter 3) there has been direct tension between appropriation of classical referents for political or social purposes and the demands of the independence and integrity of scholarship. Related tensions may also arise when appropriation has commercial rationales. Educational appropriation, too, is selective and may have a strongly instrumental focus. On the other hand, I have urged caution in the face of the idea that the arts have a decisive function as shapers or transformers of consciousness, although they are a constituent part of broader social and cultural fabrics. Accordingly, I have suggested that there are necessary distinctions to be made between the heightening of sensitivity or awareness on the part of individuals or groups who 'receive' and the translations of this awareness into considered action (whether personal, social, or political). I have tried to show that any kind of appropriation for instrumental effect is necessarily two-edged and needs to be subject to scrutiny. Scrutiny identifies both commonalities and differences between the source text and the refigured text, subjecting both to contextual analysis, to investigation of the silences and marginalia embedded within them, and to judgements about the mediations between ancient and subsequent receptions (including not only artistic conduits and adaptations but also the nature of the media involved).

Running through this discussion have been two underlying trends. The first is that classical referents are still a vital springboard in new creative work. The second is that, among the motivations of the receivers (whether artists, scholars, re-makers, or audiences), appreciation and enjoyment together form one of the important criteria by which the value of the classical referents may be judged. This of course raises further questions about the aesthetics, psychology, and behaviours associated with enjoyment (which I interpret as experience, appreciation, and pleasure in respect of the classical referent and its subsequent vitality).

In this final chapter, therefore, I want to try to get to grips with some key questions about why and how reception of classical texts and

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0533245124000233 Published online by Cambridge University Press

images can be shown to matter. It is necessary to probe evidence about possible implications for cultural shifts, while avoiding the pitfalls of either appearing to accept trivial correspondences as 'influences' or subsuming in a woolly 'universalist' way all explorations of the human situation under a notion of unchanging human behaviour. Importantly, claiming the continuing importance of classical texts is not the same as attaching to them new kinds of foundation myths, a practice which is both intellectually flawed and politically disreputable.

The first part of this chapter examines examples of the kind of links which may be said to exist between exposure to classical refigurations and subsequent reflection and behaviour. The second identifies and examines different kinds of cultural processes which are involved in reception, and considers the extent to which perceptions and practices coalesce. The third considers the place of reception study and practice in the construction of concepts of identity, both ancient and modern, with some attention to the effect which reception studies are beginning to have on perceptions of the characteristics and qualities of the ancient texts themselves (*their* 'identity', to extend the metaphor).

Making a difference to perceptions of life possibilities: the personal, the hopeful, the social

My first example is unashamedly atypical. In his memoir *Long Walk to Freedom*, the former president of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, referred to various experiences which helped to create the beginnings of hope in his long imprisonment on Robben Island under the apartheid regime (Part 9, 'Beginning to Hope').[1] These included being allowed to leave cells for Sunday services ('during the first two years on the island, we were not allowed to leave our cells even for Sunday services. The minister would preach from the head of our corridor. By the third year, services were held in the courtyard'[2]) and the prisoners sometimes being allowed to organize a Christmas performance by what Mandela describes as 'our amateur drama society'. He continues, with some irony, 'Our productions were what might now be called minimalist: no stage, no scenery, no costumes. All we had was the text of the play.' Mandela took part in a few

[1] Mandela 1994.
[2] Mandela 1994: 536.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0533245124000233 Published online by Cambridge University Press

performances during his twenty-seven years in prison and recalls that he had one memorable role, that of Creon in Sophocles' *Antigone*. He had read a number of Greek plays in prison and 'found them enormously elevating. What I took out of them was that character was measured by facing up to difficult situations and that a hero was a man who would not break down even under the most trying circumstances.' It is easy to see the attraction of the stance of Antigone in that respect: 'It was Antigone who symbolized our struggle. She was, in her own way, a freedom fighter, for she defied the law on the ground that it was unjust.'[3]

This aspect of the play was later prominent in the staging of *The Island*, a collaboration between Athol Fugard, Winston Ntshona, and John Kani, first performed in 1973. The play became an icon for its denunciation of the brutality and injustice of the apartheid regime. Sophocles' *Antigone* had earlier been performed by the Serpent Players, a group of Black actors closely associated with the actor, poet, and playwright Athol Fugard and based in New Brighton (a township outside Port Elizabeth). One performance had to be cancelled in 1965 because the actor Norman Ntshinga, who was to play Haemon, was imprisoned on Robben Island for political activities. Not only was *The Island* a good example of a theatre workshop production of township plays with cooperation across racial divides, but it was also historically specific in that the 'play within a play' drew on the performance of Antigone by prisoners in which Nelson Mandela participated.[4]

In *The Island* Winston is reluctant to dress up as a woman to play the part of Antigone; his necklace made of nails, his wig made of string, and his false breasts intensify his embarrassment. However, the other actor, John, consoles him, 'There'll come a time when they'll stop laughing and that will be the time when our Antigone hits them with her words' (*The Island*, Scene 2). In performance (Scene 4) the play culminates in a *coup de théâtre* when Winston/Antigone tears off his wig and false breasts and cries out 'Time waits no longer. I go now to my living death because I honoured those things to which honour

[3] Mandela 1994: 540.

[4] For discussion of the multiracial workshop tradition in South African drama, including refiguration of classical plays, see Mezzabotta 2000. A related development was the preparation of a new translation of Homer's *Iliad*: Whitaker 2012. Farber 1998 actively exploits synergy between Greek concepts and the semantic fields of some of languages of the modern South Africa.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0533245124000233 Published online by Cambridge University Press

belongs.' The two prisoners then resume the mime of shackled back-breaking work with which the play began.

The Island was effective in enacting the dignity, even under degrading treatment, of anti-apartheid protesters, and in influencing liberal opinion in South Africa and abroad.[5] Yet it is equally significant for the purposes of this discussion that Nelson Mandela emphasized the importance for him of playing the role of Creon:

> At the outset, Creon is sincere and patriotic, and there is wisdom in his early speeches when he suggests that experience is the foundation of leadership and that obligations to the people take precedence over loyalty to an individual. . .But Creon deals with his enemies mercilessly. . .His inflexibility and blindness ill become a leader, for a leader must temper justice with mercy.[6]

Here, it is not Antigone who is the icon; the crux is rather the role of Creon. It is as though the experience of playing Creon was a catalyst for Mandela's meditation on the requirements of leadership and conflict resolution. This is no monolithic seizure of Greek drama as 'example' but rather a process of personal development triggered by reflection on the dynamics of the play. In the international field, Jean Anouilh's adaptation of *Antigone*, composed during the Nazi occupation of France during the Second World War, was used as a discussion text for participants in the African leadership initiative in March 2005.[7] There is ample evidence of the indirect effects of the reception of *Antigone* on the history of the new South Africa, while the cultural agency of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* was reflected in Yael Farber's *Molora*, developed and toured in South Africa and internationally in the context of the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.[8]

Antigone, despite the grim ending of the play, has frequently recurred in the context of hope as well as that of debate about how rulers should behave. In addition to the personal and public resonances described above, the play has been singled out as a text which evokes response in young people. It was chosen as a key text by TAG Theatre Company (Theatre About Glasgow) in order to promote debate about personal responsibility in wider social contexts. The initiative was part of the *Making the Nation* 1999–2002 programme (part funded

[5] For further discussion, see Walder 1992; Mezzabotta 2000.
[6] Mandela 1994: 541.
[7] Hardwick and Gillespie 2007: 1.
[8] Farber 1998. For details of the relationship between the play and the work of the Commission, see Hardwick 2010; Van Zyl Smit 2010.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0533245124000233 Published online by Cambridge University Press

by the Scottish Arts Council and Glasgow City Council), which was a four-year participatory drama and theatre project developed in the context of Scottish devolution and the reconvening of the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh in 1999. The project included stimuli to debate the concepts of nationhood, democracy, government and collective, and personal responsibility. It was launched at a special event in the new Museum of Scotland on 2 March 1999. TAG, as Scotland's National Theatre for young people, wanted the project to contribute to Scotland's democratic renewal by 'providing a conduit for young people to explore national identities, to discuss their aspirations for their community and for Scotland'.[9] The artistic director for TAG, James Brining, set out the reasons for his choice of *Antigone*:

> I'm interested in young people, or audiences, whoever, asking questions about what it means to be a member of a society, of a community. Where does our responsibility begin and end? And that's something that is in the play. Where are the links between us?[10]

TAG therefore commissioned Sarah Woods, writer-in-residence at the Royal National Theatre, to produce a version of the play resonant with the concept of the *Making the Nation* project (the text does not appear to have been published). This directly politically motivated refiguration has as its principal focus the exploration of the social reaction to Antigone's resistance to Creon's edict. Alison Burke's study of the play text and its performance and reception focuses on the treatment of the chorus and the way in which it gradually moves from its position of neutrality to a position of support for Antigone's actions.[11] In the process, the play challenges political apathy and questions the justice of violating the politically active individual. Burke's discussion also demonstrates how Woods's text, both as written and as performed, differs from Sophocles' play in that the audience is not asked to adjudicate between Antigone and Creon or to consider whether Antigone is right to insist on burial for her brother and, if so, what the justifying reasons are. Instead, the focus is on the reaction of a community to the challenge presented by an individual. The set design and costume made some allusions to British imperial power and colonization (in relation to India and to Scottish participation in the

[9] TAG Theatre Company information sheet.
[10] Adams 2000; quoted more extensively and discussed in Burke 2001.
[11] Burke 2001.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0533245124000233 Published online by Cambridge University Press

military and political hierarchy) but these were suggestions; the production was not given a specific historical or geographical location.

Although the play was generally well received by audiences, review critics questioned whether its focus was too political and whether it would actually strike a chord in the experience of young people. There is no evidence either for or against the proposition that the play would encourage debate about social and political action. Nevertheless, the project was based on the view that awareness of and reflection about the issues raised in classical plays would constitute a valuable part of the cultural framework that could equip young people for the future.[12]

The potential of *Antigone* for stimulating debate among young people also underlay the refiguration *Odale's Choice* by Kamau Brathwaite, first performed at the Mfantisman Secondary School, Saltpond, Ghana, in 1962.[13] Brathwaite had 'returned' to Africa from the Caribbean and was a government education officer in newly independent Ghana. The published text appeared in the series 'Plays for African Schools'. In the introduction the editor specifically draws out the play's relationship to Sophocles:

> it is modernised (though to an indefinite period) and made to apply to an African country, but no country in particular...as the title implies [*Odale's Choice*] is the decision of the chief character, first to defy the wishes and instructions of her powerful uncle and, secondly, to refuse as a matter of principle the mercy he extends to her at the climax of the play.

The introduction also suggests that, in order not to detract from the strength of the drama and the audience response, scenery and properties should be kept very simple, and that this is best achieved by theatre in the round, rather than a stage. There is a Chorus of Women in the play but, unlike Woods's chorus, they do not express views other than to request mercy for Odale; their main function is first to sing a dance of praise for Creon. This leaves a greater role to the spectators in developing their own response. Again, there is no direct evidence of the play's effect on young people, although its theatrical success is indicated by subsequent revivals. It was later staged in Kenya and Nigeria, and

[12] The value of classical texts in debates of this kind was considered by the Appeal Court judge Sir John Laws in Laws 2002.

[13] Brathwaite 1967.

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was also performed by the Trinidad Theatre Workshop in 1973, directed by Derek Walcott.[14]

The popularity of *Antigone* in educational and workshop projects shows the capacity of ancient drama for adaptation in different historical and cultural contexts, and its potential for suggesting equivalences and comparisons with a variety of modern situations. The alternative narratives surrounding Antigone's dilemma have also energized fictional works such as Kamila Shamsie's prize-winning novel *Home Fire* (2017), which translocated the theme to issues of identity, family loyalties, religious faith, and radicalism in modern Britain.

A sometimes contentious example of the possible impact of refiguration of ancient drama on modern audiences is that of Seamus Heaney's *The Cure at Troy. A Version of Sophocles' Philoctetes* (1990, first performed in Derry, Ireland).[15] The play has provoked considerable debate about the representation of equivalence between ancient and modern situations. It is framed by the image of Philoctetes' raw wound and a mounting sense of destiny and dread. The core of Heaney's translational technique is to use the Greek conventions, and especially the chorus, to move the action into the consciousness of the receiving audience. Sophocles' *Philoctetes* has long been a rich source of adaptation in political contexts: for example, in Heiner Müller's version *Philoktet* in the situation of the German Democratic Republic (former East Germany). It was first performed in 1968 in Munich in West Germany, and not until 1977 in East Berlin (although a student performance took place in Leipzig in 1974). Müller's adaptation was initially interpreted as an allegory applying the Greek myth to Stalinism but in fact he made considerable changes from the Sophocles text.[16]

In contrast Heaney's version, especially in the printed text, is remarkably close to Sophocles in structure and content. The play is subtitled 'after *Philoctetes* by Sophocles'. The description 'after' indicates two kinds of relationship with Sophocles. First, Heaney's play does follow Sophocles' narrative outline and centres on the imagery of Philoctetes' wound, with its pain, poison, decay, and psychological effects. Heaney uses the Greek conventions associated with tragedy, especially in his

[14] For the relationship between Walcott's theatre work in the Caribbean and his poetry, see McConnell 2023.

[15] Heaney 1990.

[16] See further Hardwick 2000b: ch. 4.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0533245124000233 Published online by Cambridge University Press

retention of the role of the chorus, which he makes an interpreter, commentator, and moral guide on the implications of the action. He also replicates the Greek formal elements which were central to tragedy, especially the *agôn* or debate between major characters, and the *stichomythia* or sharp line-by-line exchange. And he communicates the intensive and sometimes problematic urgency of ethical choice. However, the play is also 'after Sophocles' in the sense that in performance and reading it is filtered through the poets', actors', directors', and spectators' consciousness of the events of the late twentieth century, and these become more important than the production conditions in Athens in the fifth century BCE.

The balance between ancient and modern has been signalled visually in different ways by various directors. At the Lyric Players Theatre, Belfast, in October 1990, the play's ambivalent relationship to modern perceptions of ancient culture was emphasized by the device of a white sheet which initially covered everything on the stage and then billowed up to reveal the fragmented head of a white classical sculpture. In contrast, a later production performed in a studio theatre in Edinburgh and at the Oxford Playhouse in 1999 put the emphasis from the beginning on modern resonances, with the opening sequence staged as a student bar argument. The bar stools were later used as stepping stones across which the characters carefully exited – an allusion, perhaps to an image favoured by Heaney in his lyric poetry and one which provided the title for a collection of his interviews and reflections.[17]

Debates about whether (and, if so, how) Heaney's play represents precise figures in the Unionist or the Nationalist communities in the North of Ireland seem to me to limit the scope of the emotions and attitudes with which the play deals. Rather, it is in the chorus's odes that Heaney departs from the usual lyric and religious registers of the Greek chorus in order to articulate specific resonances for the contemporary situation in Ireland. Two of these odes have become well known beyond those who have read the text or seen the play performed. One demonstrates Heaney's wish to introduce modern analogies of the suffering inflicted on both communities:

> A hunger striker's father
> stands in the graveyard dumb.

[17] O'Driscoll 2008.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0533245124000233 Published online by Cambridge University Press

> The police widow in veils
> Faints at the funeral home.[18]

Heaney observed in the programme notes for the production at the Tricycle Theatre, Kilburn, in 1991, that he had written the play in verse 'in order to preserve something of the formal ritualistic quality of the Greek theatrical experience' but had also 'felt free to compose a number of new lines for the Chorus'. This anachronism has been found by some critics to be intrusive, and Heaney later doubted its aesthetic value, 'considering that it reduced tension / like a puncture in a wheel'.[19]

The other well-known instance of the words of the chorus in *The Cure at Troy* has achieved even wider discussion:

> History says, *Don't hope*
> *On this side of the grave.*
> But then, once in a lifetime
> The longed-for tidal wave
> Of justice can rise up,
> And hope and history rhyme.
> So hope for a great sea-change
> On the far side of revenge.
> Believe that a further shore
> Is reachable from here.[20]

'When hope and history rhyme' became a slogan taken up by newspaper headlines at the time of the Good Friday Agreement (Belfast, 1998) but well before that the lines had taken on a public status when quoted in full by Mary Robinson, the newly elected President of the Irish Republic for 1990–7, in her inauguration speech. In his study 'Seamus Heaney, Colonialism and the Cure', Hugh Denard discussed how the lines established a continuing place in public rhetoric when they were repeated by the President of the United States, Bill Clinton, in a speech given on the steps of the Bank of Ireland (1 December 1995) while on a visit to support the peace process.[21] Denard pointed out the symbolism of the occasion, since the Bank of Ireland still displays the iconography of royal authority from its days

[18] Heaney 1990: 77.
[19] See the discussion in Wilmer 1999. A wide-ranging series of essays on Heaney's use of classical material has been published in S. Harrison et al. 2019, with extensive bibliography.
[20] Heaney 1990: 77, emphasis original.
[21] Denard 2000.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0533245124000233 Published online by Cambridge University Press

as the Irish Houses of Commons and Lords under British rule, and it faces the front gates of Trinity College, which was established in 1592 by Elizabeth I to be the educational support for the Anglicization of Ireland. Also in 1995, Jacques Santer, the President of the European Commission, gave an address to the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation in Dublin Castle. He quoted from *The Cure at Troy* to express his aspiration that 'history and hope can be made to rhyme'. The chair of the Forum, Judge Catherine McGuiness wrote in the *Irish Times* of her hope that 'these words could be a motto for the forum'.

Denard's article went on to argue the radical thesis that Heaney's version of *Philoctetes* actually challenges discourses that lock Catholics and Protestants in Ireland into accepting apparently historically determined roles as colonized and colonist, expressed through a continuing rhetoric of victim and oppressor, and that in its redemption of Philoctetes' suffering *The Cure at Troy* actually offered early insights which were eventually incorporated into the institutions set up by the Good Friday Agreement and ratified by referenda both in the North and in the Republic: 'To that extent, *The Cure at Troy* both represents, and is itself, symbolically, a ground-breaking, post-colonial voice.'[22]

Of course, the adoption of words from a refiguration of Greek drama into public discourse on the peace process is not a simple transplantation. It owes much to the status of Heaney himself (later in 1995 to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature) and to public knowledge of his internal exile within Ireland. However, it does show that refiguration of classical texts can have a public role and can be one factor in a wider cultural (and in this case political) process. It unites the personal, the hopeful, and the social aspects of the 'making a difference' category with which this chapter began and also opens up discussion of the broader cultural processes involved in different kinds of reception. Iconic examples may mark watersheds when a particular text seems to resonate with urgencies in politics and culture, but they also map the trajectories in the work of a writer (or scholar). For instance, Heaney's later play *The Burial at Thebes* (2008), an adaptation of *Antigone*, moved the focus away from the modern Troubles in Ireland and in form and idiom resonated with the histories of Irish culture and desire for liberation from British domination, without directly taking a political stance.[23]

[22] Denard 2000: 2. For discussion of the causes and implications of changes to the works of Heaney, and others, in performance in the US, see Hardwick 2015.

[23] Hardwick 2015, 2019a.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0533245124000233 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Reception and cultural processes

In the course of this Survey it has been shown that reception not only studies a wide range of cultural processes but also contributes to them, both directly and indirectly. Of these cultural processes the most significant are the transmission of material from one generation to the next; the interaction of (classical) traditions with others; and processes of cultural and political intervention.

Transmission

Transmission refers to the operations of various kinds of tradition that focus on the handing down or transmission of material from one generation to the next, sometimes through forms, conventions, and scholarship which seek to transmit the 'essential' or 'real' classical original. Examples would include the attempted reconstruction of an ancient performance of tragedy or of the original-language text of a poem, perhaps with commentary or interpretation. In the context of reception studies, too, these are valuable activities because they contain at least an attempt to identify (and sometimes detach) the accretions which have subsequently become attached to, and embedded in, later perceptions of the ancient texts. This is not to say that it is ever possible to return to 'the text as it really was'. Even if a text can be plausibly reconstructed, the audience cannot. And if, inevitably, we read the past through a filter of receptions then, as Charles Martindale has argued, there are real doubts about whether the ancient meanings and contexts can ever be plausibly reconstructed.[24] But even if the relationship between filters of reception and perceptions of the ancient text is problematic, attempts to map and peel away layers of reception can be a valuable gadfly, both in the scholarship offered and in destabilizing easy assumptions about meaning (the reverse process, which shows how various receptions can illuminate the source text and its context, is also significant).

Interaction of (classical) traditions with others

This kind of interaction may be intentional and perceived at the time or it may only be recognized in any detail afterwards (perhaps as the result of reception scholarship). Modern examples here would include *Odale's*

[24] Martindale 1993.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0533245124000233 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Choice, the adaptation of Sophocles' *Antigone* in an African context by Kamau Brathwaite discussed above, and especially the intermingling of Greek and African approaches to the celebratory and lamenting functions of the chorus. In this category might also be included the choreography and emotion represented by various kinds of dance and movement traditions. Examples include Jazz Art in South Africa, as used in the Reznek/Fleishmann *Medea* (1994–6); Japanese Butoh, which influenced the rehearsal phase of *The Bacchai*, staged at the Royal National Theatre by Peter Hall in 2002; the adaptation of *Oedipus at Colonus* for a gospel choir in the USA in 1983; studies of Martha Graham's dance work; and the meeting of popular and classical art forms in Victorian burlesque. In written texts, striking features include poetic refigurations in form and imagery – an example being the convergence of Latin, Christian, and Celtic approaches in Seamus Heaney's 'Bann Valley Eclogue' (in Heaney 2001).[25]

This interaction between classical material and other traditions may involve a cultural exchange in the meeting of different artistic or scholarly contexts. It may also involve, over a period of years or even centuries, various forms of 'migration', across cultures and across genres. The parameters of cultural history are constantly being redrawn. Seamus Heaney addressed this point when talking about the history of epic (in this case Beowulf):

> The study of the history of the English language and of Anglo-Saxon literary texts means something different now than it did when it was initiated in the 19th century. Within that older ideological frame, the tracing of Anglo-Saxon origins was as racial as it was linguistic; there was a definite patriotic purpose to it, a desire to establish the Anglo-Saxon element as a guarantee of an older, purer English line...
>
> But things are different nowadays. English we now recognise as a confabulation of Englishes and in current post-colonial conditions, in a devolving Britain, in an evolving Europe, the more people realise that their language and their culture are historically amassed possessions, the better. The outlanders at the edge of the world and the speakers at the bottom of the linguistic pecking order have had their pentecost...
>
> These writers [James Joyce, Hugh MacDiarmid, Derek Walcott, Toni Morrison, Les Murray] and others like them, sing themselves and celebrate their local idiom as part of the polyphony that is English. And yet relish of that medium and their enjoyment of their linguistic independence are all the greater for being based on knowledge of the depth and distance from which their idiom has sprung. Walcott's sailor hero in his poem The Schooner Flight, for example, speaks his West Indian English in lines that echo the alliterative metre of Piers Plowman, which in turn is a direct development of the metre of Beowulf.

[25] See Hall 1999; Macintosh 2000.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0533245124000233 Published online by Cambridge University Press

…Even a slight knowledge of Anglo-Saxon enforces a true, historically based, multi-cultural understanding. And that is to say nothing of the way a feel for the language increases the power of the literature itself.[26]

Heaney associates this kind of cultural shift with a phenomenon that the Russian poet Osip Mandelstam called 'nostalgia for world culture'. This is an ironic use of the word 'nostalgia' to imply something which is not backward-looking but rather aspires to an inter- and cross-cultural creativity that recognizes political and psychological shaping forces.[27] Heaney saw Anglo-Saxon epic as leading to a historically based cross-cultural understanding. I have quoted the passage almost in full so that the force and structure of his allusions and argument are properly conveyed. It seems to me that at almost every turn one could substitute classical examples and maintain both the coherence of the argument and its power to convince. A model of engagement with classical texts and images as a vehicle for various kinds of cultural exchange and development is perhaps unusual, but the direction now being taken by reception studies is revealing precisely that kind of activity, in enabling the seriously inquisitive to distinguish between, for example, the values of a particular appropriating text or society, those of the ancient context of production, and those of the new readers and spectators.

Cultural and political intervention

The capacity of classical texts to operate in supposedly deserted artistic and political spaces (both ancient and modern) has provided an almost infinitely renewable resource for 'critical distance'. It has enabled social and political critique in censored societies, and in liberal or barely censored contexts has been able to provide a sometimes devastating challenge to conventional wisdoms. Research by scholars in the Czech Republic about the staging of Greek drama during the period of Soviet domination after the Second World War suggests that, in periods of strong repression, translation and staging had to be extremely subtle in order to escape the censor, so that it was then left to the audience to spot hints and make connections. Only as the censorship began to relax could more overt challenges to the regime

[26] Heaney 1998.
[27] For discussion of the etymology of the concept and its current applications, see Riley 2021.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0533245124000233 Published online by Cambridge University Press

be staged, and some theatrical critics thought that the resulting art forms were cruder and more limited in the ways in which they invited the audience to engage with the plays.[28]

In postcolonial contexts, too, reception of classical texts has been instrumental in the resistance of imposed identities and the construction of new ones. This is true both of post-colonizing societies and of the post-colonized. The common factor is the potential of classical texts as sites for both colonizers and colonized (and those complicit with both or neither). These sites, or third spaces, enable the mind and the imagination to work with ancient and more recent pasts and with the future. In this field, a look across the different strands in reception studies shows considerable variety in the impact of classical material in pre- and post-independence situations. There have been detailed studies of the impact of the classical aspects of the education system on relationships between ruler and ruled. For example, Jared Majeed has discussed how references to ancient Rome provide an index to British imperialist attitudes to India in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially in respect of allusions to the European classical heritage, Latin and Greek as Indo-European languages, Roman law, and the history of the Roman Empire.[29] In reimagining sites of contest, Tony Harrison's adaptation of Euripides' *Hippolytus* and Seneca's *Phaedra*, *Phaedra Britannica* (1975), used the setting of the Raj for a critique of race, colonizers, and cultural assumptions.[30] Harrison also critiqued Anglo-Egyptian power relations in the archaeological sequences in *The Trackers of Oxyrynchus*, adapted from Sophocles' fragmentary *Ichneutai* and staged at Delphi in 1988.[31]

Concepts of identity

The double-edged impact of classical education as part of colonial education in the British Empire has been demonstrated in the ways in which writers such as Derek Walcott in the Caribbean and Femi Osofisan, Christopher Okigbo, Ola Rotimi, and Wole Soyinka in West Africa have used classical themes as a basis for new work which

[28] A paper on this research was given at an international graduate students' conference in Oxford in summer 2002 by Katerina Kvizova, Institute of Classical Studies, Prague.
[29] Majeed 1999.
[30] T. Harrison 1985.
[31] T. Harrison 1990.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0533245124000233 Published online by Cambridge University Press

both challenges colonialist and neo-colonialist attitudes and also critiques the politics of their own independent nations. Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, first performed in 1968, explores the themes of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*.[32] It includes lines spoken or sung in Yoruba and is often interpreted as an allegory for the fighting in the Biafran War. Osofisan's *Tegonni. An African Antigone*, first staged in 1994 as part of the Brave New Work project at Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, USA, refigures Sophocles in a nineteenth-century context to address racial and imperialist problems, as well as developing a critique of modern power struggles.[33]

Apart from their intrinsic artistic merit, these are significant documents in cultural history. They demonstrate a double consciousness of the historical and artistic role of classical culture: on the one hand, appropriated to justify the supposed cultural superiority of colonial role; on the other, reappropriated to show that the capacity to refigure ancient texts is not confined to the colonizers. The texts raise issues concerning the relationship between individual, social, and political responsibilities that can be contextualized in different cultures and historical situations. In this sense, the reception of classical texts by writers in newly independent nations demonstrates that that classical material, in spite of its associations with empire and colonization, can become one aspect in the creation of new postcolonial senses of identity. When the Kenyan writer and critic Ngugi wa Thiong'o attacked imperialism as a destroyer of culture, an inducer of shame for names, systems of belief, languages, lore, art, dance, song, sculpture, and colour, his remarks opened the way to fuller appreciation of how African refigurations of Greek drama and poetry have revived appreciation of precisely those elements of Greek culture which were marginalized in some narrower Western appropriations but revitalized through encounter with the traditions of African theatre. They provide examples of 'beyond intertextuality' that precede more recent theorizations in the field. It is ironic that classically educated African writers were able to do this precisely at a time when classics had been decentred from the curriculum in the colonizing countries. In this sense, classical texts may be said to be themselves part of a diaspora, first from Greece, then from western Europe, and

[32] Rotimi 1971.
[33] Osofisan 1999.

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then like other diasporas developing new and hybrid identities in a variety of civic contexts.[34]

These features prompt further questions about the extent to which and how reception practices and scholarship have also to move beyond description and contextual analysis. The lines of enquiry that I have sketched out above suggest that new kinds of evaluation are also emerging. In these, 'faithfulness' to a unified interpretation of an ancient text is no longer a defining criterion. Instead, investigating the nature of the relationship between ancient and modern, and between these and other mediating texts and contexts, may generate other kinds of evaluative terms: 'questioning', 'challenging', 'unexpected', 'celebratory', 'selective', 'subversive' may partner 'profound' and 'revealing'. In the reception vocabulary of the future, appreciation of formal technique may be matched by appreciation of cultural hybridity and energy, and an awareness of cultural fragmentation and regrouping.

Above all, reception studies have shown that classical texts, images, and ideas are culturally active presences. The vocabulary of reception studies has moved on from notions of 'legacy' to include the values and practices of the present and future creativity generated through deployment of Greek and Roman material. The key evaluative question, both for the relationship with the past and for the present, may well be 'What difference was made?' This question covers both the practices of the appropriator or agent of refiguration in relation to the source text or idea and additionally the impact on the receiving culture or tradition. There are three aspects which are the main aids to judgement on these questions. First, have the artists 'made' or created a work which differs in significant respects from the classical text or image? If so, how is this difference expressed? Formally? Linguistically? Visually? And how do such differences correspond to the differences and similarities between the ancient and subsequent contexts of production and reception? Are we dealing with what might be termed an imitation, an analogue, or a totally new work?

Secondly, how does the imitation, analogue, or new work affect perceptions of the ancient world? Does it prompt the receiving

[34] For further discussion, see Hardwick 2004a. That essay represented a 'first-wave' response to how practitioners with colonized life experiences were 'writing back' to colonizers. Subsequent questions to be posed include 'what difference was made', or even whether such work was an (inadvertent) agent in the perpetuation of colonialist attitudes to aesthetic and cultural values.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0533245124000233 Published online by Cambridge University Press

individuals or groups to revisit the ancient works, perhaps to find elements which had been concealed or marginalized? Does it reject aspects of the ancient? Does it explicitly or implicitly appropriate aspects of the ancient as artistic, cultural, or political examples or foundation myths to give authority to contemporary practices or ideas? Does it recuperate or regenerate ancient practices in a way which makes them more acceptable or comprehensible to a subsequent society? Does it regrow these in different cultural ground?

And thirdly, what do the modern work and its reception suggest about the direction of contemporary aesthetic and cultural practices? Does that direction stimulate debate, offer insights, and critique and transform perspectives? Does it appeal to desires for an unchanging aesthetic standard or notion of human nature? Does it reaffirm certain kinds of values in a different context?

In the opening chapter of this Survey, I alluded to two key areas of concern that seem at the time of writing to raise critical questions about the status of the theory and methods used in the study of Greek and Roman antiquity: the 'global turn' and the 'existential turn'. I suggested that, while the notion of a 'global turn' is helpful in highlighting the cultural role of Greek and Roman antiquity worldwide and in fostering comparative and collaborative work, it might also serve to mask resurrection of the notions of 'universality' and 'exceptionality'. It might even usher in a 'one size fits all' approach to popularizing that serves to marginalize the distinctiveness and the importance of what Emily Greenwood has called the 'omni-local'.[35] A global turn in research and in teaching does, however, encourage and enable critical engagement with questions about the cultural and ideological freight that the texts and ideas of Greece and Rome carry with them, and how that has operated in different times, places, and languages. 'Working seriously on the past' (to borrow Adorno's phrase) is a sine qua non for addressing the present and creating futures.[36] Facing up to those problems is a task for scholars as well as for creative practitioners, and, given the continuing demand for classicists and ancient historians to play a part as public intellectuals and cultural commentators, it imposes both burdens and opportunities if insights from ancient Greece and Rome and their receptions are to contribute

[35] Greenwood 2013.
[36] Adorno 2005: 89.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0533245124000233 Published online by Cambridge University Press

incisively to the enhancement of public sensibilities and critical acumen.

Judgements about the making of differences and their impact require time and critical distance before they can be made. In this respect, the study of very recent appropriations and refigurations has special requirements for the finding, preservation, and analysis of the data which will inform judgements that can only be made in the future, and the development of frameworks and taxonomies that work with and beyond intertextualities. Jerri Daboo's insistence that sites of diasporic exchange and creativity are populated by more than one cultural heritage provides a useful analogy for classical reception studies: one site's 'host' or indigenous community may be another's migrant space; it is the mutual tolerance and engagement that counts.[37] The image applies in geopolitics but it also offers a metaphor for reception experience and scholarship. The growth of reception studies in recent years contains an explicit claim that Greek and Roman material will continue to provide a significant strand in cultural history. It also implies a requirement to develop transparent rationales and practices in cultural philology that will make critical enquiry a reality in the present, and form a coherent basis for investigation by the cultural historians of the future.

[37] Daboo 2023.

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