Were it not too presumptuous, a reviewer might be tempted to find this also a fair commentary on the present book.

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CLASSICS IN AMERICA

C. WINTERER: *The Culture of Classicism. Ancient Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life 1780–1910*. Pp. x + 244. Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2002. Cased, £31. ISBN: 0-8018-6799-1.

What was the contribution of classicists to American intellectual and cultural life? *The Culture of Classicism* focuses on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century classicists to explore how the study of antiquity was central to the formation of the humanities and the establishment of liberal education in America. It argues that, far from being purveyors of dead languages, classical scholars built up an enduring legacy for American universities: a culture that promoted inward self-perfection and acted to oppose the materialism, utilitarianism, and civic degeneracy of modern societies.

The book is based on a chronological structure. While its principal subject lies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it traces the history of classical studies from the colonial era up until the early twentieth century. The first two chapters describe how, after the mid-eighteenth century, a group of American classical scholars began to interrogate the linguistic orientation of their subject and deployed antiquity to articulate the new political ideology of republicanism. While in the colonial period classics was limited to grammar and rhetoric, and was predominantly used to educate a ministerial class, the antebellum era witnessed the emergence of a more overtly political engagement with antiquity. In order to deal with attacks claiming the uselessness of antiquity for modern market economy, scholars such as Edward Everet and George Bancroft suggested the thorough transformation of existing methods of teaching and research. Their main targets were the exclusive focus of school and university curricula on 'words', as well as the use of antiquity—and Rome in particular—as a mirror image of modern societies. As Winterer explains, these scholars replaced traditional English and Scottish classicism by the new approach to antiquity formulated by German historicism. This move allowed them both to discern the differences between the ancient and modern worlds, and to re-employ the classics as a means of radical self-critique and transformation.

The turn to German scholarship also entailed a shift of emphasis from Rome to Greece, which was further reinforced by the democratization of American society and the subsequent interest in Athens as a model for modern democracies. As it is argued in the second and third chapters, after the late eighteenth century, classical scholars evoked Greece to formulate the political principles of the democratic state. They believed that Athenian culture developed an 'educated democracy', which could serve as an exemplary school for contemporary democrats, but also as a means of criticizing the pitfalls of modern democracies: unbridled materialism, anti-intellectualism, demagoguery, and utilitarianism. Thus, under the dual influence of historicist intellect and democratic politics, nineteenth-century scholars engaged in the critical study of the ancient world in order to educate democratic citizens and inculcate in them the spirit of self-cultivation. As the book documents, their works on Homer and Greek

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tragedy reveal both the historicist need to perceive the foreignness of antiquity and the political choice to reject modernity and 'become Greek' by immersing oneself in the past.

Yet the move that broadened the scope of the discipline was also the move that dethroned classical study after the 1870s in both schools and universities. By stressing the distance between past and present, the new conception of history ultimately eroded the relevance of antiquity and presented the social sciences as an eminently more useful guide for modern concerns. The last two chapters present the development and results of this change. W. meticulously describes the marginalization of classical study in the curricula, the increasing interest in modern languages and literatures, as well as the growth of anti-classicist movements pronouncing the social uselessness of antiquity. While the ostensible outcome was the transformation of the classics into a specialized and predominantly élite discipline, the 'culture of classicism' had, simultaneously, a less obvious and, perhaps, more far-reaching effect. Classicists' renunciation of immediate social utility, as W. suggests, provided a new basis for the humanities that made it possible to criticize modern society, pursue knowledge for its own sake, and cultivate erudition as a path to personal development and responsible citizenship. Hence the formation of the humanities as a strong alternative to utilitarianism, after the last third of the nineteenth century, testifies to nothing less than a huge ideological victory for classics: the profound impact of classicism on the culture of modern American universities.

W.'s precise and imaginative work constitutes a valuable contribution to both intellectual history and the study of classical reception. A wide range of primary sources, including college curricula, lectures, journal articles, histories, grammars, and internal college correspondence, sustains the main thesis of the book. These texts not only bring to light a key moment in American history, but also raise some crucial questions about the current relevance of the ancient past, and the relationship between classical learning and political responsibility. What is the purpose of classical education? How can the study of ancient texts establish a counter-culture, a means of criticizing and opposing the dominant utilitarian and anti-intellectualist values of modern societies? Nineteenth-century scholars answered these questions by promoting an intriguing, yet profoundly ambivalent, alternative to commercial economy and industrialism. Their turn to antiquity substituted for social utility an individualist and profoundly idealist learning, whose aim at self-cultivation was strikingly incompatible with their affirmation of the need for political and social change. At the same time, however, their vision of citizenship and their ideal of 'educated Athens' have opened up new directions for classicists, and have provided us with a challenging model for contemporary critical and political thought.

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THE LIFE OF MOMMSEN

S. REBENICH: *Theodor Mommsen. Eine Biographie*. Pp. 272, ills. Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 2002. Cased. ISBN: 3-406-49295-9.

Theodor Mommsen, 1817–1903, is the towering figure among scholars of classical antiquity in the nineteenth century. In Germany today, ancient historians, classical philologists, archaeologists, and exponents of the neighbouring sciences are organized in the *Mommsen-Gesellschaft*. Thanks to the Nobel prize for literature,

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