

Brill's Companion to the Reception of Classics in International Modernism and the Avant-Garde

Edited by

Adam J. Goldwyn and James Nikopoulos



BRILL

LEIDEN | BOSTON

Contents

Acknowledgements VII
Notes on the Editors VIII
Notes on the Contributors IX

Introduction: Modernist Studies at the Crossroads of Classical
Reception, Seferis Reads Eliot and Cavafy 1
Adam J. Goldwyn and James Nikopoulos

- 1 The Female Colossus in the New World: Innovations on a Classical Motif
in José Martí's *Modernismo* 19
Tyler Fisher and Jenni Lehtinen
- 2 Educating the "Perfect Imagist": Greek Literature and Classical
Scholarship in the Poetry of H. D. 38
Bryan Brinkman and Bartholomew Brinkman
- 3 Creating the Modern Rhapsode: The Classics as World Literature in
Ezra Pound's *Cantos* 53
Adam J. Goldwyn
- 4 From Ithaca to Magna Graecia, Icaria and Hyperborea – Some Aspects
of the Classical Tradition in the Serbian Avant-Garde 73
Bojan Jović
- 5 Gods, Heroes, and Myths: The Use of Classical Imagery in Spanish
Avant-Garde Prose 106
Juan Herrero-Senés
- 6 The Classical Ideal in Fernando Pessoa 123
Kenneth David Jackson
- 7 "Ulysses' Island": *Nóstos* as Exile in Salvatore Quasimodo's Poetry 142
Ernesto Livorni
- 8 Jean Cocteau, *Orphée*, and the Shock of the Old 160
David Hammerbeck

- 9 **The Classical Past and ‘The History of Ourselves’: Laura Riding’s Trojan Woman** 182
Anett Jessop
- 10 **Platonic Eros and “Soul-Leading” in C. S. Lewis** 199
Samuel Baker
- 11 **The Heideggerian Origins of a Post-Platonist Plato** 220
William H. F. Altman
- 12 **Albert Camus’ Hellenic Heart, between Saint Augustine and Hegel** 242
Matthew Sharpe
- 13 **A Modernist Poet Alludes to an Ancient Historian: George Seferis and Thucydides** 269
Polina Tambakaki
- 14 **The Wisdom of Myth: Eliot’s “Ulysses, Order, and Myth”** 292
James Nikopoulos
- Index** 313

Introduction: Modernist Studies at the Crossroads of Classical Reception, Seferis Reads Eliot and Cavafy

Adam J. Goldwyn and James Nikopoulos

On December 17, 1946 the future Nobel laureate George Seferis (1900–1971) delivered a lecture at the British Institute in Athens. The talk focused on two poets already appraised as central to their respective languages’ avant-gardes, but about whom little had been said in comparison. Today, when we talk about modern poetry, it does not seem so strange to discuss T. S. Eliot (1888–1965) and C. P. Cavafy (1863–1933) together – despite the glaring dissimilarities in their careers: The former was the lynchpin of modern literature, whose poetry and criticism helped shape, perhaps more than any other’s, the dominant ideas of what would become the century’s most dominant literary aesthetic. The latter? – a peripheral figure whose work did not receive much attention during his lifetime. The former lived in London and wrote in English, while the latter spent his life in Alexandria, Egypt and wrote in Greek. In other words, the one worked from the global capital of the largest empire the world had ever seen and in the world’s most influential language, while the other wrote from the colonized margins of that empire, in a language whose heyday of influence had long since faded. What, then, could T. S. Eliot and C. P. Cavafy truly have in common?

According to Seferis, the answer is “history.” But what he means has little to do with circumstances. Rather, Seferis argues that both poets had a certain “way of using time,” a sensibility regarding history which shaped each poet’s work similarly.¹ It is a counterintuitive thesis to anyone familiar with these two very different artists, since each seems to incorporate the past into his poetry in very distinct ways – Eliot by inserting fragments from the Western literary tradition into modernist epics like *The Waste Land*, Cavafy, by invoking unremembered pasts in the anonymous voices of his unassuming lyrics. If Eliot was known for reestablishing a literary canon, and for asserting his own work’s place therein, Cavafy made his claims by giving voice to the forgotten and the sidelined. Seferis acknowledges these distinctions, but he contends that Cavafy’s and Eliot’s work share a formative principle regarding history that accounts for their poetry’s similarities as much as its differences. Seferis calls

¹ Seferis (1966), 136.

this “a feeling of temporal identification” – the feeling that “past and present are united and with them, perhaps, the future as well.”²

In pairing such unlikely bedfellows, and in doing so through the topic of history, Seferis’ essay encapsulates the many tensions that underlie Classical reception in the modernist period. Seferis is essentially arguing that the “temporal identification” that unites time present with time past and future is an important part of what defines modernist poetics as a whole. To an extent, this idea is now taken for granted. As a recent study on modernism claims, “This tension between tradition and the apparent chaos of ‘contemporary history’ structures much of our thinking about art and literature in the twentieth century.”³ And indeed one of the principal reasons for why this assertion is now a truism can be attributed to Eliot’s impact on world letters. As far back as his 1919 essay “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” Eliot was arguing for the reciprocal nature of artistic influence. His 1923 review of the iconic work of both modernism and modernist Classical reception, “*Ulysses*, Order, and Myth,” singled out James Joyce’s use of Homeric allusion, and in the process defined modernism’s “contemporary history” as a period of “futility and anarchy,” which could only be made sense of by translating one’s cultural inheritance into a present tense.⁴ The topic of history, then, is not just of foremost importance to a volume focusing on modernism and the classical heritage. It is central to any discussion of what constitutes modernism in the first place, and it has been since modernists first began their meandering attempts to situate their artistic production within the broader context of world history.

Indeed, this tension between contemporary history and the legacy of the past continues to shape our understanding of modernism. Some of the most vituperative debates in humanistic study of the last fifty years have revolved around the question of what constitutes a culture’s valid inheritance. In the field of literature, much of this is once again indebted to the influence of modernism and of T. S. Eliot in particular. By the mid-twentieth century, modernism had become so entrenched in Anglo-American academia as a paragon of literary worth, and Eliot’s position therein so centrally established, that the coterie of mostly American and European artists associated with Eliot had come to dominate the modern canon. But it is not just that history had deemed Eliot et al. most worthy of posterity. It is that artists like Eliot had themselves deemed modernist aesthetics most capable of transcribing their times for posterity. The argument went that only a form of art which dramatized the “futile”

2 Seferis (1966), 132.

3 Latham and Rogers (2015), 6.

4 Eliot (1975b), 177.

and “anarchic” nature of early twentieth-century history was truly of its time, and therefore truly modern (and thus potentially modernist). Modernism got defined not just as a period, but as Eric Hayot has argued, as an “attitude.”⁵ The result of such snobbery, write Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, is that “to this day, no other name for a field of cultural production evokes quite the constellation of negativity, risk of aesthetic failure, and bad behavior that ‘modernism’ does.”⁶

But much has changed. Back in 2006 Mao and Walkowitz were at the vanguard of efforts to reconsider modernism’s legacy. Their work helped to inaugurate the “new” modernist studies, a movement which has been so successful that today the entire field is in a sense still “new.” It is a movement which has expanded our conceptual understanding of what modernist art was and when it appeared, and in the process opened up modernist studies to new critical perspectives. Scholars no longer feel relegated to ignore historical factors or to keep to certain sanctioned methodologies. In recent years critics have analyzed modernism in light of popular culture, as well as technological and scientific advancements; they have reassessed our preconceptions of the period with postcolonial and queer theory, and they have turned modernist criticism into a truly worldwide examination. Once exemplified by only a few names who mostly worked in western Europe and the United States, modernism is now considered a global phenomenon. As a result, our periodization continues to change. Today, it is not just unclear whether modernism began in 1913 or 1857, or whether modernism ended after World War II or not, but whom such bookends center or marginalize, promote or silence.⁷

5 Hayot (2012), 150.

6 Mao and Walkowitz (2006), 4.

7 In “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown,” Virginia Woolf famously claimed that “On or about December 1910 human character changed.” Woolf (1924), 746. This essay is now a staple of modernist theory, but it did less to finalize our efforts at periodization than incite greater speculation. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane’s influential 1978 anthology of modernist literature begins in 1890. Back in 1931, Edmund Wilson’s classic study, *Axel’s Castle*, linked modernism to French symbolism, and in doing so, pushed modernism’s start date back to 1870. Today, things are far from resolved. Jean-Michel Rabaté offers 1913 as a fundamental starting place for modernism. Meanwhile a website like Yale’s modernism lab chooses to begin its focus a year later, even though its director, Pericles Lewis, begins his *Cambridge Introduction to Modernism* in 1900 – though the first chapter focuses on Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du mal*, from 1857 (Peter Gay also begins his 2008 book on modernism with Baudelaire). The great irony of all this, as Eric Hayot has pointed out, is that the first mention of the word modernism came in 1888, when Rubén Darío used the term *modernismo* in his review of the work of Ricardo Contreras; Hayot (2012), 151. (To further complicate things, even Darío’s position as initiator

Thus, while Eliot and his high modernist brethren have certainly not been forgotten, profound shifts in the study of their legacies have turned them into figureheads for an older way of doing things. The vagaries of modernism's reception are, in many ways, reflected in Eliot's own legacy. Once considered bastions of artistic innovation, both Eliot in particular and modernism in general would become synonymous with outmoded exclusivity. Suddenly such high modernist classics as *The Waste Land*, not to mention even more challenging tomes like *Ulysses* or Ezra Pound's *Cantos*, seemed as much avant-garde tours de force as opportunities for highly educated western men to display their impenetrable erudition.

Cavafy's reception, however, has moved in a different direction. Mostly unknown in his lifetime, Cavafy has since become, according to America's most distinguished society of verse, the "most distinguished Greek poet of the twentieth century."⁸ Just thirty years ago and such a statement would have probably surprised most Greek speakers, for whom someone like Yiannis Ritsos, or one of Greece's two Nobel laureates, Seferis or Odysseus Elytis, would have seemed more apt nominees. Even more astounding is Cavafy's stature within world letters. In the last two decades, translations and academic studies of his work have proliferated at a breakneck pace. UNESCO commemorated the 150th anniversary of his birth by declaring 2013 the "Cavafy year," hosting events in his honor everywhere from Chile to Kazakhstan.⁹ In the United States, symposia organized in his name brought together classicists and writers alike – The PEN

of Latin American *modernismo* is debated. See for example, Fisher and Lehtinen's chapter in this volume.)

The field of modernist studies is fully aware of these contradictions. Any of the volumes cited in this introduction discuss them. A particularly good starting place, though, is Latham and Rogers' *Modernism: Evolution of an Idea*.

Whether or not we should identify a mid-twentieth-century end to modernism, so as to make way for post-modernism, is just as contentious. Recent explorations of this topic include two entries from Eysteinnsson and Liska's voluminous undertaking: Barrett Watten's "Modernism at the Crossroads. Types of Negativity," and Sam Slote's "Thoroughly Modern Modernism, Modernism and its Postmodernisms."

8 "C. P. Cavafy," Poetry Foundation.org, accessed 27 May 2016.

9 Sandra Marinopoulos, "Cavafy's 'Figures' Loved and Idealized," The Huffington Post, updated March 24, 2014. <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/sandra-marinopoulos/cavafys-figures-loved-and_b_4637297.html> See also The Hellenic National Commission for UNESCO. <http://www.unesco-hellas.gr/en/years_of_kavafi.html> Accessed June 1, 2016. As for the celebration in Kazakhstan, this event was co-hosted by James Nikopoulos' university in Astana, in conjunction with the Greek embassy.

America Center's New York tribute even included Nobel Prize winning novelist Orhan Pamuk.¹⁰

Cavafy's current reputation must be considered in light of the recent global turn in criticism – to which the new modernist studies have made a significant contribution. That a poet who produced only a small body of work written in a language the West had long since ossified into a “dead” idiom is now a giant of modern poetry, is testament to the sea change that literary studies have undergone. But Cavafy's work is paradigmatic of the “new” in academia in more ways than one. He is not just a once minor writer of a minor language from a once overlooked corner of the modern republic of letters. He was also a gay man who composed breathtaking and unabashed encomiums to homoerotic desire. Factor all this together and Cavafy suddenly seems paradigmatic of the many neglected corners of human experience that modern cultural criticism seeks to highlight. “Cavafy's world exists in the twilight zones,” writes Seferis, “in the borderlands of those places, individuals and epochs which he so painstakingly identifies.”¹¹ This is as true of his “much publicized eroticism” as of the anonymous individuals and eras that litter his historical poems “as though fallen from time's saddlebags.”¹² Cavafy's panorama is the landscape of contemporary criticism – hell bent on examining from up close what was once confined to the farthest reaches.

The history of Cavafy's reception is paradigmatic not just of our changing perspectives on modern poetry, but on Greek as a language of poetry. Cavafy does not just “use time” by alluding to history, but by using the history of his language in his verse. Cavafy's Greek is anything but typical. At certain moments quotidian, at others shimmeringly formal, Cavafy's poetry aimed to make full use of his idiom's potential, which included incorporating *katharevousa*, the controversial language invented to align modern Greek more closely with its ancient Attic predecessor. When Seferis writes that Cavafy's sensibility is expressed by the same kind of historical sense as Eliot's, the kind that is “temporary” and “simultaneous,” he is not just talking about Cavafy's use of historical allusion.¹³ He is talking about the way Cavafy's poetry presents a portrait of a continuous Greek language, one that is no longer either “ancient”

10 See “A Tribute to C. P. Cavafy,” Pen America, accessed 1 June 2016 <<http://pen.org/event/2013/10/09/tribute-cp-cavafy>>

11 Seferis (1966), 152.

12 Seferis (1966), 152.

13 Seferis (1966), 153.

or “modern,” no longer resigned to a glorious past or an obscure present, but that is simply present in the fullness of its complete past.¹⁴

Which is why Seferis’ essay is as relevant to a discussion on the changing face of modernist studies as to the other field represented in this volume – classical reception. Nothing has done more in recent years to shake up the academic study of the Greek and Roman classics than reception studies. Charles Martindale has made this argument convincingly. He writes that when he began his doctorate at Oxford in 1968, “Latin poetry ended with Juvenal, philosophy was confined to Plato and Aristotle, [and] history largely kept within two periods (classical Greece and late Republican and early Imperial Rome).”¹⁵ Not so anymore. It is not uncommon now to find everything from Byzantine history to modern Greek verse taught by Classicists, and a field that once labored exclusively with philological methodologies might today have recourse to everything from gender studies to performance history. Another way of putting it is that classical reception has done to Classics what the “new” modernist studies did to its field.¹⁶ What once counted as the classics and how one should go about assessing them are now being actively redefined.

The consequences of this “democratic turn,” are profound.¹⁷ Reception studies impels us to interrogate our assumptions about what we simultaneously dismiss and revere with a term like “classic” – Are these texts as independent from our world as we thought? Are they as independent from the systems of values future readers imbued them with before passing them along to us? One could argue, says Martindale, that “Classics is necessarily a dialogue of ancient and modern, transhistorically. There is a sense that this is what the very name of [the] discipline means.”¹⁸ So is this the same “feeling of temporal identification” that Seferis located in Eliot and Cavafy? An emphasis on reception turns the study of the classics into an examination of the ways artists align the past with the present and thereby rewrite that past and influence its futures.

In “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” Eliot famously wrote that tradition is not something an artist inherits. It is something he or she must work to

14 For example, see Constantine et al. (2009), the ambitious anthology that presents Greek poetry as one continuous 2,800 year history.

15 See Martindale (2013), 169–70.

16 See, for instance, Stuart Gillespie’s assertion that reception has become so normalized within Classics that “we are becoming used to reception moving towards the forefront of the study of ancient literatures,” as evidenced, in his view, by the emphasis on reception in the recent Cambridge Companions on ancient authors. Gillespie (2011), 1.

17 Hardwick and Stray (2008), 3.

18 Martindale (2013), 177.

acquire, and only by paying heed to what Eliot calls “the historical sense,” the perception “not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence.”¹⁹ Which is essentially what Cavafy is dramatizing in a poem like “Those Who Fought for the Achaean League” (at least so argues Seferis):

Υπέρ της Αχαιϊκής Συμπολιτείας πολεμήσαντες

Ανδρείοι σεις που πολεμήσατε και πέσατ' ευκλεώς·
τους πανταχού νικήσαντας μη φοβηθέντες.
Ἄμωμοι σεις, αν ἔπταισαν ο Δίαιος κι ο Κριτόλαος.
Ὅταν θα θέλουν οι Ἕλληνες να καυχηθούν,
«Τέτοιους βγάζει το ἔθνος μας» θα λένε
για σας. Ἐτσι θαυμάσιος θάναι ο ἔπαινός σας. –

Εγγραφή εν Αλεξανδρεία υπό Αχαιού·
ἔβδομον ἔτος Πτολεμαίου, Λαθύρου.²⁰

[Valiant are you who fought and fell in glory;
fearless of those who were everywhere victorious.
If Diaios and Critolaus were at fault, you are blameless.
When the Greeks want to boast,
“Our nation turns out such men as these,” they will say
of you. So marvelous will be your praise –

Written in Alexandria by an Achaean;
In the seventh year of Ptolemy Lathyrus.]²¹

“Those Who Fought for the Achaean League” is the first poem that reminded Seferis of Eliot’s use of history. Like most of Cavafy’s output, it is a work of layered subtlety, whose deeply personal sentiments emerge only after a bit of excavation. The poem lauds the last generals of a confederation of Greek city-states formed to fight off Roman advance. When the league fell in 146 BCE, so did resistance to Roman conquest. The poem’s culminating lines attribute this encomium to an imaginary Achaean writing in 109 BCE, the seventh year of the reign of Ptolemy Lathyrus, a period of Hellenistic Egypt Seferis describes as one of “humiliation, decadence and never-ending intrigue, which

19 Eliot (1975a), 38.

20 Cavafy (1963), 37.

21 This is Rae Dalven’s translation, cited from the English-language edition of Seferis (1966). See Seferis (1966), 125–6.

culminated in the flight of Ptolemy from Alexandria.”²² Thus, what we have here is a lament of the Greeks’ loss of the Peloponnesus, attributed to someone living in the years immediately preceding the Greek loss of Egypt, dramatized by a short lyric, which was penned by a Greek Egyptian in 1922. As Seferis reminds us, this is no inconsequential moment in Greek history. It is the year in which a botched military campaign against Turkey led to a systematic population exchange, forcing all Turks in Greece and all Greeks in Turkey into a state of permanent exile. As a result, some two thousand years of Greek presence in Asia Minor suddenly and quickly came to an end.²³

“By alluding, almost imperceptibly, to the fault of Diaios and Critolaus and then to the seventh year of Ptolemy Lathyrus,” writes Seferis, “Cavafy is able to identify the past with the present in a simultaneous moment.”²⁴ As a result, the writer of this anonymous epigram, “in this seventh year of any Ptolemy Lathyrus, is Cavafy, is the nameless Achaean, is both of them together.”²⁵ Within this poem then, Seferis locates a strategy of artistic innovation, one which operates under the assumption that history is something fundamentally dialogical and complementary. Seferis spies a similar assumption at work in Eliot’s use of the dead god in *The Waste Land* – a supposition, suddenly taken as necessary, that it is how one receives the past in his present which determines one’s modernity.

To an extent, modernism has always operated according to this principle of history. By its very definition, any avant-garde – including those we give the name of “modernism” to – is a reaction to what dominated its culture’s immediate past. Today we more often classify “modernism” and “the avant-garde” together rather than separately, even if contemporary criticism oftentimes speaks of “modernisms” and “avant-gardes” in the plural. For despite their many real differences, both high modernism and the avant-garde bring the past into the present and thereby project their modernity back onto history. Eliot called for such a move explicitly in “Tradition and the Individual Talent.” His own poetry, along with many other modernist temples, implicitly ask us to consider their innovations as part of a continuous tradition. As Louis Menand pithily declares, the “It” in Pound’s “Make It New’ is the Old.”²⁶

22 Seferis (1966), 130.

23 The Asia Minor “Catastrophe” held particular resonance for Seferis, who was born in Smyrna (modern-day Izmir).

24 Seferis (1966), 131.

25 Seferis (1966), 131.

26 Menand (2009).

Is it so different with other avant-gardes? In his Futurist manifesto of 1909, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti did not tell us to “make” it new; he told us to destroy the old. If modernism asked for continuity, the avant-garde demanded rupture – or so the argument went. However, a call for destruction within art is not the same thing as within life.²⁷ What an avant-garde calls for is not erasure but perpetual erasure. In Marinetti’s call to the future, references to the past abound. As the fourth point of his manifesto loudly proclaims:

Nous déclarons que la splendeur du monde s’est enrichie d’une beauté nouvelle: la beauté de la vitesse. Une automobile de course avec son coffre orné de gros tuyaux tels des serpents à l’haleine explosive . . . une automobile rugissante, qui a l’air de courir sur de la mitraille, est plus belle que la Victoire de Samothrace.

[We affirm that the beauty of the world has been enriched by a new form of beauty: the beauty of speed. A racing car with a hood that glistens with large pipes resembling a serpent with explosive breath . . . a roaring automobile that seems to ride on grapeshot – that is more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace.]²⁸

Thus even when Marinetti writes a poem in praise of his fast car, the best metaphor he can find for conveying its speed is a figure from Classical mythology: “My Pegasus,” he calls it.²⁹

The incessant desire in Futurist writings to burn down museums, libraries and other places of antiquarian interest and replace them with electric plants and railway stations similarly points to the paradoxical need of even

27 The very real political influence that Futurism had makes this statement an oversimplification. On the one hand, Futurist artists did actively promote breaks with the past. On the other, Futurist ideology influenced a culture of fascism which kept the classical heritage very much within the public eye. For more see Conversi (2009), 92–117. A more substantial discussion can be found in Poggi (2009).

28 Marinetti (1909), 51.

29 Rainey et al. (2009), 425; for a brief analysis, see 410. The Futurist painter Umberto Boccioni’s 1910 “La città che sale” (“The City Rises”) also features a Pegasus, about which Rainey et al. note that “the ‘pegasus’ that dominates the center of this painting has surprised many commentators by its apparent anachronism: Why would a Futurist use a traditional symbol, rather than a machine, to represent power?” They answer that Pegasus was a suitable referent for a car, since Futurists saw them “as a vehicle for acquiring ego-expanding powers of speed and flight. The machine assumes a quasi-organic, vitalist force” along the lines of the mythological flying horse. Rainey et al. (2009), 309.

the most anti-traditional branch of the avant-garde to engage with the past in order to understand its place in the present. Ultimately, the Classical past is not so much wiped away but continuously alluded to from within the present tense of the artwork's reception. By proclaiming the absence of the classics, the avant-garde implicates their presence. In defining itself in opposition to its classical predecessors, in demanding their obsolescence, the avant-garde inadvertently reaffirms their canonization.

If the classics have always been present within modernism and the avant-garde, then it bears asking what makes modernist innovation so different from that of previous artistic revolutions. Anne E. Fernald has argued that the "technological and epistemological changes" that affected modernism's understanding of contemporary history also distinguished modernism's treatment of tradition from those of its predecessors. With modernism, the "judgments of the past became self-consciously contingent and individual."³⁰ Another way of putting it is that the historical sensibility of modernism is fundamentally anti-Classical. By definition the "Classics" are not just statements from the past, but statements from a communally sanctioned past. They are the representatives of an inheritance that is supposed to transcend the whims of individual and epochal tastes. When modernists like Eliot deem their aesthetic to be the only one capable of representing "contemporary history," they are in essence deeming contemporary history incommensurable with the communal values its "classics" have passed on to them. "To be modern is not to dismiss the classics as false or overrated," writes Christopher S. Wood, "but to see them as paths to truth that can no longer be retraced."³¹ Even Eliot, who lamented the fragmentation of tradition and who sought to rectify the loss of a common cultural denominator, contributed directly to the anti-Classical sensibility of modernist reception. No artist who considers "contemporary history" to be so completely unique can bring the classics into the present without severing them from what was so essential about their past.

In other words, modernity is what historicized "the classics." What were once timeless and continuous, and thus merely earlier points on a timeline that included us, have now become distinct Others to our modern selves. Gregory Jusdanis has recently made such an argument, citing the German classical archaeologist Nikolaus Himmelmann, who first claimed that modernity "created antiquity as a completely different society, a non-Christian alternative to itself."³² Apparently modern archaeology is very much to blame for this.

³⁰ Fernald (2007), 157.

³¹ Wood (2012), 168.

³² Jusdanis (2004), 46.

Before the archaeologists got ahold of them, our temples betrayed their two-thousand-year histories by forming part of the landscape rather than by being deviations from it. The Roman Colosseum was overgrown with plant life and the Athenian Acropolis a palimpsest of the citadels and storehouses that had been built atop it. Now they are pristine sites, covered in scaffolding and off limits to all without an entrance ticket, as distinct from the modern world as they are from their ancient contexts.³³ Modernism, argues Jurdanis, reacted against this “calcification of classicism.”³⁴ A poet like Cavafy presents an alternative image of Greek culture, an image of continuity, whose ancient history is as contemporary as his revolutionary present is historic.

Is art, then, what saved our classics from the scientific study of the classical world, and therefore, from irrelevance? One could make an opposing argument just as easily, that the scientific study of antiquity – whether it be archaeology or philology or anthropology – allowed art to make the classics modern again. If the early twentieth century truly was a period of “futility and anarchy,” whose “technological and epistemological changes” led to a crisis of faith in the structures that formed its systems of value, then why can’t a science like archaeology contribute to this crisis? As Karl Popper famously argued, by definition science presents its truths as contingencies that are rewritten when new information becomes available.³⁵ By turning antiquity into an object of study for science, by learning more about our pasts, do we not realize just how wrong we have been about those pasts, as well as just how much more there is left to learn? Perhaps archaeology only reaffirms our modernity’s very suspicions, those that lead us to wonder whether all our inherited narratives are at all accurate – and whether the present narratives we are weaving will prove as inevitably false as well.

What is certain is that debates regarding the concept of “reception” have always played a role in our discussions of modernity – in a similar way that they have informed our understanding of what constitutes the “classics.” Whether we are speaking of Eliot or Cavafy or Sophocles or Homer, we are speaking of artists who take their inheritance and make it contemporary. And

33 We would argue instead, that these sites are still part of the nature of modern-day Rome and Athens. From afar, both seem like exceptions to the smog and noise of our twenty-first century. But when you are maneuvering past the locals in gladiator costumes nearby, demanding a price for a picture, when you are wandering around the Acropolis’ underside in the district of Psiri, these ancient spots blend into the experience of the modern cityscape, and the absurdities of their current circumstances become part of the absurdity of the contemporary world.

34 Jurdanis (2004), 43.

35 See Popper (2002), 43–86.

it has always been this way, as Martindale's gloss on the definition of his discipline argues. However, it has not always been this way either. It is a very different thing when Eliot appropriated Ovid than when Shakespeare did. And it is very different for a modern to use Homer and not some arcane bit of forgotten history à la Cavafy. In a similar way, it is very different when Eliot alludes to a Greek than when he does to the *Bhagavad Gita*. When we refer to the "Classics" we refer specifically to a canon of Western texts that the intellectual, artistic and, indeed, political elite of the Western world has selected, sanctioned, and re-sanctioned as fundamental to its culture over the course of its history. When we speak of the Greek and Roman classics we allude to a history of genealogy and influence; we implicate a legacy of social capital that is irretrievably interwoven into the history of Western cultural and political influence around the globe. Homer, for example, is no longer a figure of the West alone, nor has he been for quite some time.³⁶ The fact that medieval portraits of Homer can be found in Arabic as well as Greek and Italian manuscripts in the Middle Ages and that we find his traces in contemporary Caribbean and Korean literature has as much to do with the central place Western culture has occupied in the world as with the nuance and sophistication of Homeric narrative.³⁷

The argument we are making with this volume – and which Seferis' essay exemplifies – is twofold. For one, classical reception has always been as fundamental to modernist identity as it has to the identity of the classics themselves. Two, our contemporary reception of the Classics must be understood as shaped in large part by our contemporary reception of modernists like Eliot and Cavafy. However, an analysis that operates under this assumption need not run roughshod over the distinctions either – in the same way that a volume that contributes to the dynamics of classical reception and modernist studies as they are practiced today need not be afraid of acknowledging the hazards its assumptions present. These are hazards that have been catalogued by many and which are linked, once again, to the global and democratic turns in academic criticism. In expanding the parameters of Classics as a discipline, do we not run the risk of losing the discipline's focus, as well as its communality and

36 See for example, Graziosi and Greenwood (2007) as well as Goldwyn (2015).

37 For medieval portraits of Homer, see Graziosi (2015); for visual depictions of Ancient Greek mythological and historical figures in contemporary Chinese painting, see "Discussing *The Divine Comedy* with Dante" (2006) and for the Trojan War and Greek mythology more generally, see the works of the Korean-born American painter Younghee-Choi Martin. Derek Walcott's *Omeros* is the most famous adaptation of the *Odyssey* in a Caribbean idiom, but the poem's influence on African-American visual culture can also be seen in the work of Romare Bearden.

traditional skills?³⁸ What about what has happened with modernism? Have our recent attempts “to understand its imbrication in the social, material, and economic structures of a globally conceived modernity” turned modernism into “an ingrained yet somehow weightless concept”?³⁹

The answers to these questions are always the same: Maybe. The threat that with increased inclusion comes increased ambiguity is very real. At the same time, one hopes that with more quality scholarship also come more lucid – if albeit more complicated – theoretical elaborations. We for one hope that this volume will help to clarify how modernism fits within world literature, how classical reception contributes to modernism’s place therein, and how the enduring influence of modernist Classical reception continues to shape contemporary views of Classical literature, even if there are gaping lacunae in our project. No single volume can accurately represent the state of a single field, let alone the intersection of two, as ours is attempting to do. Despite our ambitions, the subjects and geographical areas represented here are all-too-limited and still Euro-centric. And while the volume’s title implies a study of all modernist and avant-garde art, we have chosen to concentrate on literary production. We have done so in order to keep the project’s scope manageable, and in light of the editors’ and contributors’ own specialities. In our defense of these decisions, we can only admit that intentions cannot always triumph over logistics.

As one more “companion” in Brill’s series on classical reception, the duty of this volume is to attempt to represent a current state of affairs. This inevitably involves giving voice to the “new” in such a way that does not lose sight of the “old” – without which the “new” lacks context. Thus, we have included contributions on lesser-discussed “modernists” as well as on canonical fixtures; we have sought studies that highlight the discrepancies that arise when one form of classical reception takes precedence over others, as well as the assumptions that inform why one form of reception would ever become more paradigmatic than another.

We begin the volume with Tyler Fisher and Jenni Lehtinen’s chapter on Cuban poet José Martí (1853–1895). Their study expands our awareness of the ways European modernism’s preoccupation with nationhood is prefigured in Latin American *modernismo*. By examining Martí’s use of the colossus image, their work places classical reception at the center of how we define the

38 Martindale (2013), 176. In addition, one need only look at the recent proliferation of undergraduate programs in the ancient world or graduate programs in Classical Reception itself, both of which give students mediated access to the ancient world and its literatures through translation but most often without the study of Greek and Latin, not to mention the traditional philological skills of paleography and textual editing.

39 Latham and Rogers (2015), 2.

limits of modernism's origins. This chapter is followed by Bryan Brinkman and Bartholomew Brinkman's discussion of classical scholarship in the writing of the American poet H. D. (Hilda Doolittle, 1886–1961), which then leads us into Adam Goldwyn's analysis of the global scope of Ezra Pound's epic ambitions. We hope that by leading with H. D., we do not commit the usual fallacy of placing her work within the shadow of her relationship with Pound (1885–1972), or of foregrounding Pound's own well known ideas on the classical tradition and literary innovation. More important though, these chapters demonstrate that the classics were not merely a source from which modernists culled literary references, but a stomping ground upon which to engage in a dialogue concerning the place of literature in an evolving modernity.

That literature could – and in fact, should – play a foundational role in twentieth-century discourses on world history, is evidenced in these opening chapters implicitly, and explicitly in the two that follow. The role modernist poetics played within broader national discourses comes up for scrutiny in the studies by Bojan Jović and Juan Herrero-Senés, respectively. Herrero-Senés focuses on an oft-neglected aspect of the post-war Spanish avant-garde, prose fiction. His essay examines how Spanish novelists used myth to take a stand on contemporary history. Jović considers modernist literature from within the Serbian context and connects the tensions underlying an experimentalist approach to the classics with the Yugoslav situation in the aftermath of World War I.

The volume also looks at modernists whose central place in their respective traditions belies their relative neglect within Anglo-American criticism. Chapters on the poets Fernando Pessoa (1888–1935) and Salvatore Quasimodo (1901–1968) question why these names usually only figure in national accounts of the avant-garde. Kenneth David Jackson argues that the Greek and Roman classics form the thread that unifies the many contradictions of the career of Portugal's most important modern poet, Fernando Pessoa. And Ernesto Livorni reviews how the theme of *nóstos* wove itself into the work of Salvatore Quasimodo in particular, and in Italian Hermetic poetry as a whole. Meanwhile, David Hammerbeck looks at the prolific but much-maligned auteur Jean Cocteau (1889–1963), investigating Cocteau's adaptations of the Orpheus myth in light of French modernism's engagement with performance. In Chapter Nine, Anett Jessop looks at the understudied American writer Laura Riding (1901–1999), situating Riding's appropriation of the Trojan War within feminist critical discourse. In doing so, her chapter joins the Brinkmans' in reinforcing classical reception's relevance to feminist critiques of modernism.

The next two chapters redirect our focus towards Plato and the divergent ways artists and philosophers made use of his complicated legacy. Samuel Baker examines beloved children's book author and avowed anti-modernist

C. S. Lewis (1898–1963). His study of Lewis' transformation of Platonic *eros* into an allegory of Christian longing expands our definitions of a “modernist” account of classical reception. This is then followed by William F. H. Altman's chapter on the seminal but controversial German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889–1976). Altman looks at Heidegger's contribution to the creation of a post-Platonist Plato, a figure for a newly-theorized and rapidly developing modern century. In a different vein, Matthew Sharpe considers fiction and philosophy in his examination of the work of the Algerian-born Frenchman Albert Camus (1913–1960). One of the century's most influential thinkers, Camus attempted to contextualize and think “au dehors” his modern predicament by persistently “returning to the Greeks.”

The volume then concludes with its own “return” to a certain Greek and to the “historical sense” with which we introduced this project. Polina Tambakaki discusses our old friend Seferis and his career-long engagement with Thucydides. Athens' foremost historian helped the poet to connect an inchoate identity of modern Greek citizenship to an anti-traditional century and its two-thousand-plus year past. The volume concludes with James Nikopoulos' close reading of Eliot's overly-discussed essay on the allusiveness of contemporaneity, “*Ulysses, Order, and Myth.*” That is to say, we end by reconsidering what is for many the classic starting point for modernist classical reception.

We hope that this book provides a glimpse in the direction of what a dialectical understanding of classical reception entails. The present rewrites the past, as much as it is enacted through the past. We find this again and again, from avant-garde to avant-garde, a conception of artistic revolution based on the belief that one has the right and the duty to actively acquire his inheritance. The most famous version of this statement is still Eliot's. “Some can absorb knowledge,” he writes in “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” “the more tardy must sweat for it.”⁴⁰ Perhaps this explains why modernism occupied itself so vociferously with its pasts. Perhaps modernism understood its time to be a belated one, and thus, believed that it needed to labor for its innovations. Today, literary criticism is attempting to do the same. Both classical reception and the new modernist studies are attempting through hard work to make up for their disciplines' prior lethargy, by refusing to take for granted what their predecessors once did – our classics can only be considered birthrights after we have begun exercising our right to question them.

How un-modern then, what Seferis had to say on the topic of inheritance. Seferis agreed with Eliot that an artist needs to work to acquire a tradition – but only if that person comes from a rootless place [...] like St. Louis! (poor

40 Eliot (1975a), 40.

Eliot). Whereas someone like Cavafy, writes Seferis, could take his bequeathment for granted. After all, “He comes from one of the intellectual capitals of the world which, though almost submerged, is still great and can boast of being ‘Greek from ages past.’”⁴¹ How un-modern then, this idea of inheritance Seferis ascribes to Cavafy, our epitome of modern poetry. Perhaps Eliot is not as stodgy as we once sought, for even he understood that innovation has less to do with the amount of cultural capital one is bequeathed as with the amount invested in interrogating the allotment. In the end, even Eliot felt he had inherited something of the ancient Greeks and Romans; even Cavafy felt he had to sweat to acquire his Hellenism. The process of creating one’s modernity is akin to the process of affirming one’s classics. Neither procedure is static. For as anyone knows who has ever suffered at the hands of another’s haughty dismissal of his culture, one man’s novelty is always another’s old news, the way one man’s classics are just as easily another’s albatross.

Bibliography

- Bradbury, M. and McFarlane J. (eds.) (1991) *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890–1930*. London: Penguin.
- Cavafy, C. P. (1963) [Καβάφης, Κ. Π.] *Τα Ποιήματα, Volume 2*. Athens: Ikaros Publishing.
- Constantine, P. et al. (eds.) (2009) *The Greek Poets, Homer to the Present*. London: W. W. Norton.
- Conversi, D. (2009) “Art, Nationalism and War: Political Futurism in Italy (1909–1944),” *Sociology Compass* 31: 92–117.
- Eliot, T. S. (1975a) “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, Kermodé, F. (ed.), 37–44. San Diego: Harcourt. Farrar, Straus & Giroux.
- Eliot, T. S. (1975b) “Ulysses, Order, and Myth,” in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, Kermodé, F. (ed.), 175–8. San Diego: Harcourt. Farrar, Straus & Giroux.
- Fernald, A. E. (2007) “Modernism and Tradition,” in *Modernism*, Eysteinnsson, A. and Liska, V. (eds.), 157–71. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Gay, P. (2008) *Modernism, the Lure of Heresy: From Baudelaire to Beckett and Beyond*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Gillespie, S. (2011) *English Translation and Classical Reception: Towards a New Literary History*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Goldwyn, A. J. (ed.) (2015) *The Trojan Wars and the Making of the Modern World*. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis.

⁴¹ Seferis (1966), 155.

- Graziosi, B. (2015) "On Seeing the Poet: Arabic, Italian and Byzantine Portraits of Homer," *Scandinavian Journal of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 1: 25–47.
- Graziosi, B. and Greenwood, E. (2007) "Introduction," in *Homer in the Twentieth Century. Between World Literature and the Western Canon*, Graziosi, B. and Greenwood, E. (eds.), 1–24. Oxford University Press 2007.
- Hardwick, L. and Stray, C. (eds.) (2008) "Introduction: Making Connections," in *A Companion to Classical Receptions*, Hardwick, L. and Stray, C. (eds.), 1–9. Malden: Blackwell.
- Hayot, E. (2012) "Chinese Modernism, Mimetic Desire, and European Time," in *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms*, Wollaeger, M. and Eatough, M. (eds.), 149–70. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jusdanis, G. (2004) "Farewell to the Classical: Excavations in Modernism." *Modernism/modernity* 11.1: 37–53.
- Latham, S. and Rogers G. (2015) *Modernism: Evolution of an Idea*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Lewis, P. (2007) *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lewis, P., project director (2010) The Modernism Lab at Yale University. <<https://modernism.research.yale.edu/index.php>>
- Mao, D. and Walkowitz, R. (eds.) (2006) *Bad Modernisms*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Marinetti, F. T. (2009) "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," in *Futurism: An Anthology*, Rainey et al. (eds.), 49–53. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Martindale, C. (2013) "Reception – A New Humanism? Receptivity, Pedagogy, the Transhistorical." *Classical Receptions Journal* 5.2: 169–83.
- Menand, L. (2009) "The Pound Error." *The New Yorker*. June 9, 2009.
- Poggi, C. (2009) *Inventing Futurism: The Art and Politics of Artificial Optimism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Popper, K. (2002) *Conjectures and Refutations. The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*. London: Routledge.
- Rabaté, J.-M. (2007) *1913: The Cradle of Modernism*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.
- Rainey et al. (eds.) (2009) *Futurism: An Anthology*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Sferis, G. (1966) "Cavafy and Eliot – A Comparison," in *On the Greek Style. Selected Essays in Poetry and Hellenism*. Trans. R. Warner and Th. D. Frangopoulos, 120–61. Boston: Little Brown and Company.
- Slote, S. (2007) "Thoroughly Modern Modernism. Modernism and its Postmodernisms," in *Modernism*, Eysteinnsson, A. and Liska, V. (eds.), 233–49. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Watten, B. (2007) "Modernism at the Crossroads. Types of Negativity," in *Modernism*, Eysteinnsson, A. and Liska, V. (eds.), 219–32. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

- Wilson, E. (2004) *Axel's Castle. A Study of the Imaginative Literature of 1870–1930*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Wood, C. S. (2012) "Reception and the Classics," in *Reception and the Classics. An Interdisciplinary Approach to the Classical Tradition*, Brockliss, W. et al. (eds.), 163–71. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Woolf, V. (1924) "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," in *Theory of the Novel. A Historical Approach*, McKeon, M. (ed.) (2000), 745–58. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.