

*\*\*\*Teaching the Classical Reception Revolution\*\*\**

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## 1. Introduction

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When we designed our [2016 workshop on 'Revolutions and Classics'](#), we specifically decided to mix research-based papers with some on pedagogy. We believed that the workshop's focus on the manner in which classical texts and artefacts have been deployed in contexts of radical change provided a unique opportunity to reflect additionally on the challenges of addressing political themes via teaching in classical reception. Funding from CUCD enabled us to invite some early-career colleagues who could discuss their recent experiences of teaching across classical reception, classics, and politics in ways that might be helpful to other younger academics, in line with the goals of the Classical Reception Studies Network. We additionally invited some more established colleagues who could reflect on critical issues in Classics pedagogy and how these have changed over a longer time-span. We are delighted to present the five papers here, which explore some of the ways in which classical reception has 'revolutionised' the teaching of our discipline.



When we read over them for publication in this Bulletin, we thought that the papers fell in two groups. Three papers considered classical reception as a pedagogical tool for 'revolutionising' access to the ancient world and its texts; two assessed reception as a way into complex issues such as class and gender.

Of the first group, two encourage us about the prospects for classical reception in a range of classrooms, but one questions whether classical reception has overhauled the discipline in the way that some early practitioners might have expected.

Emma Cole reports on helping to develop new Liberal Arts programmes in two different institutions in the UK, showing how the flexibility of the LA interdisciplinary syllabus may provide a home for research-based teaching by academics who have specialised in classical reception. She also describes how the pedagogical strategies that she worked out in the LA context can feed into more traditional, single-honours degree programmes. Emma makes the point that early-career academics are often expected to teach languages, or pre-existing courses with set content, so the LA route may provide unexpected opportunities for real intellectual and professional development.

Jo Paul's opening reflections register the 'double life' that researchers in classical reception may lead while they teach mainstream courses; they are fortunate, in an increasingly competitive job market, if they can also teach their specialty. Within the framework of a developing career, however, Jo considers that the two strands of the professional identity may become more integrated. She points to the Open University's new course in Latin, in which the language acquisition is partnered by thorough study of the culture and literature (in translation) of the Augustan period. Because 'translation' brings with it questions of reception, the new course has been alert from the start to such issues. In particular, it has drawn on artistic receptions, by Poussin and David, which refract the political dimensions of Augustan literature through the related concerns of subsequent societies.

The question of languages and other traditional teaching is crucial to Luke Richardson's paper. He points out that the early-career researcher with a PhD in classical reception is likely to be at a disadvantage in a job market that often requires new colleagues to take substantial language teaching and bread-and-butter courses in traditional topics. Even at higher levels, it is unlikely that someone will be employed in a Classics department with a sole specialism in reception. What does this mean for the ways in which classical reception studies have interrogated the discipline, for instance in raising awareness of the politics of classical education in the UK and elsewhere? Luke suggests that reception has not in fact carried out such interrogation; because the classical languages are still the backbone of the discipline, and because the languages are still predominantly taught in fee-paying schools, the discipline remains fundamentally uncritical. What if reception becomes just another way of glorifying Greece?

[In a recent 'Disciplinary Action' column for \*Eidolon\*](#) Johanna Hanink argues that classicists today must embrace what she calls 'critical classical reception', that is, work which is cognisant of the role of the Greco-Roman classics in the various '-isms' that continue to plague the modern world, including racism, colonialism and sexism. The second group of two papers explores the manner in which the cultural capital of antiquity is still bound in present-day elitism and sexism, while discussing some pedagogical strategies to allow students to reflect and comment on these key issues.

Susan Deacy narrates her experience using Martin Bernal's *Black Athena* in the classroom to raise questions related to the elitist nature of Classics as a discipline. She explores visions of the goddess Athena from Ruskin's Victorian England to the present day, focusing on Bernal's critical intervention in the late 1980s. Her discussion of these diverging receptions allows

students to reflect on the power that elitist and Eurocentrist narratives about antiquity and its tradition continue to wield today, especially in shaping students' own conceptions of Classics.

The pressing question of how to connect antiquity to today's political concerns is at the centre of Carol Atack's paper. She discusses her experiences with Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* both as the play which was performed for a large outreach drama event and as the centrepiece of a module addressing sexuality and gender in antiquity. She outlines the manner in which she employed a performance-based teaching method that allowed students to reflect on gender binaries in Athenian life explored by both the text and the particular production at the outreach event which featured a cross-gender casting. Her piece also reflects on the play's concern with spatial politics, namely who is entitled to participate and occupy certain spaces, creating an obvious link with present-day Occupy and liberation movements.

We are very grateful to CUCD Bulletin for allowing space to disseminate these timely and thought-provoking papers.

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