‘Only Connecting’:

Authenticity and the Classics in E.M. Forster, Christopher Logue, and Kae Tempest

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Submitted for the degree of DPhil in Classical Languages and Literature
[76,661 words]

Acknowledgements

I am grateful above all to my supervisor, Fiona Macintosh, without whom this project would not have been started – let alone completed. I feel extremely lucky to have been able to work with someone who radiates such warmth and energy, and is consistently so generous with her intellect, her time, and her expertise. It was her work on Modernist thought and selfhood that first drew me to Classical Reception, and it has remained highly influential throughout this project. I remain in awe of her ability to tease out the salient points of an argument and to help me articulate my ideas in the clearest possible way. Additionally, I would like to thank her for all the opportunities she has given me beyond the thesis: through the community fostered by Fiona at the APGRD and beyond, I have made so many exciting academic friendships and partnerships, and I hope to remain part of that family for many years to come.

Also at the APGRD, I would like to thank Claire Kenward for making the Study Room feel like a second home, and to Pantelis Michelakis for his willingness to extend further advice and support when taking on the role of APGRD Director following Fiona's retirement in 2024. I would also like to thank Pantelis in his capacity as Confirmation examiner, along with Tim Rood (both Confirmation and Transfer) and Emma Greensmith (Transfer) – all three provided valuable feedback at each stage of the thesis's development. Tim's ongoing mentorship was also especially helpful for my work on E.M. Forster. Materially, this thesis was completed with financial support from St Catherine's College, with visits to international conferences and archives funded by St Catherine's, the Faculty of Classics, and the Oxford-Berlin Research Partnership scheme.

I have enjoyed many fruitful academic and artistic collaborations while at Oxford, working on projects and performances which in differing ways have widened my intellectual horizons and helped inform the thesis itself. Thank you to Cat Domeneghini, for collaborative afternoons in Wolfson; to Thomas Munro, for Logue lunches; to Marianna Leszczyk, for co-founding our wonderful community at the Reception Research Group; to Zoë Jennings for co-convening an early seminar series on authenticity (and many APGRD postgraduate symposia); and to Giovanna Di Martino for the opportunity to participate in her workshops and expand my understanding of translation. I am exceedingly grateful to Ezra Baudou for redefining my relationship with performance, and for the opportunity to write, perform, and learn in professional theatre contexts. Translation and performance work with Ezra, Giovanna, and Zoë (as well as Marcus Bell and Alex Silverman) has brought me enormous creative fulfilment over the years, and informed my scholarship in ways I could not have anticipated. Thank you to Cat, Fran, Zoë, Ezra, and Tom Anstey for proofreading sections of this thesis.

At home, I would like to thank Fran Beretta, whom I was so lucky to meet in New Haven, CT in 2022. It has been a joy to share my living space with such a good friend, whose capacity for humour and whimsy (and excellent classical scholarship) has made the last three years so special. Thank you to Andrew Mawer, for creating a loving base in Oxford and Bristol (and on various mountains in all weathers) where I was able to re-energise before launching back into work. Thank you for the endless cups of coffee and genuine care for me and the development of my project.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents: Jim and Marie-Thérèse Barnes. I am beyond grateful to you both for selflessly putting me and my education first, and for your care and support in all the ways that matter and more. This thesis could not have happened without you.

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Abstract

This thesis considers the particularities of twentieth- and twenty-first century understandings of both ‘Classics’ and ‘authenticity’, identifying points of commonality in the intellectual and cultural histories of these terms. The constructed nature of both, and the manner in which they invite considerations of value and personal resonance, provide a helpful framework for contemporary literary reception studies going forward. Both the ‘C/classic’ and the ‘authentic’, in the context of readership, are predicated upon individual responses to the text, and are strongly implicated in notions of affect and embodiment. The first part of the thesis charts twentieth- and twenty-first century developments in the usage of both terms, and argues that these need to be understood as part of a post-Industrial-Revolution ‘turn’ towards authenticity, heritage, and individualised selfhood. The second part of the thesis explores these concepts through analyses of three Classical Reception case studies across three flashpoints from the early twentieth century to the present day: E.M Forster (1904-1971), Christopher Logue (1959-2015), and Kae Tempest (2014-present day).

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Introduction

Why authenticity, and why now?

The ideas underpinning this thesis first began over ten years ago, when I observed a simultaneous resurgence of interest in retelling 'classical stories' alongside a growing preoccupation with uncovering moments of 'authenticity' as a response to the crises inherent in late-stage capitalism. I saw these hopes and anxieties for the classical past and the modern present as particularly concentrated in critical receptions of Kae Tempest's 2014 spoken word epic *Brand New Ancients*, in which a recourse to ancient myth was presented as something of a salve to contemporary isolation.

My MPhil thesis[1] looked at the ways in which classical imagery and the language of classical epic were used by Tempest to represent timeless, transcendent qualities of personal value – what I would now explicitly term 'authenticity'. Moving forward to 2020, I began my doctoral work in a context where attitudes to both Classics and authenticity had continued to shift. The COVID-19 pandemic and increasing reliance on remote and virtual technologies had heightened anxieties about, and preoccupations with, personal authenticity and authentic connection still further. Politically, there were calls for a move away from hegemonic narratives which meant that classical tropes and stories were being used more frequently and in often contradictory ways: both as a means for hitherto overlooked voices to express themselves through new retellings and as a legitimising tool for the far right. Within the academy, the constructed nature of the discipline of 'Classics', along with its uses and abuses, were now routinely subject to intense scrutiny and the mechanisms involved in its formation were starting to be unpicked. Tempest, with whom my project began, was producing work with a similar focus on personal authenticity but now seemed to be

[1] Barnes (2016).

distancing himself from the classical references which had first garnered him critical acclaim. Could one speak of 'authenticity' regarding 'Classics' at all, and what did it mean to have done so?

Through my doctoral study and time at Oxford's Archive of Performances of Greek & Roman Drama (APGRD), I began to work in increasingly interdisciplinary environments, noticing patterns as well as paradoxes in the way in which authenticity (and what 'feels authentic' to a contemporary reader) was constantly being renegotiated in relation to attitudes to the past and to what it might mean for the present. In particular, the considerations at play in archival processes (through not only the APGRD but our partnership with the Institut für Theaterwissenschaft at the Freie Universität Berlin) and the very real issues of authenticity, authentic affect, and the weaponisation of history faced by the British heritage industry (through my involvement with The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities' Heritage Pathway) proved especially fruitful. Interdisciplinary collaborations, notably Constanze Güthenke and Hindy Najman's co-convened seminar series on Ethical Reading, similarly prompted in my research a greater consideration of the forces which mediate reader response, and the value of greater sensitivity to them.

The issues raised in this thesis form just one part of a far larger discussion that continues today across multiple histories of scholarship. Whilst my own background and training have led me to focus on primary texts that are literary, British, and modern, the hope is that the ideas behind the thesis may serve as a further intervention in ongoing debates surrounding heritage, authenticity, and cultural history. Classical Reception, with its inherent acknowledgement of the liveness and agency of the text, is a logical place to begin presenting these ideas; throughout the thesis, I examine multiple areas where shifting attitudes to personal authenticity – and what it means to relate 'authentically' to (and through) the ancient past – are representative of wider social and historical pressure points.

Contemporary crises of authenticity

Although preoccupations around 'authenticity' are certainly not brand new, there is a particular quality to the way in which the term and its associations have come to be used in recent years, and it is important to acknowledge these briefly here before moving onto the scholarly and philosophical foundations of 'authenticity' that are explored in Chapters 1-3. Journalists and cultural commentators note the free and frequent invocation of 'authentic' in twenty-first century public discourse,[2] often in ways which do not consciously relate back to the more defined modes of 'authenticity' found in twentieth-century Existentialist thought.

Invariably, these discussions of authenticity in the public sphere immediately highlight the very *inauthenticity* of the pursuit of it and the steps taken to achieve (or, cynically, to fabricate) it. Peter York's 2014 book *Authenticity is a Con* takes, as the title suggests, a combative approach, decrying the vogue for 'authenticity' as 'a word and concept fashionable in everything from emotions to materials'.[3] A line may be drawn through artisanal bakeries, a social media culture where participants are encouraged to broadcast their intimate selves, and politicians desperate to present themselves in genuine alignment with their electorate. It is this latter point which has been subject to the greatest scrutiny: York associates the alleged 'authentic' with the populist right (Nigel Farage's claims to be 'tell[ing] it like it is').[4] Lucinda Holdforth describes authenticity as a '21st century virtue […] the modern meta-virtue' for contemporary politicians, where it is considered

[2] York (2014); Kennedy (2019); Sherwood (2022); Holdforth (2023); Serazio (2024); Lee (2025); Burey (2025); Chamorro-Premuzic (2025).

[3] P. York (2015, 2 January). ''Peter York: Against Authenticity', *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jan/02/points-of-view-peter-york [accessed 10/12/2025].

[4] York (2015), 'Against Authenticity'. See too Kennedy (2019), whose work on 'authentocracy' in British politics is highlighted in Chapter 1.

preferable to double down on individualistic traits rather than adjust to the varied demands of the community.[5]

This study examines the concerns surrounding the pursuit of personal authenticity at the expense of collective civic harmony, and it draws parallels with the ways in which individual situatedness is given increasing importance when deriving meaning from a text. York argues that 'authenticity doesn't do collective';[6] and Holdforth posits that rigid adherence to one's personal brand of 'authenticity' may even be antithetical to co-existence: 'to live in a community is to fit the self to the circumstance, and to offer the self that best matches the moment'.[7] The pursuit of 'authenticity' can, of course, risk tipping into solipsism and narratives of supremacy cannot be ignored (consider, for instance, the popularity of Heideggerean Existentialism on the alt right). However, this thesis seeks to validate the situatedness of the self in interpreting authenticity while ultimately seeking more nuanced readings of the 'authentic' and what it might teach us about our relationships with the 'classic(al)'.

This tension between the individual and the collective in matters of personal authenticity is strongly implicated in notions of performativity and 'personal branding', where the authentic self is something that – ironically – lends itself all too well to mass marketing. The paradoxical goal of authenticity, in this context, is that contemporary society has robbed the individual of their 'true' or 'authentic' self; reifications of the so-termed 'authentic' are then proffered as a means to recapture it. The ubiquity of social media, and its dual potential for both authentic connection *and* the mask of performativity, is never far away in debates on the value of twenty-first-century authenticity. In the 2010s, the context in which I was first exploring these ideas in my MPhil thesis, 'authenticity'

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[5] L. Holdforth (2023, 2 August). 'The Problem with Authenticity (and Other 21st Century Virtues)', *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2023/aug/03/the-problem-with-authenticity-and-other-21st-century-virtues [accessed 7/10/2025].

[6] York (2015), 'Against Authenticity'.

[7] Holdforth (2023), 'The Problem With Authenticity'.

online involved a very specific, curated *naïf* aesthetic.[8] This Millennial turn towards sincerity has since been derided by younger generations as 'Millennial cringe',[9] with Generation Z (those born between 1997-2012, the first to be raised in an entirely internet age) navigating authenticity in differing ways. Journalist Eugene Healey associates this hyper-sensitivity towards the 'glossy perfection of millennial content' in favour of that which is 'raw and unfiltered' with existing in a world where 'turning yourself into a brand isn't a lifestyle choice but a survival strategy, particularly as AI puts a blowtorch to the remaining areas of knowledge work that once promised middle-class security'.[10] The prevalence of AI, too, places even greater value on the 'authenticity' of the original or unmediated.

Authenticity has, no doubt, become such a valued trait because the mediating forces between individual feeling and external presentation appear inescapable. Media Production scholar Allan Taylor, writing on how an obsession with authenticity is 'uncontrollably gaining traction' among his students, notes that this increased appetite for the authentic speaks to a wider social condition where 'we are so far removed from reality that even if the media artefact reflected everyday life in the twenty-first century, […] our lives are already removed from what we might consider to be "authentic"'.[11] This disconnect is ripe for monetisation, with the possibility of the 'authentic' product (or the product which helps uncover the 'authentic' self) representing a 'powerful and lucrative' concept.[12] In much the same way, a course of cosmetic surgery may be seen as facilitating the uncovering of an authentic self, with authenticity operating as something to

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[8] A. Whiting (2016, 5 May). 'The Problem with #LiveAuthentic', *Washingtonian*, https://washingtonian.com/2016/05/05/the-problem-with-liveauthentic/ [accessed 10/12/2025].

[9] K. Chayka (2025, 13 August). 'The Revenge of Millennial Cringe', *The New Yorker*, https://www.newyorker.com/culture/infinite-scroll/the-revenge-of-millennial-cringe [accessed 15/12/2025].

[10] E. Healey (2025, 14 June). 'Gen Z and Gen Alpha Brought a Raw, Messy Aesthetic to Social Media. Why Does it Feel as Inauthentic as Ever?', *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/jun/14/gen-z-gen-alpha-social-media-inauthentic-brands [accessed 11/10/2025].

[11] Taylor (2022), v.

[12] Holdforth (2023), 'The Problem with Authenticity'.

be *produced* rather than occurring without mediation.[13] For Taylor, the idea of the authentic lends itself very well to selling and being sold to because of its very ephemerality, which he describes as 'an affective Derridean "trace" that disappears as quickly as it appears. The attainment of authenticity thus becomes a never-ending quest, as the performative interval of the authentic cannot be sustained'.[14] There are similarities too with the unique 'aura' of authenticity ascribed to the original object by Walter Benjamin,[15] and interestingly the word 'aura' is also frequently used in contemporary online discourse to describe the ineffable *je ne sais quoi* of authentic presentation.[16] The Generation Z term 'aura-farming', meaning the conscious cultivation of authentic signifiers, was recently levelled at British Prime Minister Keir Starmer regarding his PR team's forays into TikTok.[17]

'Authenticity', as it is explored in this thesis, considers that which is understood to be innate both to the individual and to their object of interest (in this case received forms of the classical past). Whilst social media itself only becomes of real consideration in my final chapter (which returns to Kae Tempest), the marketability of authenticity, modern and contemporary anxieties of the self, and the role of mediation are all central concerns throughout this study. There is a sense in all my case studies that authenticity is both that which is *assumed* to be innate and yet simultaneously also understood to require external mechanisms through which to become fully realised. As Michael Serazio, in his study on the mediating forces which 'construct, communicate, and accentuate authenticity' notes: 'staging authenticity is, paradoxically, a project of creating that

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[13] Cf. Pitts-Taylor (2007); Elliott (2008).

[14] Taylor (2022), vi.

[15] Benjamin (1936).

[16] B. Huynh, L. Ittimani, & A. Gorman (2025, 7 June). 'Explain it to me Quickly: What is Aura Farming, and is it Cool or Cringe?', *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2025/jun/06/explain-it-to-me-quickly-what-is-aura-farming-and-is-it-cool-or-cringe [accessed 15/12/2025].

[17] M. Boseley (2025, 12 December). 'In a Shocking Twist, Keir Starmer's TikToks are Borderline Competent', *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/dec/12/keir-starmer-tiktoks-borderline-competent [accessed 13/12/2025].

which seems *un*mediated'.[18] Acknowledgement of mediation, then, is central to exploring questions of authenticity, and therefore inevitably recalls the role of mediative interpretation which underpins reader response theory.[19] The understanding in Classical Reception studies that meaning is unfixed, and that classical texts cannot be encountered without the mediating effect of cultural habits and interpretive frameworks,[20] is an appropriate starting point for considering what theories of authenticity can contribute to discussions of Classics, or the 'classic' text.

Mirror worlds

The image of the mirror, with its promise of accurate (or even heightened) representation whilst still serving as mediation, is particularly useful for joining these anxieties of authenticity with attitudes towards Classics and 'the classical world'. Mirrors represent uncanny objects of replication where authenticity is negotiated, and they work as powerful metaphors for (re)mediations of the self and objects of artistic interest to it. Metaphorical mirrors are held up to society to illustrate uncomfortable truths, yet they are also sites of illusion, superstition, and the uncanny. Naomi Klein's 2023 exploration of warped political ideology uses the critique of the 'doppelganger' or 'mirror world',[21] where the repeated and subtle inversion of truth fundamentally troubles our relationship with the real. In the 'psychomanteum' of the practising spiritualist, a mirror is angled in a darkened room, intended to reflect not its immediate environment but messages from those long dead.[22] The Lacanian mirror stage, discussed in Chapter 1, is a thunderbolt moment of self-realisation. When General George Patton wrote of his conviction that he had been reincarnated

[18] Serazio (2024), 2.

[19] Fish (1980); Iser (1978).

[20] Martindale (1993). Cf. also recent emphases on explicitly understanding Classical Reception through the lens of media theory, particularly Michelakis (2020).

[21] Klein (2023).

[22] Lewis (1995), 294. Moreman (2008), 201.

through the ages as various martial figures, including ‘the Hoplite’, ‘the Parthian’, and ‘a Roman’, it was ‘Through a glass, darkly’.[23]

Throughout the research for this thesis, I was repeatedly struck by the image of one particular mirror: the art historical phenomenon of the ‘Claude glass’, and its metaphorical potential for exploring not only Classical Reception but specifically the interplay between ‘authenticity’ and the ‘classical world’. Named after (though seemingly not used or endorsed by)[24] French landscape painter Claude Lorrain (1600-1682), the glass was a small handheld mirror, convex and dark, employed by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century tourists seeking to enhance the ‘picturesque’ in their encounters with the landscape or well-known historical beauty spots.[25] The intention was to create an ‘improved’ reflection, presented in a manner similar to Lorrain’s landscape paintings -– many of which feature idealised classical ruins, or aestheticised scenes from classical mythology.[26] Malcolm Andrews, in his comprehensive study of the picturesque in Britain, notes Lorrain’s ‘incalculable influence’ on not only subsequent landscape painting but also attitudes to the ancient past. In Lorrain’s renditions, the classical is presented as sitting legitimately within the dominating landscape, meaning his works ‘were (just) classifiable as history paintings’.[27]

The way to experience views with a Claude glass, as contemporary proponents such as William Gilpin advised,[28] was to turn one’s back on the intended vista entirely and instead

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[23] G. Patton (1922), ‘Through a glass, Darkly’. See Prioli (1985) for an analysis of Patton’s poetry and interest in reincarnation.

[24] Maillet (2004). For an overview of the glass, its origin, and its uses, see Soth, A. (2021, 18 February), ‘The Claude Glass Revolutionized the Way People Saw Landscapes’, *JSTOR Daily*, https://daily.jstor.org/the-claude-glass-revolutionized-the-way-people-saw-landscapes/ [accessed 5/8/2025]. For the intermedial potential of the glass, see Campbell, P. (2010, 9 September), ‘At Low Magnification: Optical Instruments’, *London Review of Books 32*(17), https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v32/n17/peter-campbell/at-low-magnification [accessed 13/12/2025].

[25] Maillet (2004); Andrews (1989).

[26] See e.g. *Capriccio with Ruins of the Roman Forum* (c.1634); *Dido and Aeneas at Carthage* (1676); Landscape *with Ascanius Shooting the Stag of Sylvia* (1682).

[27] Andrews (1989), 26. Cf. Chapter 3 for comparable readings of Alma-Tadema’s presentations of the classical past in the nineteenth century.

[28] Gilpin (1792).

contemplate it as it appeared in the mirror. Poet Thomas Gray wrote in 1769 of becoming so engrossed in his glass, and walking backwards to optimise his view, that he 'fell down […] across a dirty lane' and broke his knuckles, but by retaining the glass in one hand was still able to see 'the sun set in all its glory'.[29] There is an irresistible parallel here with the Classicist's desire to cling on to an aestheticised image of the ancient past as the more 'authentic' one, whatever the cost. The paradoxical nature of constructed authenticity is also apparent in this image: 'the tourist wants to discover Nature untouched by man; and yet, when he finds it, he cannot resist the impulse, if only in the imagination, to "improve" it'.[30] Longing for the untouched and unmediated somehow also necessitates the deployment of a mediating device.

The appeal of the Claude glass may be found in the manner in which it 'reduces a view into something simpler […] it edits details out',[31] and thus presents a mediated reflection that aligns better with the mental ideal of a heightened, or indeed more 'authentic' version of that which one is viewing. Indeed, the 'classical world', as it is discussed in this thesis, is the version (or versions) of the classical past which appears, reconfigured and remediated, in the metaphorical Claude glass of the beholder. Classical Reception in this context does not limit itself to a specific ancient author or pattern of classical allusion to be identified in a modern text; rather, it encompasses the wholesale reception of 'classical antiquity' and what it means when we consider something authentically such. I use the term 'Classics' and 'classical world' intentionally, for the versions of antiquity explored in this thesis are often significantly divorced from a particular historical period or geographical area; they are instead the wilfully picturesque renditions of these properties that are held up for observation and comparison. In some cases this mediating mirror is explicitly acknowledged, in

[29] Gray (1769).

[30] Andrews (1989), 3.

[31] Campbell (2010), 'At Low Magnification'.

others disbelief is willingly suspended, and in others still the distorting effects of the mirror are overlooked entirely in pursuit of the heightened authentic.

Arnaud Maillet, in his study of the Claude glass and its impact on art history,[32] uses it to consider the limits and subjectivity of direct experience. He draws a comparison with the 'black mirror' technique historically used in divination, scrying into a polished surface until images from the subconscious start to manifest.[33] Andrews similarly describes how this pattern of mirroring is not only reflecting a landscape but a set of aesthetic habits and presumptions (or, in our case, receptions) held by the beholder. 'The impulse to "improve" is usually inspired by an educated awareness of what constitutes an ideal landscape'[34] – or, perhaps, as here, an idealised narrative of the ancient classical past.

The mirroring metaphor works not only in mediations of the 'authentic classical past' itself but also in the manner in which classical imagery is brought into contemporary experience as an authenticating device. Both lines are present in the literary case studies under discussion here, as Classics is both presented as a locus of authenticity *and* leveraged with a view to expressing or navigating the authentic. In the same way as the Claude glass might heighten a British landscape by giving it a classicising filter (via the paintings of Lorrain), the classically minded tourist may similarly seek to interpret their present through the filter of the classical past. Andrews' description of 'the tourist travelling through the Lakes of North Wales […] loudly acclaim[ing] the native beauties of British landscape by invoking idealised foreign models' such as 'Roman pastoral poetry'[35] finds its most obvious parallel in the thesis at Chapter 4, where the Forsterian character

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[32] Maillet (2004).

[33] For more contemporary audiences, the phrase 'black mirror' brings to mind the dystopian television series of the same name, where the term is used to represent the disorienting moment of self-reflection in the dark screen of an electronic device that has just been switched off. In this moment the role of the self in manufactured authenticity is similarly brought to the fore: a reflection of the individual's participation in digital consumption and the potentially disturbing disconnect between their 'real' and digital lives.

[34] Andrews (1989), 3.

[35] Andrews (1989), 3.

Inksip describes a British woodland as similar to 'the country near Veii […] it is part of my system to make classical allusions'.[36]

In *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), Forster explicitly uses the image of the mirror and its capacity for reflective responsiveness to discuss the mechanics at work in the interplay between life and its representations in literature:

> A mirror does not develop because an historical pageant passes in front of it. It only develops when it gets a fresh coat of quicksilver – in other words, when it acquires new sensitiveness; and the novel's success lies in its own sensitiveness, not in the success of its subject matter.[37]

Mirror-making and artistic reflection are not neutral or objective acts, and the very responsiveness of the reflecting or mediating device is crucial to more sensitive readings of our objects of study.[38]

In many instances of classicising or of reception, the mediating device is such a familiar one that it may go entirely overlooked. However, in my three literary examples, to differing extents, these mediating devices are brought to the fore and the reader is made to confront them. A comparable example is the role of the translator, who may be consciously foregrounded or made invisible so as not to disrupt the perceived immediacy of the text – yet their mediation has still occurred.[39] The visibility, or otherwise, of the mediating force can become what Lawrence Venuti terms 'the criterion by which methodological choices and authentic translation is distinguished from

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[36] Forster (1909), 56.

[37] Forster (1927), 36.

[38] Güthenke similarly invokes this quotation when proposing 'new sensitiveness' in the discipline, arguing for the value of navigating between 'appreciation of the historical pageant' while 'equally car[ing] about the fresh workings of the quicksilver'. Güthenke (2018), 1.

[39] Venuti (2008).

inauthentic'.[40] For media theorists, this is the distinction between 'immediacy' (where the mediation is forgotten by the user or, here, the reader) and 'hypermediacy', where the mediation draws attention to itself.[41] Authenticity is also increasingly understood to be a core consideration in perceptions of mediated communication, and trust in the mediating environment.[42] Throughout, I invite the reader to hold in mind the role of mediation in communicating both the 'authentic' and the 'classical', and to consider which contemporary permutations of the Claude glass might be at play in each instance.

Overview of chapters

The thesis is structured in two parts: the first is concerned with theories of authenticity in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, how these may be brought into dialogue with contemporary turns in Classics, and why marked shifts in attitudes to consumption, the collective, and the self are vital to considering how both authenticity and Classics work in parallel and often in concert. The second part of the thesis brings in three authors whose works are illustrative of differing preoccupations with authenticity and Classics across the long twentieth and early twenty-first centuries: E.M. Forster (1904-1971), Christopher Logue (1959-2015), and Kae Tempest (2014-present day). Each serves in part to illustrate the 'authenticities' outlined in Part I and explores how, each, in turn, align with flashpoints of 'authenticity' in their respective periods. I also draw out the authenticating devices used by each author, facilitating closer reading of their work and its relevance for Classical Reception studies, in particular. In this way, the thesis considers not only how 'the authentic' operates in classical receptions but how it is *produced*, and how we as readers might respond to it.

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[40] Venuti (2008), 84.

[41] As defined in Bolter & Grusin (1999).

[42] See Lee's 'authenticity model' as introduced in Lee (2020) and explored more specifically in Lee (2025).

I address where specific vocabulary relating to 'authenticity' is used in each of the case studies, although for the most part my concern is with the ways in which the literary texts relate to the *themes* of authenticity discussed in Part I and how classicising authenticity can inform engagement with my authors. Forster, Logue, Tempest, and their contexts are by no means exhaustively representative of classicised experiences. Indeed it is particularly important to stress, given these authors' (white, British) perspectives, that explorations of authenticity and classicism are by no means the sole preserve of this particular group. They are selected here as case studies because of their own points of (inter-)connection (with both Forster and Logue, differently, feeding into Tempest). I hope, in time, to expand this critical lens to consider other classical receptions accordingly.

Chapter 1 defines 'authentic(ity)' as the term is used throughout the thesis, and it describes the theoretical underpinnings that have led to a very specific use of 'authentic' in English from the turn of the twentieth century onwards. 'Authenticity' in this modern usage moves beyond mere object verification and towards an idea of a connected self which finds connection in a manner which is 'not affected, unfeigned'.[43] The chapter primarily introduces these usages in English (given the anglophone nature of the three literary case studies) but is fully aware of how such notions of 'authenticity' are implicated in wider movements towards European Existentialism and psychoanalysis. A key tension which will continue to preoccupy the remaining chapters is introduced: namely, the manner in which authenticity is understood both as something intensely personal yet also predicated upon *collective* notions of authority and acceptability. The argument is that there is a strong similarity here in how Classics, or the 'classic(al)' text, is constructed. The chapter also draws a crucial link between authenticity and 'feeling right', which is of fundamental

[43] *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), s.v. 'authentic (*adj.*) 7.d.', accessed 1/10/2025, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/authentic_adj.

importance when looking at relationships with the past, and the feelings that such relationships elicit.

Chapter 2 highlights relevant shifts in the study of Classics (particularly Classical Reception) in recent years which have provided important interventions into the way Classics, authenticity, and the relationship between the two are presented in this thesis. The chapter analyses how 'authenticity' has been implicated in the construction of the discipline, and how wider theoretical and disciplinary changes have recently facilitated a move away from close reading as inherently yielding classical 'authenticity' and towards the classical as something which is 'felt'. Increasing awareness within the discipline of the mechanisms at play resulting in these 'classical feelings' is especially relevant, and I hope that my explorations of authenticity can make an important contribution to these discussions. The chapter closes with a coda that considers the ways in which 'classical feelings' have continued to hold widespread appeal in popular contexts, and how these have forged clear links between Classics, authenticity, and marketability.

Chapter 3 acknowledges both the 'the classical' and 'the authentic' as commercial properties, operating in similar ways: both promise to package up and deliver a set of non-replicable occurrences, and both simultaneously represent the desired reality of the individual and the collective. Scholarship on the role of authenticity and attitudes to the past in Modernist thought is especially relevant here, and the chapter highlights how nineteenth-century patterns of consumption and self-fashioning (and the leveraging of Classics for both) combine to create the very particular relationships between Classics and authenticity under discussion here. Material massification and consumption are explored through the upsurge of the heritage industry, alongside less tangible – though equally if not more important – means of production. Classical education in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Britain is highlighted as a notable example of these processes at work.

Chapter 4, the first in Part II, analyses some frequently overlooked works by E.M. Forster, whose understandings of both the 'classical' and the 'authentic self' are products of and responses

to Edwardian Britain. The Forsterian moment of engagement across cultural or temporal lines – 'only connect'ing – is understood as representing the 'authentic feelings' discussed in Part I. A product of a Classics-heavy education, it is unsurprising that much of Forster's writing navigates the world through classical allusion; however, the chapter argues that there is a quality to this allusion which bears scrutiny. Authenticating devices employed by Forster to represent 'connection' between characters and with the classical past very consistently understand Classics through nature, feeling, and embodied experience – often explicitly rejecting meaning which might be derived through close reading of a text. This is particularly noticeable in Forster's posthumously published and more experimental works, where the self and sexuality are freely explored in ways that transcend Edwardian social *mores*.

Chapter 5 moves into the mid-to-late twentieth century to an author with a very different set of educational and cultural contexts. Christopher Logue's *War Music*, worked on from 1959 until the poet's death in 2011, is in many ways a response to the assumed Classics literacy of Forster's generation. Consistently keen to position his voice as that of the subaltern, Logue's approach to (re)mediating classical material through an explicit acknowledgement of intertextual and allusive mechanisms is representative of wider literary and social concerns around the hegemonic underpinnings of assumed patterns of thought. Like Forster, however, Logue recentres situated embodied experience as crucial to authentic mediation of ancient texts. Logue's stated lack of interest in familiarising himself with his Homeric source material in its 'authentic' language is scrutinised alongside his exploration of 'authentic feeling' derived from that very unfamiliarity – a quality that he frequently expressed as 'musical'.

Kae Tempest, the focus of Chapter 6, is strongly implicated in the contemporary crises of authenticity outlined in my Introduction. The chapter discusses his relationship with authenticity and the classical past and its strong connections with both Forster and Logue, with the former representing a parallel preoccupation with 'connection' and the latter explicitly cited as a direct

influence on his early work. The tensions outlined throughout the thesis – between the individual and the collective, between Classics and class, and between the constructed and the 'authentically' felt – are all writ large in Tempest's work. Furthermore, I argue that Tempest's turn towards embodiment and away from the *verbatim* classical has its roots in both Forster and Logue's examples. In all three instances, there is a rallying cry to recontextualise what is understood by the ancient classical past and to reimagine the mechanics of authenticity at work in literary responses to it.

Part I: Theorisations and histories of authenticity

Chapter 1: ‘Not affected, unfeigned’

The authentic turn and the role of the self

The first recorded usage of ‘authentic’ to mean ‘that which truly reflects one’s inner feelings; not affected, unfeigned’ is not until 1915, when it appears rather prosaically in an issue of *Good Housekeeping Magazine*.[1] It is not surprising, perhaps, that it is amidst the political and social fragmentation of the early stages of the First World War that this personal dimension to authenticity comes to the fore for the first time.

It is important to underline the fact that even the noun ‘authenticity’ does not appear in English until the eighteenth century; though the adjective ‘authentic’ in other meanings has a long pre-history with its roots in Greek and Roman antiquity, and in religious and legal texts, in particular. But both ‘authentic’ and ‘authenticity’ as they are used throughout the thesis have their origins in this early twentieth-century sense, which implies that which is both inherent and personal. This 1915 first recorded usage, with the understanding that the term would likely have been in use a little earlier, coincides with the time that Forster was writing the short stories discussed in Part II. Indeed, many of the terms and developments explored within this thesis emerged in the socio-political and intellectual climate of the Edwardian period, when the use of the term ‘authenticity’ with reference to the personal and the relational becomes common. What is striking is that Logue, and later Tempest also adopt these terms in markedly similar ways later in the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries.

The thesis is concerned with two main twentieth-century developments: first, how authenticity has been understood generally throughout this period; and secondly, how this sense is used by the writers under discussion through their use of authenticating devices in their

[1] *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), s.v. ‘authentic (*adj*.) 7.d.’, accessed 1/10/2025, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/authentic_adj.

engagements with the discipline of Classics. My argument is predicated upon the understanding that both 'Classics' and 'authenticity' as markers of value are constructs: they are highly subjective properties that demand scrutiny and frequently operate in similar ways.

I begin this chapter with a brief intellectual history of the term(s) and an analysis of the particular 'turn' in their usage at the beginning of the twentieth century. The second chapter looks at how authenticity in this new sense can be understood in parallel with the history of scholarship and the study of Classics, in particular, in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I consider these concepts in conjunction with the considerably later development of reception theory, which eventually enables the term 'authenticity' to unlock new approaches to Classics, particularly in the current moment when there is an impetus for greater critical scrutiny within the discipline. The third and final chapter of this first section brings in a specific modality of authenticity – as a commodifiable property – and explores how this is linked to cultural attitudes to Classics throughout the long twentieth century and down to the present day.

Whilst I predominantly consider the word 'authentic(ity)' in English and its impact in Britain – given the contexts in which Forster, Logue, and Tempest are writing – I also take care not to lose sight of comparable terms and their usage globally. This is essential when considering the cultural history of the term 'authenticity' in philosophical writings from other traditions, notably German and French – both of which are of particular relevance when considering the role of 'authenticity' in Existentialist thought.

Central to my argument are instances where 'authenticity' is understood as a form of objective reality, and how this – much like the 'classical' – requires both an intensely personal form of identification and a shared set of assumptions around what does or does not qualify as real/ authentic. Whilst authenticity may on occasion be linked to object veracity (as will be discussed below), the focus of my discussion in this chapter is on when 'authenticity' involves a turn towards the personal. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it becomes common to find

‘authenticities’ that imply an alignment with the self, which by extension facilitate authentic connections in turn with ‘another’, which may be an individual, a text, or (significantly for my discussion) the perceived classical past.

Usages of ‘authentic(ity)’

Whilst the adjective ‘authentic’ has been in use in the English language since the fourteenth century, the noun ‘authentic’ does not appear until the eighteenth century. But for both the adjective and the noun, there is a significant etymological evolution at the turn of the twentieth century – at which point ‘authentic(ity)’ starts to assume what we can now see as distinctly ‘modern’ associations. Similarly, the turn of the twentieth century represents a particular flashpoint in cultural understandings of and interest in the ‘authentic’ self, and the creation of different kinds of ‘authentic’ relationships with and through the ‘text’. There is, implicitly, a sense of ‘connection’ in many of these meanings; a sense of the internal and the external aligning.

The word ‘authentic’ has multiple roots: it is partly a borrowing from Middle French, itself derived from the classical Latin *authenticus* and Hellenistic Greek *αὐθεντικός* – the latter two referring to legal legitimacy or authority, respectively.[2] There is a link here with *auctoritas*, in the sense of origination, authorship, and – crucially – authority. In an important sense, that which is authentic is that which may be believed; and this fundamental meaning persists to this day.

What, then, of the ‘authentic’ as it pertains to the human? In the Middle Ages the term could be used to represent authorial legitimacy or divine authorisation, but it does not yet represent personal sincerity. As Alastair Minnis in his work on authenticity and authority in the Middle Ages has demonstrated, the term ‘authentic’ is connected in the medieval period with Christian mysticism. Minnis cites as evidence John Wycliffe’s use of the Latin term *authenticus* to emphasise

[2] Kalliopi Nikolopoulou has recently reiterated the ‘life-and-death’ semantic context of the Greek term, following both Loraux (1986**)** and Burkert (1972) in understanding the ‘acting on one’s own authority’ of the ancient αὐθέντης as that of killing oneself or a family member. Nikolopoulou (2025), 34.

the primacy and consequent reliability of scripture.[3] There is a direct line implied here between the sacred text and its recipient: the scriptures may be understood as inherently authoritative, requiring no mediation (unlike with human writings). Here, authenticity is inherent both in the object *and* in the faith placed in it by the reader. Compare the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s definition 3, where the 'authentic' is something 'that possesses authority; entitled to obedience or respect; authoritative'.[4]

The links between authorisation and connection or wholeness persist in early modern usages of the term 'authentic' in English. By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this usage encompasses an individual who holds a particular licence or qualification (see *All's Well That Ends Well* II.iii.12: 'of all the learned and authenticke fellows').[5] In parallel, we can see other usages in English, which maintain the sense of the authentic as intrinsic and originary[6] – a legitimacy that is derived from its non-repeatability. For instance, *Paradise Lost* IV.719 references 'Joves authentic fire',[7] and William Cowper's *Conversation in Poems* 244 the 'grape's authentic juice'.[8] Here the authentic begins to combine the spiritual with the material, representing an inherent primacy that warrants respect and stands distinct from feebler 'copies'.[9] When the noun 'authenticity' begins to appear in the eighteenth century it, too, initially sits more closely with this first order interpretation of the authentic as something that may be relied upon, as we see in the first recorded usage by Horace Walpole in 1762: 'The portrait […] was rather a work of command and imagination than of authenticity'.[10]

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[3] Minnis (1988).

[4] *OED*, s.v. 'authentic (*adj.*) 3', accessed 1/10/2025, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/authentic_adj.

[5] *OED,* s.v. 'authentic (*adj.*) 1.b.', accessed 1/11/2025, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/authentic_adj.

[6] See Chapter 3 for the wider implications of 'originary authenticity'.

[7] *OED*, s.v. 'authentic *(adj.*) 4', accessed 29/11/2025, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/authentic_adj.

[8] *OED*, s.v. 'authentic (adj.) 4', accessed 29/11/2025, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/authentic_adj.

[9] There is a sense, here, of Walter Benjamin's later conception of the 'aura', tying an artwork's inherent presence to a specific place and time. See further Chapter 3.

[10] *OED,* s.v. 'authenticity (*n.*) 1', accessed 29/11/2025, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/authenticity_n.

There is at the turn of the twentieth century a burgeoning alternate definition of authenticity that goes beyond mere verification. 'Authenticity' now aligns directly with a sense of unadulterated identity and it begins to be used of international food, or of reconstructions of music, costume, or architecture from a different time. As we have heard, by 1915, that which is 'authentic' has become 'that which truly reflects one's inner feelings; not affected, unfeigned',[11] and is expressed relationally with another person, place, or concept. That the first recorded usage is in *Good Housekeeping Magazine*[12] marks the term's establishment in popular discourse, which needs to be borne in mind when considering the philosophical evolution of the term discussed below. Similarly, the noun 'authenticity' as representing 'the quality of truthful correspondence between inner feelings and their outward expression; unaffectedness, sincerity'[13] first appears in 1910. These early twentieth-century citations reflect a link with the passionate, the personal, and the emotional that emanate from a moment of connection and can be seen in the other instances provided by the *OED,* for example: 'an authentic love of nature'[14] or 'this, for the first time in my life, was true, authentic jealousy'.[15]

Indeed, the emergence of an authentic self as one which is 'rooted in individual reason and separated from the premodern collective self' is understood as an Enlightenment concept, which Romanticism developed further.[16] There is a conceptual overlap here with the idea of 'sincerity'; Milnes and Sinanan, in their consideration of the development of authentic selfhood, suggest that 'in Romantic literature and thought sincerity and authenticity are fused – and thereby transformed –

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[11] *OED*, s.v. 'authentic (*adj.*) 7.d.', accessed 29/11/2025, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/authentic_adj.

[12] *OED*, s.v. 'authentic (*adj.*) 7.d.', accessed 29/11/2025, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/authentic_adj; 'I wanted to shake him into being a man, some one who would bear me off, or make tremendous and authentic love'.

[13] *OED*, s.v. 'authenticity (*n.*) 3.b.', accessed 29/11/2025, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/authenticity_n.

[14] Taken from the *Lock Haven* (Pennsylvania) *Express* of the 16 November 1929.

[15] Taken from P. Frankau's *Wreath for Enemy* (1954). For the full definition and usages see *OED*, s.v. 'authentic (*adj.*) 7.d.', accessed 29/11/2025, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/authentic_adj.

[16] Milnes & Sinanan (2010), 2.

for the first time'.[17] Indeed, the link between authenticity and sincerity persists well into the twentieth century and went on to provide the title for Lionel Trilling's famous series of lectures at Harvard in 1970.[18] For Trilling, sincerity is 'a congruence between avowal and actual feeling'[19] and consequently something that is expressed in relation to others. Authenticity is a more recent consideration, which is understood as congruence with the inner self, irrespective of societal expectation (in this regard there is a clear dialogue with Existentialism, discussed below). As Kirsch explains, for this post-Romantic interplay it is as 'if sincerity is saying what you mean, authenticity is being what you are'.[20] Trilling subsequently raises concerns about the individualistic or anti-social tendencies that might be encouraged by the valorisation of personal authenticity above all else:

> At the behest of the criterion of authenticity, much that was once thought to make up the very fabric of culture has come to seem of little account […] Conversely, much that culture traditionally condemned and sought to exclude is accorded a considerable moral authority by reason of the authenticity claimed for it.[21]

'The century of the self'[22]

This turn to the personal in usages of 'authentic(ity)' needs to be understood as operating in parallel with the increased philosophical interest in the self that is attendant on the emergence of

[17] Milnes & Sinanan (2010), 2.

[18] Trilling (1972).

[19] Trilling (1972), 6.

[20] B. Crair (2008, 3 March). 'Sincerity and Authenticity', *The New Republic*, https://newrepublic.com/article/40450/sincerity-and-authenticity [accessed 1/9/2025.

[21] Trilling (1972), 11.

[22] Cf. Adam Curtis's 2002 documentary of the same name, which considers the role of Freudian psychoanalysis and late capitalism in the shaping of twentieth century understandings of (and preoccupations with) the self as a project – and the consequent commercial possibilities of self-improvement.

psychoanalytical theory at the end of the nineteenth century. The clearest philosophical echo of this authentic turn towards the personal, the subjective, appears in European Existentialism, where there is an impetus to identify an inherent or underlying truth about the human condition and to consider how to live in accordance with it. To understand authenticity as a factual underpinning invites humanistic questioning; and Existentialism asks what is it that defines a human being and how is that defining quality best recognised and honoured?

There is a clear similarity between the Existentialist definition of 'authenticity' and the *OED* definition 7.d.: 'that which truly reflects one's inner feelings; not affected, unfeigned'. The situatedness of the individual in an 'authentic' experience is key, as seen in the early (Christian) existentialism of Kierkegaard (1813-1855). Here, living as an individual entails responsibility for authentic truth on a personal rather than any collective level. 'What matters is to find my purpose', Kierkegaard writes in an early journal entry, '[…] the crucial thing is to find a truth that is truth for me, to find the idea for which I am willing to live and die. Of what use would it be to me to discover a so-called objective truth […] constructing a world I did not live in but merely held up for others to see'.[23] For Nietzsche, writing later in the nineteenth century, the individual's (or indeed any kind of) relationship with God is rejected, and the centrality of the human will is writ larger. Whilst 'authenticity' is not formally defined in Nietzsche's work, there is a similar preoccupation with the affirmation of the 'true self', as illustrated by his notable call to 'become who you are'.[24]

Heidegger is heir to these nineteenth-century influences (explicitly Nietzsche) and their imprint is most obviously felt in the Heideggerian concept *Eigentlichkeit*, 'authenticity'. Central to *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time,* 1927) is *Dasein* – being-in-the-world – a state which is relational, and contingent upon the people, things, and circumstances around us. This, Heidegger argues, is an

[23] Kierkegaard (1835), 8.

[24] Nietzsche (1882), 152.

'inauthentic' (*uneigentliche*) state.[25] Such inauthenticity is not a moral flaw in this context, but a default condition of operating in the world. The authentic self, it follows, is that which recognises and 'takes ownership' of one's own being (the adjective *eigen* literally means 'own'; the verb *eignen* 'to own'). Crucially, *Eigentlichkeit* does not require a permanent departure from *Dasein*, from being oneself in the world, but is more a modality that may be tapped into: 'Authentically being one's self is not based on an exceptional state of the subject, a state detached from the they, but is an *existentiell*[26] modification of the they'.[27] Heidegger's fascist politics and posthumous association with the alt right[28] lends this focus on individualism and innate personal authenticity a challenging quality, a fact that must be borne in mind when considering the role of 'authenticity' (and the pursuit of it) in individuals and social groups. In the case of Nietzsche, too, a rejection of what may be termed 'herd mentality' in favour of personal authenticity can lead to uncomfortable questions when considering the role of 'authenticity' in narratives of cultural conservatism and authoritarianism. This is particularly the case when such narratives are combined with ideas of inherent value and personal heritage regarding the 'authentic' ancient past (as will be explored below).

Authenticity and Existentialism accrued particular ethical concerns for Sartre, for whom authenticity operates as a *moral* consideration, with the choice to bring oneself closer to one's authentic self an important factor for the individual. In *L'Être et le néant* (*Being and Nothingness*, 1943), whilst the word *authentique* itself is not prominent, it is nonetheless implicated in Sartre's well-known existential category *mauvaise foi* (bad faith). To live in bad faith is to self-deceive

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[25] Heidegger (1927), 260 ('factically, Da-sein maintains itself initially and for the most part in an inauthentic being-toward-death').

[26] *Existenziell* as distinct from *existenzial* (Existential), here referring to how a particular individual concretely embodies their own existence.

[27] Heidegger (1927), 130.

[28] M. McManus (2025, 3 June). 'The Far Right Canon', *Liberal Currents,* https://www.liberalcurrents.com/the-far-right-canon/ [accessed 22/10/2025].

regarding one's own intrinsic human condition; in a Heideggerean sense, it is to fail to take ownership of *Dasein* and to exist in a state of inauthenticity (*Uneigentlichkeit*).

An example of this kind of disconnect is offered by Flynn: '[a] student who insists that she is going to become a brain surgeon but who automatically reaches for the snooze button rather than get out of bed to attend her chemistry class […] is deceiving herself. She is living in bad faith'.[29] Bad faith, here, becomes a technical term for an inauthentic existence, which has a similarly Existential impact: 'Bad faith then has in appearance the structure of a lie. Only what changes everything is that in bad faith it is from myself that I hide the truth. Thus the lie is absorbed into the being of the liar'.[30] The authentic attitude, Sartre argues, is to remain faithful to the self and the course of action that one has chosen ('*L'attitude authentique […] veut rester fidèle à soi-même tel qu'on s'est choisi*').[31] In this context, the authentic self operates not merely within a place of clarity – as in Heidegger – but as a moral and ethical goal. The loaded language of bad faith and falsehood is also reminiscent of earlier understandings of authenticity as representing trustworthiness and moral authority – as *auctoritas*.

Adorno, by contrast, questions the individualism of the purely Existentialist mindset and – by extension – its value for social critique. According to Adorno, to over-emphasise personal authenticity is to under-consider social contexts and the structural status quo. In *The Jargon of Authenticity* (*Jargon der Eigentlichkeit*, 1964), it is the Heideggerean notion of *Eigentlichkeit,* in particular, that Adorno takes to task. As a review of its first publication in English in 1973 states:

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[29] Flynn (2006), 74.

[30] Sartre (1943), 89. '*La mauvaise foi a donc en apparence la structure du mensonge. Seulement ce qui change tout, c'est que dans la mauvaise foi, c'est de moi que je cache la vérité. Ainsi le mensonge est absorbé par l'être du menteur'.* All translations from French are mine unless otherwise specified.

[31] Sartre (1943), 90.

> …the jargon of authenticity is a social disease and Adorno has set out to exterminate it. 'Authenticity,' a characteristic term in the jargon which Heidegger shared with many politicians, theologians and conservative ideologues, abstracts from the social causes of discontent by giving contemporary feelings of meaninglessness an ahistorical formulation.[32]

This tension between the highly individualised and the collective in understandings of both the authentic and the classical will recur throughout the thesis, alongside an Adornian invitation to consider individual response (and indeed personal authenticity) in more critical, less ahistorical contexts.

In Adorno's Marxist reading, Heidegger's presentation of 'the human crisis [as] not historically specific but as eternal'[33] overlooks the role of monopoly capitalism in facilitating this disconnect. Authenticity, in consequence, is a 'jargon' which masks factual experience by leaning into the mystical, the ambiguous, and away from uncomfortable realities. Indeed, it becomes increasingly difficult to consider the pull of authenticity in the twentieth century, in both its form as inherent authority and as personal alignment, without considering its increasing role in patterns of commodification and consumption – and the way in which the self is leveraged for those means. Marshall Berman, writing in 1970, considers this same interplay from a very different angle, valuing the quest for authenticity as an opportunity for 'radical' self-fashioning and in *opposition* to bourgeois values.[34] This sense of authenticity as reclamatory *and* anticapitalist is comparatively unusual, however. To consider the value of authenticity in either case, nonetheless, is to assume an

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[32] Stahl (1975), 489.

[33] Kennedy (2019), 76.

[34] Berman (1970), 3. See also Berman (1982) for his wider views on the experience of modernity.

opinion on the value (or otherwise) of pre-existing social structures and the role of the individual within them.

Authenticity as a contemporary (political) commodity

Writing in 1977, sociologist Richard Sennett argues that a preoccupation with personal authenticity invites 'absorption in motivations and localism'.[35] In the wake of a greater emphasis on the individual, he voices concern for the erosion of social and public life, fearing a turn to solipsism as focus turns inward: one is 'plunged into the narcissistic problem of never being able to crystallize what is authentic in one's feelings'.[36] In *The Culture of the New Capitalism* (2006), Sennett continues his critique of authenticity, this time with a far more obvious focus on authenticity's role as a neoliberal commodity – particularly in the workplace. This sentiment is echoed in Peter Fleming's claim in *Authenticity and the Cultural Politics of Work* (2009) that 'personal authenticity was once a reference point from which critics and labour activists sought to challenge the domination of the corporation'. Nowadays, he continues, it has become branding, or a metric for tracking 'working motivation and productive performance'.[37]

Of particular interest when considering the compelling power of the 'authentic' self and its potential collective implications is Joe Kennedy's suggestive study, *Authentocrats* (2019), which seeks to examine what the author terms 'an "authentic turn" in popular culture that has readied the ground for a particular construction of what it means to be "real"'.[38] Specifically, Kennedy considers the potent aura of the 'authentic' in a neoliberal political context, and how it has been leveraged to represent consistency, dependability, and a connectedness to a particular place and

[35] Sennett (1977), 263.

[36] Sennett (1977), 267.

[37] Fleming (2009), 1-2.

[38] Kennedy (2019), 59.

time. He describes not only the 'political fetish'[39] of the 'authentic' British working-class citizen in the context of peri- and post-Brexit cultural discourse, but also the marketability of 'authentic' traits by those in positions of cultural and political power.

Kennedy helpfully coins the term 'authentocracy', which he describes (in terms strikingly similar to Adorno's critique of Heideggerean ambiguity) as a form of 'populism that seeks to wield power with reference to an authenticity that is always "just over there"'.[40] Kennedy's authentocracy is thus close enough to consider but tantalisingly out of reach; and this is a state that is common to all the 'authenticities' under discussion in this thesis. Consider, for instance, the clichéd impetus for backpackers to travel far beyond their comfort zone with a view to 'finding oneself', the assumption being that the '"real" lives of "others" […] somehow possess a reality hard to find in their own everyday lives'.[41] Kennedy's concerned analysis of the reification of the authentic ('authentic reality') in the current state of 'digital late-late capitalism' similarly echoes the manner in which Adorno warns against ahistoricising otherwise very natural responses to current events. Kennedy writes that 'alienation gradually becomes mystified not as a product of a particular historical configuration, but as a fundamental part of being human, as something both "definitive" and definitional'.[42]

There is a tension here between twentieth-century authenticity as being deeply tied to self-expression, self-presentation, and politicisation and yet simultaneously promising ethical commitment and remaining by its very nature imagined or illusory. Both Sennett's concerns about the modern 'cult' of authenticity as an erosion of public life and Kennedy's concerns about how it manufactures legitimacy in political life echo Adorno's warning against a 'jargon' that serves only to exacerbate disconnection in spite of its tantalising promise of union. This thesis contains

[39] Kennedy (2019), 10.

[40] Kennedy (2019), 12.

[41] Conner (2022), 150.

[42] Kennedy (2019), 31.

numerous examples of anxieties about authenticity, whilst also considering a very obvious (post)modern impulse to seek 'authentic' connection both within the self and towards the other (including the ancient past). The 'century of the self', I argue, is more than mere solipsism. In many ways, current understandings of selfhood *and* contemporary discussions about Graeco-Roman antiquity can both find their origins in many of the philosophical and sociological flashpoints under discussion here. In all three of my case studies, there is an emphasis on authenticity as understood through the situatedness and embodiment of the individual receiving the text. But rather than acting as a solipsistic end in itself, the reading experience is shown to serve as a locus from which interpersonal and intertemporal connections are made possible.

Indeed, Sennett's 2008 study *The Craftsman*, written over forty years after his *The Fall of Public Man*, seeks to rehabilitate authenticity by grounding it in materiality. Now authenticity entails what the individual body contributes to physical, collaborative processes. By engaging in and producing craft, the individual's authenticity is expressed through embodied competence rather than union with an abstract self, and this is crucially distinct from capitalist value judgements of what constitutes 'good' or 'bad' work. According to Sennett, 'craftsmanship names an enduring, basic human impulse, the desire to do a job well for its own sake. […] craftsmanship focuses on objective standards, on the thing in itself'.[43] This 'intimate connection between hand and head […] recognizing and encouraging the impulse of craftsmanship' is not limited to what one would immediately associate with the term 'craft' (as in skilled manual labour) but any activity where this 'impulse' is actualised through union with bodily practice.[44] In Chapter 5, this union with bodily practice is powerfully illustrated with reference to Christopher Logue's *War Music* project. Kae Tempest's relationship to performance and the body on stage is discussed in Chapter 6, with points of commonality and difference.

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[43] Sennett (2008), 9.

[44] Sennett (2008), 9-10.

Interestingly, Kennedy's term ‘authentocracy’, can also be found in North American cultural commentary which critiques an obsessive veneration of handcrafting and artisanal practices (in opposition to widespread commercialism). This lionisation of craftsmanship in the United States is represented by scholars as simply a redirection of the same hunt for an illusory ‘authentic’ that is just out of reach. Sarah Banet-Weiser, for example, argues that in order to retain its ‘authentic’ status a piece of craftsmanship (or a product, or a text) must by definition exist in just the right amount of obscurity. In Sennett’s late-late-capitalist reading, the ‘authentocrat’ is the espouser of this belief who effectively gatekeeps authentic products from the masses – lest those products or experiences be rendered kitsch – and so that the value of the commodity for branding is not diminished. Ford argues that in the American context:

> …the nature of the “authentic” has become as fluid and reactive as the world of advertising itself, [and] the Authentocracy has the tools […] to propose a counter-narrative in which the things they prefer are promoted, the things they despise rejected. Their reward for their efforts is authority, the authority to say what is real and what is not. The modern branding expert’s efforts are spent in an endless attempt to anticipate, to route around, to please, and co-opt – not the ‘authentic’ which is just a concept after all, but to enlist the authentocrats themselves. Of course an authentocrat once co-opted loses all ability to claim authority; their secret powers fade with the first junket’.[45]

Elizabeth Outka, in her 2012 study *Consuming Traditions: Modernity Modernism, and the Commodified Authentic* terms this preoccupation with the authentic as pure, unrefined, or unsullied

[45] P. Ford (2012). ‘Authentocracy in America’, *Slate*, https://slate.com/culture/2012/12/sarah-banet-weisers-authentic-reviewed.html [accessed 29/10/2025].

by widespread reproduction as the 'originary authentic'. This 'originary authentic' emerges from 'the mystique of the originary object' in response to mass marketing at the beginning of the twentieth century.[46] This powerfully appealing image, however, is just as marketable in its own right since the acquisition of a reproduction item offers the consumer an affordable article that nonetheless conveys all the qualities of the original: 'both the exclusive and the accessible, the original as the perfect reproduction'.[47] The relationship between authenticity and commodification, as presented by Outka, is the subject of Chapter 3, which looks specifically at what I consider an indisputable link between the appeal of the 'authentic' classical past and commercialism at the turn of the twentieth century.

The out-of-self

In other areas of twentieth-century thought, apprehension of the authentic is divorced from the material world entirely, and is perceived instead as operating *beyond* the trappings of the quotidian. That authenticity must exist independently of contemporary capitalistic concerns and yet be utterly implicated in them is not as antithetical a concept as it might initially appear. In both instances the authentic is a sought-after feeling or quality, pertaining to experience, behaviour, or provenance. The commercially inclined may then seek to purchase an object that they understand to be imbued with this 'authentic' sense. However, elsewhere we see authenticity presented as something which is only accessible through the *eschewal* of ties to the physical present.

In many ways, this apprehension of the 'authentic' is closely related to the general move towards questioning accepted notions of 'the real' across twentieth-century thought, from structuralist exposure of mediating processes to psychoanalytical explorations of the unconscious. Questioning the relationship between the 'normal' and the 'real' is also behind the imperatives of

[46] Outka (2012), 8.

[47] Outka (2012), 8-9.

Existentialist philosophers to live as one's authentic self. If 'reality' is a construct, and 'turning a particular form of behaviour into a cipher for reality itself ends up accepting and naturalising that behaviour',[48] behaviour which is perceived as abnormal or deviating from constructed notions of reality can therefore be reconsidered in a new light. Could that which had previously be considered delusion now be *re*considered as insight? Interest in equating the peripheral, even the unintelligible, with the authentic is certainly nothing new – consider, for instance, the 'delphic babble' of the oracular figure – but in the twentieth century there is consistent interest in this idea, particularly in the development of psychoanalysis.

Concepts such as the Lacanian 'mirror stage' present the self-aware, conscious mind as doomed to fragmentation upon reaching consciousness. For Lacan, this fragmentation occurs at the moment a child recognises their reflection in a mirror and thus proceeds to live as both their inner self and the external projection of themselves perceived by the world:

> The *mirror stage* is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation – and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality.[49]

In the Lacanian sense, then, episodes of psychosis are in fact breaking down the protective, performative self (the Freudian 'ego'), and revealing the real – the pre-mirror stage. Similarly, Freudian and Jungian understandings of psychotic episodes suggest that these experiences are to a certain extent unfiltered, with the self no longer expressed through normative mediations. Jung's process of 'active imagination', for instance, involved pushing the limits of his own sanity through

[48] Kennedy (2019), 78.

[49] Lacan (1966), 3.

intentionally gruelling and relentless creative projects, withholding sleep and taking himself to a place where 'confrontation with the unconscious'[50] could be found. There is a symbolic sense here of the inner self as something which must be found again, or reconnected with. Kae Tempest's interest in Jungian psychoanalysis, in particular, can be linked with the role mythology as pre-moral authenticity plays in his work (see Chapter 6).

Whilst there is no explicit fetishisation of the psychotic, or the 'out-of-self' experience, in a psychoanalytical context, certain other thinkers in the latter half of the twentieth century do begin to draw those connections – and strongly imply that such breakdowns in mediation lay bare an *authentic* self. Trilling critically notes that in some quarters the cult of authenticity has become so valorised that now 'insanity is a direct and appropriate response to the coercive inauthenticity of society […] it is an act of criticism which exposes the true nature of society'.[51] The most explicit and sustained commitment to this sentiment is in the work of psychiatrist R.D. Laing, known for his radical presentation of madness as something which 'need not be all breakdown. It may also be break-through'.[52] Laing reportedly commented that 'insanity is a perfectly rational adjustment to an insane world'.[53] Greatly influenced by Existentialist thought,[54] Laing presents psychosis as the result of a 'divided self', where a tension between the authentic, private persona and the palatable 'sanity' that the individual presents to the world results in a problem where 'humanity is estranged from its authentic possibilities. This basic vision prevents us from taking any unequivocal view of the sanity of common sense, or of the madness of the so-called madman'.[55] There are strong

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[50] Jung (1953), 170.

[51] Trilling (1972), 168-169.

[52] Laing (1967), 110.

[53] As quoted in Chang (2006), 412. See also S. O'Hagan (2012, 2 September). 'Kingsley Hall: RD Laing's Experiment in Anti-Psychiatry', *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/sep/02/rd-laing-mental-health-sanity [accessed 1/1/2026].

[54] Laing (1960) *Preface to the original.*

[55] Laing (1967), 11.

Heideggerean and Nietzschean influences in Laing's conception of authenticity, with associated problematic manifestations. As Thompson points out:

> Influenced by his reading of Nietzsche's and Heidegger's respective conceptions of authenticity, Laing's understanding of what it means to be genuinely 'oneself' could sometimes be experienced by others as brutal, rude, or aggressive.[56]

Laing gained notoriety for his enthusiastic experimentation with LSD, both on himself and with his patients, understanding it as 'a chemical therapeutic enabler' providing the opportunity to 'go back in time, beyond the false self'.[57] This sense of utilising a tool which forces one out of the day-to-day in order to access a pre-fragmented, pre-verbal, or pre-moral self – and thus uncover the perceived authentic – has other parallels in this period. See, for example, the out-of-self experience facilitated by the recreational drug high,[58] or the controversial popularity of animalistic 'primal therapy' as described in Janov's *The Primal Scream* (1970).[59] Similarly, Gestalt therapy, a mid-century development in response to Freudian psychoanalysis, encouraged shouting, crying, and physical expression in a bid to 'lose your mind and come to your senses'.[60] Fritz Perls, co-developer of the technique with his wife Laura Perls, stated that its aim was 'to make people authentic, to make them real. To help them stop playing roles and become what they are'.[61]

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[56] Thompson (2025), 163.

[57] Kirsner (2025), 103.

[58] See the 1960s 'psychedelic renaissance' as discussed in Petrement (2023) and Shortall (2014). For a contemporary account, see T. Wolfe (1968) *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test.*

[59] See Janov (1970), 154: 'Primal therapy aims to make the patient real. That means he feels what he really feels, thinks what he really thinks, and does what he really wants'.

[60] Perls (1969), 14.

[61] Perls (1969), 32.

Interestingly, for Perls, the authentic is explicitly presented in opposition to the 'phony', a term similarly employed by midcentury countercultural movements. Abigail Cheever, in her study of the term and its twentieth-century relationship with 'authenticity', notes that 'the epithet "phony" was omnipresent during the postwar period in the United States. It was an easy appellation for individuals who appeared cynically to conform to codes of behavior for social approbation or advancement'.[62] She situates the term against 'authenticity' in similar ways to the examples provided above: 'for phoniness to be possible, the self needs to have two components that are generally understood through metaphors of depth: an inner core and an outer façade […] Authenticity in the postwar period is imagined as that which separates the individual from the social world, as what might be uniquely one's own rather than a consequence of social influence'.[63]

This differentiation between inner core and outer façade may be applied both to questions of personal authenticity ('Is this person engaging with me authentically?'; 'Am I behaving in line with my authentic self?') *and* object authenticity ('Does the outer appearance of this object match up with the core attributes attributed to it?'). This is particularly useful for our purposes as it may be applied to both personal relationships with and through Classics *and*, by necessity, the object authenticity of the discipline of Classics itself. In this reading, to consider the 'authentic' is to have first identified the 'phony' or 'inauthentic'. As Flynn observes: 'one is no more born an individual (in the existentialist sense) than is one born authentic'.[64] When applied to a cultural grouping – Classics in this instance – the 'authentic'/'inauthentic' binary risks oversimplification under the guise of historical verisimilitude. In the case of object verification ('Is this vase fifth-century Athenian?', say) this binary may hold, but in a reception context the line becomes considerably more blurred, and is contingent upon far more subjective valuation than we might care to admit. In

[62] Cheever (2010), 2.

[63] Cheever (2010), 2-3.

[64] Flynn (2006), 75.

Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind, Yuval Noah Harari warns against the romanticisation of associating 'ancient' civilisations with cultural purity – what he terms the myth of 'authentic cultures'.[65] Consider, too, Salman Rushdie's comment that 'authenticity is the respectable child of old-fashioned exoticism. It demands that sources, forms, style, language and symbol all derive from a supposedly homogenous and unbroken tradition. Or else'.[66]

For this reason, it is important to grasp that we are dealing less with the classical *per se* than with a *sense* of the classical – an authenticity that is assumed and based on what 'feels right' (in the same way that one might hope for that sense of self-alignment or interpersonal recognition discussed above). Authenticity, as understood here, begins to find parallels in twentieth- and twenty-first-century theorisation of feeling – principally phenomenology and affect studies.

Feeling and 'feeling right'

Originating in Edmund Husserl's definition of 'Phenomenology [as] the science of the essence of consciousness',[67] Phenomenology as the study of lived experience and bodily responses may also be identified through a Heideggerean sense of 'authentic existence' and 'being-in-the-world'. Husserl's imperative to 'return to things themselves'[68] is picked up by Merleau-Ponty's *Phénoménologie de la perception* (1945), where 'to return to the things themselves is to return to that world which precedes knowledge […] and within which knowledge itself is situated'.[69] Again, we are seeing an emphasis on the primacy of embodied sense and feeling without the mediating layer of rational consciousness. The phenomenological turn in the early twentieth century was an

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[65] Harari (2014), 87.

[66] Rushdie (1991), 67.

[67] Husserl (1983), 73.

[68] Husserl (1983), 52.

[69] '*Revenir aux choses mêmes, c'est revenir à ce monde avant la connaissance […] et à l'intérieur duquel elle se constitue'* – Merleau-Ponty (1945), ix.

influential one,[70] and connects directly to affect studies at the turn of the twenty-first century. Affect theory is the study of felt experience, operating at a level even prior to emotional response – affect is that which is felt before it is known, and consequently emoted. Sarah Ahmed notes that emotions, on the other hand, work to 'mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between the individual and the collective'.[71] Whilst affect theorists do not necessarily employ the terms 'authentic' or 'authenticity' explicitly, their influence on the (re)centering of personal, embodied resonance in ascertaining whether or not something 'feels right'[72] is very relevant to my reading of authenticity throughout this thesis. Here, I understand authenticity as that which is (or purports to be) inherent, pre-verbal, and operating outside of temporal circumstance. The importance of recognising mediation and questioning social assumptions that are presented as norms is also very pertinent when considering what 'feels authentic' just as much as what 'feels classical'.

'The authenticity feeling'

The leveraging of 'feeling' to access authenticity (and all the sought-after qualities associated with it) may be observed in attitudes to receptions and reconstructions of the past – with what is considered an 'authentic' response not always necessarily correlative with historical sources. In literature, film, and TV, for instance, it is often more expedient for what is presented to 'feel authentic' to the audience, in line with their own expectations. Matthias Frey, in his study of how striving for *perceived* authenticity often trumps all in historical filmmaking, describes 'the authenticity feeling' as 'the sensation of a media-produced purportedly successful historicity'.[73] He

[70] See Moran (2000) Chapter 1: 'The Phenomenological Turn'.

[71] Ahmed (2004), 119.

[72] See Sedgwick (2002).

[73] Frey (2018), 2.

tellingly describes 'authenticity […] for its many proponents [as] ultimately a felt, sensual, even embodied historicity'.[74] Where a film is felt to convey authenticity, scrupulous attention to detail is paid to faithful reconstruction, which acts as a demonstration of reality and assures the audience of its reliability (as demonstrated by Barthes in *L'effet de réel* [*The Effect of Reality*, 1968]). However, decisions also need to be made in instances where 'accuracy' (or 'authenticity'), is best conveyed through stylistic choices that do *not,* in fact, line up with the historical period in question. Vivian Sobchack argues that in this sense history 'emerges in popular consciousness not so much from any "particular accuracy" or even "specificity" of detail and event as it does from a "transcendence of accuracy and specificity" enabled by a general and "excessive" parade and accumulation of detail and event'.[75]

Frey gives the example of language and dialect, and how a sense of authenticity is conveyed even when actors are speaking in different languages from those which would have been used in the period depicted. He cites *The Passion of the Christ* (2004) as an outlier, where Latin, Aramaic, and Hebrew are all scrupulously recreated in dialogue. This is in contrast to *Gladiator* (2000) where all actors speak English but were encouraged to deliver their lines in their own native accents, something director Ridley Scott intended would create an effect that was 'less "actorly" and thus more sincere'.[76] More commonly seen is the use of accent and dialect to imply status or background in ways readily intelligible to the audience,. Frey cites 'swords and sandals' blockbusters such as *Quo Vadis* (1951) and *Spartacus* (1960), where all characters speak English but the Roman elites use British received pronunciation whereas the enslaved characters have American accents. More widely, the use of British English as shorthand for gravitas and authenticity in historical contexts

[74] Frey (2018), 4.

[75] Sobchack (1990), 28.

[76] Frey (2019), 17.

has been noted by journalists.[77] Frey consciously elides fantasy films with his descriptions of the historical, where again accent and dialect are used as authenticating devices, notably British regional accents.[78] This is particularly interesting as book and film universes such as *The Lord of the Rings* are by definition not representing a historical period, yet use the frameworks of historical recreation to render their worlds more believable. Fantasy worlds which nonetheless elicit affective notions of 'historical authenticity' can be useful when considering the ambiguous status of what it means when something 'feels right' in connection with representations of the past.

Kennedy, in his consideration of 'authentocracy', looks at the immense popularity of the filmed adaptations of *Game of Thrones* (2011-2019) as illustrative of contemporaneous heightened interest in 'ontologically displaced realism'.[79] Whilst the use of fantasy worlds to underpin the current moment's preoccupation with authenticity might be initially surprising since 'it's a genre that, nominally, has literally *no* interest in reality whatsoever',[80] it is this very 'hanging between realities' which enables the genre to 'countersign a particular version of first-world authenticity'.[81] In both historical and fantasy contexts, the foreign and the familiar are judiciously employed to elicit Frey's 'authenticity feeling'. *Game of Thrones* is set in a world containing dragons, supernatural powers, and undead humanoid predators, and yet it also contains numerous signs and symbols linking it with the medieval past, particularly medieval Britain. The 'realism' of characters' gritty day-to-day lives, diverse regional accents, and unrelenting presentations of war and brutality enable the show to 'pass real-world judgements',[82] whilst also being 'on closer inspection […]

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[77] G. King (2025, 10 February). 'Why Fake Posh English Accents are Everywhere in Hollywood Films', *The Independent*, https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/english-accent-posh-films-nosferatu-b2695503.html [accessed 30/10/2025].

[78] B. Wheeler (2012, 30 March). 'Why are Fantasy World Accents British?', *BBC News*, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-17554816 [accessed 30/10/2025].

[79] Kennedy (2019), 72.

[80] Kennedy (2019), 68.

[81] Kennedy (2019), 72.

[82] Kennedy (2019), 72.

merely a deck of tropes that gesture towards authenticity'.[83] *Game of Thrones* was particularly controversial for its frequent and graphic depictions of sexual violence, often against women, with certain rape scenes yielding a significant amount of online discourse.[84] What is particularly interesting about this is that those arguing against accusations of pornographic misogyny praise such scenes' 'fidelity' to not merely the *Game of Thrones* books but to an overall 'historical accuracy'.[85] In such commentators' minds, the fantasy world of Westeros is so successfully tied to an accepted historical past that its inclusion of sexual violence is not only permissible, but necessary. The 'authenticity feeling', here, has truly been established.

Kennedy notes *Game of Thrones'* substantial following on the alt right,[86] and aligns this with the manner in which its overall emphasis is on conflict and (often misogynistic) violence, both of which are presented as not only 'historical contingencies' but also 'fundamental conditions of being'.[87] Appropriations of the historical past to bolster right-wing ideologies are certainly nothing new,[88] although recent years have also seen a particular marriage between this kind of programming and the use of authenticating devices to create visually immersive worlds presented as historically accurate.

Similar issues can be seen with France's *Puy du Fou*, a fifty-hectare immersive historical theme park founded by Philippe de Villiers – former president of the far-right *Mouvement pour la France* and known for his vehement opposition to immigration, gay rights, and Islam[89] – which may soon have a British equivalent in rural Oxfordshire. Concerns were raised over 'what version

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[83] Kennedy (2019), 76-77.

[84] See Korhonen (2024).

[85] Korhonen (2024), 86.

[86] Kennedy (2019), 77.

[87] Kennedy (2019), 72.

[88] As articulated in, e.g., Couperus (2022).

[89] R. Davies (2025, 22 February). 'Far-Right Links and Putin Praise: Fears Over £600k UK History Theme Park Plan', *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/feb/22/far-right-links-and-putin-praise-fears-over-600m-uk-history-theme-park-plan [accessed 29/10/2025].

of British history they plan to tell'[90] given the founding family's ongoing commitment to nationalist politics and 'the defence of civilisation'.[91] Here, as in France, history will be articulated through the selective presentation of historical 'authenticity'. The de Villiers family is also known to have been in talks with Vladimir Putin over a similar theme park in Crimea, seeking to legitimise the annexation of that territory by aligning its history with that of Russia.[92] A further point of comparison here is the reconstructed Chinese city of Datong, where 'fake relics'[93] have been created at great expense to boost tourism in the area and resurrect the old city ruins by creating them anew and 'tidying them up' in the process. These are newly-built historic buildings presented as 'authentic', with their claims to authenticity heightened by the 'aesthetics' of the now, much to the dismay of historians and conservationists.[94] In each case, we see instances of what Kennedy terms 'atavistic conservatism',[95] where the past is not only valued over the present for its perceived inherent 'authenticity' and 'authority', but is also reconfigured in ways which serve contemporary narratives. Janis similarly warns against how '"tradition" is problematically manipulated as a foil to modernity, or refashioned as a politics of authenticity'.[96]

This slippage between history and authenticity, with an implicit link between historicisation and authentication, becomes highly pertinent as we start to consider the manner in which the classical past *specifically* relates to the modes of authenticity introduced in this chapter.

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[90] Davies (2025), 'Far-Right Links and Putin Praise'.

[91] Davies (2025), 'Far-Right Links and Putin Praise'.

[92] Interview between Putin and de Villiers published on the Kremlin's website (2014, 14 August) http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46454 [accessed 30/10/2025].

[93] Y. Ren (2014, 15 October), 'Back to the Future: The Fake Relics of the "Old" Chinese City of Datong', *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2014/oct/15/datong-china-old-city-back-to-the-future-fake-relics [accessed 26/12/2026]. The project has also been politically controversial, with the government not only spending vast sums on the construction but also forcibly evicting residents of the contemporary city to make room for the reconstruction of the past.

[94] Ren (2014), 'Back to the Future'.

[95] Kennedy (2019), 14.

[96] Janis (2008), 2.

Understanding authenticity as that which 'feels right' can be both dangerous and liberating, depending on the circumstance and the level of critical awareness employed. Linking that 'authenticity feeling' with pre-existing notions of the past is relevant to constructions of 'the classic', too, and to the discipline which bears that name. There is a sense that antiquity by its very nature can confer authority and thus be employed as justification in itself. Minnis, in his discussion of authenticity as authority referred to earlier, cites medieval writer Walter Map's wry comment that his work will most likely be appreciated posthumously, as 'antiquity will make of me an authority, since then as now old copper will be preferred to new gold'.[97]

This relationship between authenticity as 'feeling right', and Classics as 'feeling classical', will be explored throughout this thesis, particularly as they apply to my discussions of the classical and the authentic in Forster, Logue, and Tempest. I am interested in what it means to recognise the turn towards the personal in navigations of authenticity *and* the ancient past, whilst also remaining mindful of the 'jargon' against which Adorno cautions. Similarly, I consider the potential salvageability of 'authentic connection' with and through Classics in a manner which is sited consciously in opposition to the narratives of singularity, solipsism, and cultural exclusion that are never too far away in discourse around the authentic, the classical, and the intersections between the two.

How might the individual, embodied response be honoured whilst retaining a healthy criticism of the mechanics at play in constructing this 'feeling' of authenticity? How might tensions between the individual and the collective be interrogated in ways which recognise the influence of heritage without succumbing to nationalism? Finally, how can we start to insert discussions of 'authenticity', and what we mean by it, more firmly into classical scholarship? From a reception perspective, in particular, this necessitates a second order question since it is no longer sufficient to

[97] Cited in Hexter (2005), 15.

ask: ‘Where is the classical in this text?’; now the imperative is to ask: ‘Why is the classical here, and to what end is it being employed?’

Chapter 2: ‘Strange harmonies and unadventured patterns’

The authentically classical and the classicised authentic

This chapter links Classics and authenticity together, picking up the manifestations of authenticity focused on in Chapter 1. It considers the ways in which authenticity has played out in the discipline, and particularly how more contemporary scholarship has responded to critical and affective turns in ways which may be read fruitfully alongside similar developments in what we mean by ‘authenticity’ and the ‘authentic’. The discipline’s relationship with ‘authenticity’ in a philosophical context and with ‘authentication’ in the context of authorship and material culture will be acknowledged, but the area of most relevance to the ‘authenticities’ outlined in the previous chapter is the (re)centering of the individual, embodied reader that has taken place in recent scholarship. The focus on the self, and its attendant difficulties, presented by the twentieth century’s ‘authentic turn’ has clear parallels with disciplinary turns in shaping how classical material is received. The questions of value, authority, and lived experience introduced by this new definition of ‘authenticity’ are equally relevant here. Whilst most of the chapter will consider scholarly and literary manifestations of the ‘authentic’ in Classics, it is also important to acknowledge the role played by what might be termed ‘non-scholarly’ engagements – including on social media and in online communities. It is in this arena that the use of Classics to explore personal identity appears to be at its most apparent in a twenty-first century context.

When classical scholars engage with ‘authenticity’ in a sustained way, it is usually when they consider authorship or textual legitimacy – though, as discussed in the previous chapter, authenticity as inherent textual ‘authority’ is not entirely unrelated to the ‘authentic’ *qua* ‘feeling’. Increased scrutiny of the nature of the discipline itself, and acknowledgement that a grouping of

different cultural and historical properties has come to be understood under the single term 'Classics', mean that in the twenty-first century the study of 'Graeco-Roman' antiquity is poised at an interesting moment of reckoning. Just as hitherto unquestioned assumptions behind what constitutes the classical are being unpicked, there is an opportunity to consider these in conjunction with preconceived notions surrounding 'authenticity' and what it might mean in the third decade of the twenty-first century. Many of the classical scholars under discussion here, whilst not explicitly focusing on the relationship between Classics and authenticity, have driven significant shifts in disciplinary thought and invited a greater awareness of the personal and structural mechanisms at play in classical receptions. I consider these shifts and interpolate what I have dubbed the 'authenticity feeling' into their discussions.

If within the discipline, the illusory, constructed nature of 'Classics' is being actively contested, beyond the academy authenticity and the classical are being re-evaluated and re-connected in new ways, particularly as responses to perceived crises of modernity. Despite the discipline's associations with whiteness and elitism, increasingly acknowledged in contemporary scholarship, there is a continued interest within wider circles in utilising the ancient world (in particular through receptions or in retellings of it) in order to understand the contemporary world. The latter portion of this chapter considers ways in which this alignment of authenticity and the classical may be interpreted, and begins to identify precisely where the appeal of Classics as a means for personal authenticity – or the 'classicised authentic' – might lie. The three case studies in Part II of the thesis trace these relational modes as they evolve from the early twentieth century to the present day.

Authenticating (in) antiquity

One very clear way in which the study of Classics has engaged with the study of authenticity is through how analogous concepts operate in an ancient philosophical context. Whilst this ancient meaning of authenticity is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is important to acknowledge the inevitable influences that these parallel ancient philosophical readings have had on pre-existing understandings of relationships between notions of the authentic and notions of the classical. Equally important to note is the way in which authenticity might be more readily understood by those trained in ancient philosophy. There are evident parallels with authenticity as 'not affected, unfeigned'[1] in, for instance, Parmenides' distinction between ἀλήθεια (variously translated as 'truth', 'reality', or 'unconcealedness') and δόξα (variously 'opinion', 'seeming', or 'that which is accepted').[2] Similarly one might look at Platonic ideas of authentic knowledge in opposition to mere appearance, seen most notably in the Theory of Forms and the Allegory of the Cave.[3] Whilst not precisely 'authenticity' in the manner in which it is understood in this thesis, a direct line may be drawn from Parmenides in particular to Heideggerean ideas of the authentic, with Heidegger's work becoming 'more and more entrenched in early Greek thinking […] between 1932 and 1944'.[4] For Heidegger, however, ἀλήθεια is ultimately distinct from '*Eigentlichkeit'* ('authenticity'); initially referred to as 'truth', *Eigentlichkeit* is later corrected to 'disclosure' ('*Unverborgenheit*').[5]

A second way in which 'authenticity' is commonly encountered in classical scholarship is in the authentication of something as classical. Whilst this may initially seem far removed from the forms of authenticity discussed in Chapter 1, there is a connection that might not be initially apparent. To identify an artefact as an 'authentic' product of fifth-century Athens may well rely

[1] As introduced in Chapter 1.

[2] First introduced in Fragment 2 (DK).

[3] *Republic* VI-VII.

[4] Turner (2024), 10. See also Turner and Hemming (forthcoming).

[5] Kompridis (2006), 188.

upon reasonably concrete scientific testing. The affective codes relied upon when applying the much more slippery adjective ‘classical’, however, are rather more interesting. Authorship, too, is notoriously contested in the case of certain classical texts,[6] where manuscript and scholiastic traditions mean it is not always obvious which variant of a text should be accorded originary status. ‘The pedigree of authenticity’[7] is nevertheless a key factor for cultural institutions seeking to lend value to certain texts and decide upon authoritative versions. Glenn Most, in *Variants and Variance* (2024), reminds us of the familiar scholarly predisposition towards ‘the theme of “older is more authentic”’.[8] Classical philology has traditionally been an area where close reading is valorised above all, and consequently the authenticity (and authority) of the text becomes foundational to the discipline in a very particular way. Increasingly, however, Classics has seen a move towards questioning this inherent authority and acknowledging the subjectivity at work in ascribing this ‘pedigree’ of authentic value.

Recognising habits

Reception, implicitly, invites recognition that authenticity cannot be assumed as a stable or inherent meaning in classical texts. Whilst it is certainly possible to authenticate an artefact by date or provenance, the introduction of the term ‘classical’ brings with it a set of affective resonances, whose peculiarities those who identify as ‘classical scholars’ are increasingly tasked to reckon with. If that which we call ‘Classics’ is shaped by inherited aesthetic and scholarly habits, the boundaries of what constitutes the ‘authentically classical’ begin to shift.

Following the affective turn of the late twentieth century and a marked decentering of hegemonic readings, these ‘habits’ have been more frequently discussed in twenty-first-century

[6] Exemplified by the Homeric question; on the construction of Homeric authorship see Graziosi (2002).

[7] Most (2024), 245.

[8] Most (2024), 117.

scholarship. James Porter, writing in 2006, notes that classicism is as much a 'practice' as a '*habitus*', combining outward behaviour and the production of recognisably classical scholarship with 'intellectual positions conceived as practices and as framed by *habitus*'.[9] He traces this affective turn back to cultural materialism through Raymond Williams' reconciling of feeling and thought,[10] and the idea of 'social feelings'[11] as both innately experienced *and* products of their socio-cultural environment. *Habitus* should of course be understood through Bourdieu's conception of it as an internalised way of being which, crucially, 'feels natural'.[12] This understanding that both thought and feeling may be true in light of one another is useful when considering the paradoxical nature of the authentic as much as the classical: something 'feeling right' may be an 'authentic and deeply felt sentiment',[13] but such moments of 'pure subjectivity do not remain untouched by social forces and dominant ideologies'.[14] Whilst identifying an authentically 'classical feeling' may feel innate, it is amply evident now that there are ingrained intellectual habits at work which in our contemporary climate it would be remiss not to acknowledge.

Much of Porter's work has sought to delineate the 'classic(al)' and interrogate to what extent the use of the term is justified. In an exploration of whether those who lived in what we call 'classical times' would have had a understanding of what that term has come to mean, he notes how the presence of Greek cultural objects in Roman homes may have served as what we might view as 'classicising' devices, expressed specifically through a sense of authenticity: by relying on the

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[9] Porter (2006), 61.

[10] See Williams (1977), 132-33 on 'affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought'.

[11] Porter (2006), 61.

[12] Bourdieu (1972), 72-95. Chapter 2, 'Structures and the Habitus', defines the *habitus* as 'structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively "regulated" and "regular".' So assumed, it results in the 'objective homogenizing' of a group's patterns of thinking without awareness of the fact.

[13] Porter (2006), 16.

[14] Porter (2006), 61.

symbolic potency of Greece, a Roman might access 'the ennoblement of one's own living world through authentic Greekness'.[15]

The Postclassicisms Collective, of which Porter is one of nine prominent scholars,[16] has provided a considered re-evaluation of how the discipline (and the term) 'Classics' might be theorised in light of contemporary intellectual, ethical, and political developments. The Collective explicitly address the illusory nature of the discipline, as 'a construction of Greek and Roman antiquity [that is] at once an ideal and an origin, at once beyond time and located in time, a value-laden narrative'.[17] Their claim that to work in this area is to acknowledge 'a reflexive process' where 'we also observe how we collectively as a field study the classical world and how we as a society relate to it'[18] is of particular relevance to this thesis. Here I discuss the role that authenticity has played in scholarly and non-scholarly relationships with the classical, alongside the leverage that the classical has exerted in thinking about broader relationships with the authentic. The evolution away from authenticity as simple verification and towards a more affective quality that was identified in Chapter 1 is paralleled in the Postclassicisms Collective's observation that the long-held mode of 'authentication of the professional classicist' is increasingly understood as an exercise in value judgement. So-called 'authentication' often simply erects and perpetuates exclusionary boundaries around classical subject matter:

> The capacity to locate texts and artifacts securely in time and space and in relation to one another has long been seen as the mark of the classical scholar, crucial to his (we use the gendered pronoun deliberately) claim to be able to identify the truly classical:

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[15] Porter (2006), 320.

[16] The others being Alastair Blanshard, Simon Goldhill, Constanze Güthenke, Brooke Holmes, Miriam Leonard, Glenn W. Most, Phiroze Vasunia, and Tim Whitmarsh.

[17] The Postclassicisms Collective (2020), 3.

[18] The Postclassicisms Collective (2020), 3-4.

> the genuine text or artifact from the interpolation or the fake; the products of classical genius from those of degenerates and epigones; the Greek and the Roman from the oriental and the barbarian. With the institutionalization of classical scholarship, the scholar's responsibility to the *authenticity of the Greco-Roman past becomes a responsibility to methodological rigor premised on the acquisition of specialized skills and an encyclopedic knowledge of antiquity's remains.*[19]

Classicised modes of authenticity, even when apparently only regarding the authentication of an artefact or confirming authorship, turn out to be no more than highly emotively loaded and value-driven observations shaped in accordance with a hegemonic set of beliefs, yet presented as objective truths.

It is the recognition of these same concerns that has led to some scholars advocating a move away from 'Classics' as a discipline entirely, and therefore from the constructed nature of the discipline and the wider social and intellectual habits it has served to propagate. One of the proposed alternatives is Critical Ancient World Studies (hereafter CAWS), a disciplinary and methodological transformation outlined in the 2024 edited volume of the same name – pointedly subtitled 'the case for forgetting Classics'.[20] That the construction of what is called Classics is not a neutral or apolitical happening is increasingly underpinning much contemporary work; and an awareness of this crisis of faith beyond the discipline was initially sparked by a controversial 2021 *New York Times* article. In this article, Dan-El Padilla Peralta was profiled as the galvanising force behind a growing movement to 'destroy the discipline' which he considers 'equal parts vampire and cannibal'.[21] Behind the provocative headlines, something more subtle (though nonetheless radical)

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[19] The Postclassicisms Collective (2020), 33. *Italics mine*.

[20] Umachandran and Ward (2024).

[21] R. Poser (2021, 15 June). 'He Wants to Save Classics from Whiteness. Can the Field Survive?', *The New York Times*, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/02/magazine/classics-greece-rome-whiteness.html [accessed 20/11/2025].

is at work: a call for scholars of the ancient world to move beyond the performed neutrality of 'the position of the teacher, the qualified classicist who knows things' and can 'point out the howlers'[22] in presentations of antiquity (again, that historically familiar form of authentication). Instead, Padilla Peralta provides an invitation to 'overhaul the discipline from nuts to bolts' and take apart these assumed scholarly habits by recognising the highly subjective places (e.g. whiteness, maleness, eurocentrism) from which they come.[23] With their 2025 edited volume *Classics and Race*, Derbew, Orrells, and Vasunia explicitly address the ways in which 'Classics' has been used to prop up racist narratives, as well as how the term itself has been habitually assumed to include and exclude along racial lines: though most familiarly associated with Greece and Rome in a western context, 'depending on the university and/or country, Classics can also include the study of ancient Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Egypt, Ethiopa, and India'.[24] 'Classics' need not necessarily mean what we think it means, and 'authenticating' the 'classical' often relies on subconscious narratives which in turn substantiate wider assumptions about what does or does not 'feel classical' and is valued as such.

The habit of repetition and preservation

In his own exploration of the term 'C/classic(s)' and what constitutes a 'classic text', Most returns to the idea of value, arguing that the 'inherent value' of the classic (or Classics) is 'a pious fiction'.[25] Value is rather something that is ascribed and, consequently, human decision making is at least in part responsible for the continued preservation and dissemination of a classic text. The idea of preservation as an act of faith is echoed in Lorraine Daston's work on archival processes, where

[22] Poser (2021), 'He Wants to Save Classics from Whiteness'.

[23] See Padilla Peralta (2025) for ways in which 'classicism' as a concept has failed the Black experience, and how this might begin to be countered. Goldhill (2025a) emphasises that this 'an essay to open a conversation, a conversation that is pressing, timely, and important'.

[24] Derbew, Orrells, and Vasunia (2025), 3.

[25] Most (2021), 8.

the archive is seen as 'a discipline's wager on its own longevity'.[26] The classic, then, becomes a 'saved remnant',[27] operating metonymically for a set of values deemed worthy of preservation. In deciding which remnant to save, which particular piece among others deserves to represent the whole, a set of judgements are made – themselves also informed by *habitus*. One might argue that the saved remnant has survived 'simply because it is better […] it possesses an inherent value that is greater than that of all the other parts of the past that are abandoned'.[28] Thus the requisite qualities for inherent 'authenticity' or 'authority' are assumed as self-evident, rather than externally imposed.

However, archiving, like close reading, is not a purely neutral act, and its perceived objectivity is strongly imbricated in the relationship between the classical and the authentic. Judgements regarding authenticity are made at the point of access ('Is this item classical enough to be preserved?') and as ongoing substantiation of the item's worth ('It has been preserved, and it is therefore precious'). The archival impulse, specifically in Classics, is the focus of Mario Telò's 2020 study *Archive Feelings*, which employs archival mechanisms of preservation, longevity, forgetting, and destruction to theorise Greek Tragedy (although many of the issues he raises are applicable to any text deemed canonically classical). Interestingly, Telò aligns the desire to preserve and extend relevance in textual form with Freudian theorisations of the 'death instinct'.[29] This also echoes the early Existentialist relationships with authenticity discussed in Chapter 1, where anticipatory behaviours are understood as covers for the confrontation of personal authenticity in the face of individual finitude.

The archive, then, may serve as a metaphorical repository for anxieties of survival: not only of the self but also of that which is deemed important, and must be projected into the future in order to shore up its perceived importance by rendering it universal. Telò draws a comparison with the

[26] Daston (2017), 330.

[27] Most (2021), 7.

[28] Most (2021), 7.

[29] Telò (2020), 16

archival processes of repeated posting on social media as 'piling up data […] in the vain attempt to showcase an illusory authenticity – an "original" self that is the most derivative *(an)-archê* or non-self'.[30] Similarly, acts of preserving and maintaining through repeated exposure are – often unconsciously – at work in Classics.

Similar processes are observed by Umachandran and Ward in their critique of the discipline as it currently stands, arguing that 'the disciplinary boundaries drawn around classics, as currently formulated, engage a complex process of remembering and forgetting […] the ideological curation of a specific slice of the past, remembered in such a way as to render it a justification and authentication of the present condition of the world."[31] Archival studies as a broader discipline has given significant thought to the nature of 'the archive' in recent years, and it is in this climate that Classics specifically is invited to rethink its relationship to archival processes. Ann Laura Stoler, in her contribution to *Refiguring the Archive* (2002), notes that 'whether documents are trustworthy, authentic and reliable remain pressing questions' but that it is no longer sufficient to rely simply on their archival inclusion for reassurance: 'a turn to the social and political conditions that produced those documents […] has altered the sense of what trust and reliability might signal and politically entail'.[32]

The habit of divine authority

In his afterword to the CAWS volume, Padilla Peralta warns against the 'hagiographical tendencies'[33] that have attended the discipline, most notably in the huge value placed on close reading as a means towards unlocking classical truths. This connection between legitimacy,

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[30] Telò (2020), 16. *Archê* here is interestingly not only operating as 'first principle' but in the Derridean sense of 'authority' – again, authenticity and authority are closely aligned.

[31] Umachandran and Ward (2024), 10.

[32] Stoler (2002), 85.

[33] Padilla Peralta (2024), 254.

authenticity, and authority – all implied to be accessible through intimate familiarity with the text – is very similar to Alastair Minnis's discussion of the well-established relationship between authenticity and scripture.[34] The specific methodological training and leveraging of encyclopaedic knowledge of the canon identified by the Postclassicisms Collective is also noted by Padilla Peralta, who aligns classical close reading with biblical exegesis. Both, he emphasises, are associated with a 'presumption of rigor […] as a baseline for legitimate scholarly standing',[35] and 'Classical philology and biblical exegesis shack up regularly in histories of classical scholarship'.[36]

Padilla Peralta is not alone in drawing this parallel, and it is interesting that biblical scholarship is an area with its own developing relationship with authenticity and alternate modes of textual engagement. Theologian Hindy Najman's work on ethical reading,[37] for example, reinserts the 'transformation of the self' as part of contextual processes of (re)engagement with canonical material, moving beyond a simple quest for original textual intent.[38] This form of affective critical engagement when considering historical patterns of reading in a Classics context is most apparent in what Constanze Güthenke has designated 'feeling' philology in her study that traces the insertion of the self in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century philhellenisms.[39]

The 'fetishization of the text' continues to haunt the discipline of Classics, with the individual reader's inference of moral authority from classical texts being analogous to a believer seeking affirmation from their sacred writ.[40] Recognition of this is crucial to an understanding of the blurring between 'neutral' and 'personal' modes of authenticity that is increasingly becoming apparent. *Postclassicisms* observes a parallel with the *sola scriptura* model, 'the Protestant

[34] See further Chapter 1.

[35] Padilla Peralta (2024), 254.

[36] Padilla Peralta (2024), 257.

[37] See Najman (2017), 507. See further, Najman (2024).

[38] Najman (2017), 507.

[39] Güthenke (2020).

[40] The Postclassicisms Collective (2020), 86.

commitment to personal engagement with the very words of scripture rather than any authorized tradition of interpretation'.[41] For the classical believer, then, there is a sense that the 'authentic' meaning behind the text may only be experienced when it is experienced in its 'pure' form, unmediated by layers of reception. Acknowledging the fantasy of one-to-one, unmediated connection with an imagined past, then, is an important first step in understanding how the fantasy of the *authentic* is implicated in the construction of the classical.

In the set of examples I discuss in this chapter, and indeed in many of the 'authenticities' presented by my case studies in Part II of the thesis, this complex entanglement of both the classical and the authentic may be understood as implicit. However, I hope to demonstrate that it is possible to recognise the constructed nature of this perceived authenticity accessed through classical resonances without either imposing any universalising feelings or dismissing them entirely as pure construct. In each instance, the focus is on 'authentic (classical) feelings', examining the ways in which these have evolved in a modern context and considering why they are of relevance to disciplinary and cultural conversations. By contributing to this wider scholarly unpicking of intuitions of classical or authentic 'rightness', I hope to offer directions of potential reconciliation between the collective and the personal in literary relationships to the ancient past.

Proximity and distance

An awareness of and/or fascination with the ancient context brings with it an appetite for a more holistic engagement with antiquity. In many ways here too, we detect the persistence of the aforementioned fantasy of unmediated union with the classical, but in such a way that might be observed – and indeed *experienced* – in more embodied terms. In his analysis of Hölderlin's *Hyperion*, Joshua Billings identifies the god Eros's 'state of constant oscillation between lack and

[41] The Postclassicisms Collective (2020), 86.

fulfilment' as comparable to the process of receiving antiquity.[42] What he terms 'an erotics of reception' is this state of yearning for both physical and intellectual connection with Classics.[43] This flirtation is doubly tantalising, he argues, for the desirous classical receiver does not simply seek to access cultures of the ancient mediterranean but the *classical* past, and all the illusory layers attendant on it.

The fantasy of recovering classical sensory experience is a powerful one, and the cultural mechanisms behind it began to be explored from 2010 onwards. Of relevance here is the 'sensory turn' in Classics, where this fantasy of connection is more clearly articulated through the body. This idea of the ancient world as something that should be considered in a holistic and sensory way was explored extensively in six volumes that appeared between 2014 and 2019 in the *Senses in Antiquity* series[44] (one for each of the five senses, and the initial volume *Synaesthesia and the Ancient Senses*).[45] Butler's monograph *The Ancient Phonograph* (2015) similarly seeks to amplify the sounds and rhythms inherent in ancient poetry, inviting even the philologically minded close reader to appreciate their text on multiple sensory levels. Sarah Nooter has considered the role of sound and voice, including nonverbal expression, in her theorisation of Aeschylean tragedy.[46] Armand D'Angour has written on the desire, in recreating ancient music, to 'access and appreciate something of the sensations aroused by the actual sounds of the ancient world', whilst acknowledging that for the most part these practices of reconstruction and recreation are more accurately 'a matter of intelligent conjecture'.[47] Frederick Naerebout notes the paradox of

[42] Billings (2010), 4.

[43] Billings (2010), 4.

[44] Series edited by Alex Purves, Kelli C Rudolph, Mark Bradley, Michael Squire, Sarah Nooter, and Shane Butler.

[45] Butler and Purves (2014).

[46] Nooter (2017).

[47] D'Angour (2019), 32.

reconstruction with reference to nineteenth-century revivalist movements in Greek dance which, he argues, were 'heavily invested in being the authentic *past*, instead of the authentic *present*'.[48]

Such tensions between proximity and distance, and the tantalising glimpses of an 'authentic' experience that may lie between them, are never far away in receptions both of specific classical texts and of classical antiquity as a whole. Simon Goldhill recognises this tension as particularly present in the 'self-consciousness of modernity' and similarly sees it as an inevitable part of reception studies and (re)performance.[49] When looking to authenticate the 'classical' ('Is this art Greek or Roman enough?')[50] or one's feelings about it ('Is my response authentic or modern?') there is perhaps an underlying desire for authenticating 'epiphany'.[51] Meaning, however, 'flirts with its own temporality, its status as lasting or fleeting, its temporariness'.[52] A useful metaphor is Schliemann 'gazing on the face of Agamemnon', only to remove the mask and have the unnamed body beneath crumbled to dust – the 'authentic' face of antiquity might have been glimpsed, just for a moment. In a Nietzschean context, this is the 'gulf' or 'rift' (*Kluft*) lying between the 'the ideal antiquity' and the 'real antiquity' – whilst 'the goal itself is an illogical pretension […] the aspiration for it is very real'.[53]

In Güthenke's work on Romantic Hellenism and affective relationships with classical philology, this tension between intimacy and longing is key. She observes how philhellenist travel writers experienced this tension in the contemporary Greek landscape they encountered, 'merg[ing] the real and authentic with the ideal or symbolic'.[54] The collection of folk cultural traditions in a Romantic context, she argues, was motivated by a similar appeal to 'authenticity and immediacy'

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[48] Naerebout (2010), 54.

[49] Goldhill (2011), 26.

[50] Goldhill (2011), 26.

[51] Goldhill (2011), 26.

[52] Goldhill (2011), 26.

[53] Nietzsche (1868), unpag.

[54] Güthenke (2008), 40.

alongside a heightened awareness of 'the distance separating them from the modern author'.[55] Oral poetic traditions exemplify this, in particular. Much like the crumbling face behind the so-called Mask of Agamemnon, as soon as any moment from the oral tradition – oft-repeated but unrepeatable in its moment of delivery – is 'collected' in writing, it loses the quality that initially charmed the collector. As Güthenke explains, 'Yet more, it even enhances that rift. The more it is collected, the more it seems endangered.'[56] Susan Stewart, in her 1991 essay collection *Crimes of Writing*, identifies the inherent incompleteness of collected poems as offering a further level of tantalisation: 'it is a fragment of a larger whole that is a matter not only of other versions, but of the entire aura of the oral world – such a world's imagined presence, immediacy, organicism, and authenticity'.[57]

There are particular qualities to oral poetry which lend themselves to the fantasy of the authentic classical experience. Noting the recent 'epic turn'[58] in performances of classical material, Macintosh highlights the appeal inherent in oral epic and its mode of operating beyond written codification. Epic performances are therefore afforded a 'fluidity', which take any authoritative authenticity away from the text and transfer it to the bardic performer, who makes a connection with the audience through the unrepeatable moment of storytelling exchange between them.[59] 'Reinvention' in this context is 'not only legitimate but also deeply appropriate' to the form.[60] Notions of repetition and preservation, as discussed above, are still at play here, but the archival repository of stories and songs is now embodied rather than residing in some external, impersonal location.

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[55] Güthenke (2008), 112.

[56] Güthenke (2008), 112.

[57] Stewart (1991), 104.

[58] Macintosh (2018), 9.

[59] Macintosh (2019), 11.

[60] Macintosh (2019), 11.

The tension between the individual and the collective that has been present throughout much of this investigation into modes of authenticity is also present in the figure of the oral storyteller. Though delivered via an individual body, the folk tale with each telling 'offer[s] a kind of fabular impersonality, where an author's voice is lost in a wider fiction machine or culture of storytelling'.[61] One is reminded of the double meaning of the Latin *vates*, of bard as both poet-performer and priest (here, too, the authentic and the divine find a place of convergence). Indeed, both the sublime and grounded aspects of the authentic are represented in the oral storytelling figure, particularly when considered alongside folk traditions more widely. The bard is at once a vessel for the authentically distant, quasi-spiritual, and arcane, whilst also representing a very real, physical presence, that of the '"folk" – the "authentic" voice of an oral storyteller, who might be from a lower social class'.[62] There is a sense of mantic inspiration delivered through the mechanisms of the human.

This oscillation between the foreign and the familiar, and the suggestion that authenticity may be found in that tantalising in-between zone, gains still greater impact in oral epic in performance where, to quote Porter, '"feeling classical' is bound up with "sounding classical"'.[63] Giving voice to, or otherwise expressing through the body, the otherwise purely textual and artifactual symbols of a classical past can lend a powerful sense of authenticity.[64] Kristin Sampson's comment that 'to speak in one's own voice is often considered as speaking with authenticity and autonomy' and her questioning how this works in the case of, for example, a Homeric text when the self behind the voice is obscured by distance and time, is pertinent here.[65] In the case of classical stories (or indeed

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[61] C. Burrow (2025, 20 March). 'Ogres are Cool', *London Review of Books 47*(5), https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v47/n05/colin-burrow/ogres-are-cool [accessed 1/11/2025].

[62] Burrow (2025), 'Ogres are Cool'.

[63] Porter (2005), 43.

[64] Porter (2005), 43 on the turn towards 'authentic recreation' of ancient sounds: 'Classical texts, as receptacles of voice, were a mnemonic of the classical past […] recovering their sound was a way of living, literally of experiencing, the past the way it once was. Only, the experience of the past here is of the way it once *sounded* – an experience (or illusion) that, apparently, is still to be had'.

[65] Sampson (2019), 123.

stories *we tell ourselves* about the classical past), we are presented with a 'corporeality without body'.[66] If voice is the external manifestation of an authentic self, the modern receiver of Classics experiences an exchange across the gulf that 'feels authentic', but it is less clear to what that authenticity relates. This elusive quality is precisely what makes it tantalising: the affective impact bypasses the textual and gestures towards something deeper; something occluded, yet present enough to resonate.

Ideas of the authentic as pre-verbal and operating outside one's own contemporary moment (as discussed in Chapter 1) are all the more heightened when the 'authentic' look, feel, or sound of the classical do not fully conform to contemporary aesthetic norms (but crucially are *just* recognisable enough to be engaged with). For someone altogether unfamiliar with classical languages, this is very much the case; and even for the studious philologist there is still a frisson of unfamiliarity with how the ancient languages themselves might have sounded in context. Linguistic anthropologists such as Kathryn Woolard and Paul Kroskrity have discussed how value is attached to languages based on ideologies of authenticity and tradition.[67] Kroskrity demonstrates a pattern whereby rare or unfamiliar forms of language are deemed more sacred or authentic by their very remoteness, whilst Woolard comments on the romanticisation of unfamiliar languages as 'purer' or 'more authentic'. Commentators on liturgical Latin similarly note that its very unintelligibility to the majority of the congregation contributes to the 'mystery of the ancient prayer texts', and the stirring of religious emotions.[68] Christopher Stray, weighing up the affective qualities of Latin and Greek, draws a hierarchy of sorts between the two where in the popular imagination Latin is 'halfway to gibberish' whereas Greek – represented in idioms such as 'it's all Greek to me' – is presented as having gone all the way.[69] It all its 'waving and glittering' unfamiliarity, Greek offers

[66] Sampson (2019), 123.

[67] Woolard (2016), 21-38. Kroskrity (2000), 329-359.

[68] O'Reilly (1960), 132.

[69] Stray (2018), 252.

'exotic, sometimes toxic, transcendence' and 'the dissolving influence of analysis and the creative force of pure intelligence […] the return to nature'.[70]

Even among the classical *cognoscenti*, then, this exoticisation of ancient Greek is apparent. In W.B. Stanford's 1967 *The Sound of Greek*, for example, he elevates everyday modern Greek words to classical grandeur by the way they fall on his (foreign) ears:

> One can still hear the authentic classical clarity and euphony in words like παρακαλώ, with its rippling and superbly articulated flow […] and my ear still delights to remember how a Greek waitress at Olympia pronounced the pitch accent and all the crystal-clear consonants in κολοκύθια.[71]

For the Greek waitress, however, that day's order of courgettes would likely not have held such poetic potential. The innately authentic is more often than not what Porter terms a 'telltale projection from the present'[72] – or, in this case, from contemporary northern Europe. A recurrent trope in 'authentic' encounters is that the more removed something is from one's original circumstances, the more authentic it must truly be.

Naerebout observes a Modernist trend towards an 'obsessive interest in "the authentic"' in response to 'the quickening of change with a resulting sense of loss and alienation'.[73] Folk and embodied practices, where some sense of 'age-old behaviour has been preserved', become extremely important for the perpetuation of some sense of authenticity to cling to, when 'the real thing is already lost'.[74] Much like music and oral storytelling, ancient dance promised early

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[70] Stray (2018), 252.

[71] Stanford (1967), 65.

[72] Porter (2002), 156

[73] Naerebout (2010), 43

[74] Naerebout (2010), 44.

twentieth-century practitioners a form of authentic sensory engagement that bypassed the intervening years and layers of reception. In a Modernist context, ancient dance practices were considered 'the most "authentic" and "primitive" means of communicating with the divine.'[75]

'Noble savages'

It is the pairing of 'authentic' and 'primitive' that is particularly useful when introducing a common way in which the classical and the authentic are elided in modern receptions. As seen in the fantasy of 'authentic cultures' in Chapter 1, the link between authenticity and the refutation of artifice readily invites the fetishisation of spatial and temporal distance. Regina Bendix, in her study of how authenticity was perceived in the formation of folklore studies, demonstrates how 'the call for authenticity' and 'the need to restore a pure, unaffected state of being required some tangible evidence, or, failing that, some gripping imagery'.[76] Certain elements of the 'classical' lend themselves to facilitating such imagery only too well.

An exemplary illustration of this conjoining is the characterisation of Charles Strickland (a fictionalised version of Paul Gauguin) in Somerset Maugham's 1919 novel *The Moon and Sixpence*. Here we see an example of early twentieth-century preoccupations with authenticity as 'primal', as unmediated, and erupting out of the constraints of the present moment.[77] The very first sentence describes Strickland's greatness as 'authentic',[78] and throughout the novel his particular brand of authentic artistic genius is associated with 'sensuality',[79] the 'primitive',[80] and the 'mysterious'.[81]

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[75] Macintosh (2010), 11.

[76] Bendix (1997), 35.

[77] See Bell (2012).

[78] Maugham (1919), 1.

[79] Maugham (1919), e.g. 1, 95, 209.

[80] Maugham (1919), e.g. 95.

[81] Maugham (1919), e.g. 1, 3, 209.

His ‘authenticity’ is also consistently described in explicitly classical terms, and in ways which emphasise the sensual, primitive, and mysterious qualities of the classical past:

> He seemed to partake of those obscure forces of nature which the Greeks personified in shapes part human and part beast, the satyr and the faun.[82] I thought of Marsyas, whom the god flayed because he had dared to rival him in song. Strickland seemed to bear in his heart strange harmonies and unadventured patterns […] it was a primitive force that existed before good and ill.[83]

The appeal of the alien and the familiar and the potential authenticity in the gulf between the two is frequently expressed in descriptions of Strickland’s paintings, as if they captured a process of remembering ‘forgotten’ sensual experiences from antiquity: ‘there were purples, horrible like raw and putrid flesh, and yet with a flowing, sensual passion that called up vague memories of the Roman Empire of Heliogabalus’.[84] Maugham’s specific reference to Heliogabalus in the context of vivid painting also calls to mind Alma Tadema’s *The Roses of Heliogabalus* (1888), a painter whose drive for ‘realism’ and ‘genuine archaeological exactness’[85] was by the early twentieth century associated with highly-coloured Victorian excess.

Fetishisation of the authentic ‘primitive’ in Modernist art has been extensively documented,[86] and indeed Strickland/Gauguin’s move to Polynesia (as remote, as authentic) would have been understood in those terms. There are, of course, racist and classist assumptions embedded in these presentations of authenticity: Bhabha notably presents the ‘primitive’ as yet another illusory

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[82] Maugham (1919), 95. A full examination of the Edwardian preoccupation with satyrs, fauns, and associated classical horned beasts may be found in Chapter 4.

[83] Maugham (1919), 95.

[84] Maugham (1919), 209.

[85] Macintosh (2010), 44. See Chapter 3 for a discussion of Alma-Tadema’s reproductions.

[86] Leja (1993), Rubin (1984).

construct that is used to substantiate colonial discourse, whereas in fact 'what may seem primordial or timeless is, I believe, a moment of a kind of "projective past"'.[87] There is a flattening at work here, where the idea of the classical world (historically used to legitimise colonial narratives) is simultaneously open to a form of intellectual colonisation itself, where the inconvenient realities of ancient Mediterranean pluralism are overruled by a set of projected, idealised symbols.

The 'authentic primitive', much like the 'authentic classical', is constructed, and similarly speaks volumes about the viewer. Initially, the elision of 'primitivism as the nostalgia for a pre-civilized condition' with an antiquity frequently heralded as foundational to civilisation as we know it may seem contradictory.[88] Yet there is a mode of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century reception, in particular, where this is keenly observed, notably in Nietzsche's 'complex reformulation of the classical spirit in relation to the primitive.'[89] For Nietzsche, the 'civilising' aspects of classical Greek art are there in order to temper 'primal energies',[90] which may be temporarily experienced through a container: the Dionysiac.[91]

This interest in what might be termed the 'primal underpinnings' of the classical can be very readily observed down into the early twentieth century, as in Maugham's fictionalised portrayal above. In many ways, it is the Cambridge Ritualists (c.1890-1930) and their consistent and explicit uncovering of an overlap between the classical, the authentic, and the primitive that lie behind Maugham's novel. The Ritualists had a shared interest in the recovery of the ritual folk and religious practices that they detected at the core of myth and its subsequent articulation through performance.[92] In a manner which echoes the Existentialist authenticities which arise later in the

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[87] Bhabha (1994), 293.

[88] Bell (2012), 353.

[89] Bell (2012), 357.

[90] Bell (2012), 357.

[91] Nietzsche (1872).

[92] See Macintosh (2011).

century, there is also in their work a demonstrable awareness of the relationship between the collective and the individual in the uncovering of meaning, and an impetus to recapture collective mythic loss. Jane Harrison's work, in particular, emphasises the role of 'group-thinking, or rather group-emotion towards life' that underpins Greek ritual practices; 'not religion, but […] the stuff of which religion is made'.[93] What came to be termed religious and performance practices were, according to Harrison, fulfilling an impulse 'among primitive peoples' for 'collective feeling and collective thinking'.[94]

There is a strong link between the 'authentic primitivism' of the Ritualists and the development of social anthropology at Cambridge – particularly via James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890). Both Frazer's academic background and the work itself are steeped in Classics, and his desire to infer connections across cultish practices is expressed through both his classicism and his interest in anthropological surveys of human behaviour, such as Edward Burnett Tylor's *Primitive Culture* (1871).[95] Frazer's characterisation of mythology, ritual, and antiquity -– and their role in what would now be termed the history of ideas – exerts significant influence over subsequent interpretations of the ancient past and the slippage between classical antiquity and other ancient cultural practices. Alessandro Testa, in a 2024 reappraisal of *The Golden Bough*, charts a link between culturally absorbed 'Frazerism' and the widespread acceptance that 'the more remote the evoked past is, the more "authentic" the tradition, and therefore the worthier as an element of collective identity, social memory, and cultural heritage'.[96]

It is worth noting here that some parallels have been drawn between Frazer's conception of mythology and that of Jung,[97] and whilst a direct influence is not declared in Jung's work there are

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[93] Harrison (1912), 485.

[94] Harrison (1912), xiii; Harrison (1912), 485.

[95] Brissman (2024), 269.

[96] Testa (2025), 298.

[97] Notably Vickery (1973), 95.

points of commonality. For instance Frazer's depiction in *The Golden Bough* of 'a solid layer of savagery beneath the surface of society' separated from us only by 'a thin crust which may at any moment be rent by the subterranean forces slumbering below'[98] can find its echoes in the Jungian collective unconscious and 'spirit of the depths'.[99] Fellow Ritualist Gilbert Murray (the only member of the group based in Oxford) similarly writes of 'a great unconscious solidarity and continuity, lasting from age to age, among all the children of the poets'.[100]

Leveraging 'authentic Classics' for the 'authentic self'

Two presentations of 'classic(al) authenticity' have recurred thus far, one growing out of the other: the hyper-individualised moment of connection (as seen in the affective pull of the sensory, the unrepeatable moment of oral performance, or the erotics of close reading); and the collective (the accrual of cultural habits, notions of shared mythic repositories). Twentieth- and twenty-first-century 'classical authenticities' appear to have in common a (re)centring of the individual and of individual experience, even when operating within collective imaginaries. Stray associates this with a move in the nineteenth century towards 'a society predicated on the autonomy of the individual', for whom ancient Greece in particular – as more ancient, more arcane, than classical Rome – offered up a 'wilder freedom' to explore.[101] Aligning oneself with an idealised vision of classical precedent can be a powerful tool for self-identification, whilst also participating in a collective imaginary. Johanna Hanink's *The Classical Debt* considers the ways in which Greece in particular has been used in the conception of European identities on personal as well as national levels, by

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[98] Frazer (1900), 74-75.

[99] See Chapter 6 for a more in-depth discussion of Jungian authenticity. Frazer was similarly an influence on DH Lawrence, in whose work a similar preoccupation with the authenticating devices of the 'primal' and the 'primitive' may be found, although with a notable lack of recourse to the classical. See Asher (2017), 82-110 for Lawrence's responses to Frazer. In Chapter 4 I discuss Lawrence's divergent opinions from Forster on the usefulness of classical imagery to illustrate these themes.

[100] Murray (1957), 208.

[101] Stray (2018), 287.

'embracing and enacting'[102] classical models. Or, as Jenkyns understands it, romanticised ancient Greece can be made to serve as 'a peg to hang one's preconceptions upon'.[103]

In a twenty-first century context, this is particularly true when one considers the ways in which Classics is being used to navigate 'authentic selfhood'[104] in social (often partly or fully online) spaces. Recent years have seen building interest in the Graeco-Roman classics among online communities, representing a drawing together of the hyper-individualised and the collective. For some communities, this 'idea of the classical' as it is represented online has offered a sense of validity or recognition for otherwise marginalised individuals. In an interview discussing the relevance of their *Queering the Past(s)* project for secondary school students, Marcus Bell, Eleonora Colli, and Nancy Rabinowitz discuss the sheer volume of material on social media exploring young people's queer identities through self-drawn representations of figures such as Sappho, Achilles, and Patroclus.[105] They describe the prevalence of hashtags such as #sapphic on Tumblr, Instagram, and TikTok, where the term is 'actually not much about Sappho as an author - it's just a synonym. […] Online, they use these sorts of hashtags in very different ways from the ways Classicists understand them'.[106]

In a neoliberal context, what might be termed 'personal authenticity' carries with it powerful social capital: presented as a stable or innate fixity, 'personal authenticity' is rather (as are all the other 'authenticities' outlined above) a shifting cultural and social practice. In recent years, a new set of 'tribal' categories for aesthetic identity formation has been observed, and here too idealised

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[102] Hanink (2017), 150.

[103] Jenkyns (1980), 297.

[104] Anton (2001); Lewin & Williams (2009); Taylor (2022); Lee (2025).

[105] The project produces ebooks and other online resources which utilise the relevance of classical figures in the imagination of LGBTQ+ young people to open up conversations in the classroom. See https://queeringthepasts.com/ [accessed 3/1/2026].

[106] M. Bell, E. Colli, & N. Rabinowitz (2022). 'Queering the Past(s)', *Reimagining Ancient Greece and Rome* (podcast), https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/queering-pasts [accessed 3/1/2026].

versions of classical antiquity are heavily implicated.[107] A specific iteration of this is the 'Dark Academia aesthetic', which emerged in the 2010s following renewed interest on social media in Donna Tartt's 1992 book *The Secret History* and its portrayal of Classics students in a fictional North American liberal arts college. This understanding of 'aesthetic' has evolved from an academic category to refer to a hyper-specific Venn diagram comprising not only personal appearance and fashion style but also particular locations visited, cultural tastes bought into, and tangible possessions, which combine to signify an individual's personal brand. Whilst fashion subcultures functioning as a means to articulate individuality and, paradoxically, to seek belonging is certainly nothing new,[108] the way in which this self-presentation can now be curated on a social media account is especially heightened.

The presentation of Classics in accordance with the 'Dark Academia' aesthetic combines the display of classical imagery with a cultivated bookish persona, 'beige shirts and tweed blazers […] [a] candle-lit room with books all over the floor, planning an intricate essay on why Latin is not dead'.[109] Tori Lee has written about the disciplinary pitfalls and potentiality of the phenomenon, which 'cultivates nostalgia for an imaginary past to cope with real, ongoing problems in the present'.[110] On the one hand, the accessibility of an online trend has a democratising quality: indeed, Lee notes that it draws a significant following from Generation Z women and LGBTQ+ people, as well as those who might not otherwise be able to attend the types of educational institution that Dark Academia seeks to aestheticise.[111] She aligns the experiences of many in the

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[107] Giolo & Berghman (2023). This has frequently been commented upon in cultural news pieces. See, for instance: S. Spellings (2025, 25 May), 'Do I Have an Aesthetic?', *Vogue*, https://www.vogue.com/article/do-i-have-an-aesthetic [accessed 1/12/2025]; and L. Cochrane (2025, 22 September), 'From Dark Academia to Medievalcore: Fashion is Embracing our Need for Escapism', *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/sep/22/dark-academia-medievalcore-fashion-embracing-need-escapism [accessed 1/12/2025].

[108] Lewin & Williams (2009); Conner (2022).

[109] Lee (2024), 423.

[110] Lee (2024), 420.

[111] Lee (2024), 420.

community with Lorna Hardwick's idea of reception through 'fuzzy connections', where the reader experiences 'a simultaneity of experience that brings together the ancient and the new…even if the reader does not have detailed knowledge of [their] associations'.[112]

There is, however, a risk inherent in this particular reception of the discipline as a whole, namely in Dark Academia's 'reinforcement of existing structural inequities in the discipline'.[113] The college environment as presented in *The Secret History* is an explicitly elitist one, with the central protagonist borrowing money to reinvent himself as a child of privilege before gaining admission to the Greek class he so idolises. Similarly, the codes and tropes of the Dark Academia aesthetic 'reinforce the idea that to access academic spaces it is necessary to shrug off authentic markers of non-hegemonic social, cultural, ethnic, gender, and class groups and adopt markers like language, clothes, and habits of the dominant social group'.[114] Ironically, in this reading, to engage 'authentically' with Classics one must first sublimate one's own 'authentic markers'.

There is also a double abstraction of the 'classical' label at play here, where the aesthetic is not only interested in pursuing that which 'feels classical' but also that which *gives the impression* that one 'feels classical'. As Tom Hilless observes, in his 2023 essay concerning the underlying (if inadvertent) conservatism of the movement in spite of claims that it has reignited interest in classical subjects:

> Studying Greek or Latin is not a prerequisite for life according to the Dark Academia aesthetic, but looking like the sort of person who might study Greek or

[112] Hardwick (2011), 56; Lee (2024), 424.

[113] Lee (2024), 421.

[114] T. Hilless (2023). 'A Morbid Longing for the Picturesque: Dark Academia, *The Secret History* and What it Means for Classics in the 21st Century', *Ekklesia Magazine*, https://ekklesiamag.wordpress.com/home/april-2023/a-morbid-longing-for-the-picturesque-dark-academia-the-secret-history-and-what-it-means-for-classics-in-the-21st-century/ [accessed 3/12/2025].

> Latin is. This very fact entrenches the idea that there exists a kind of person […] who studies Classics'.[115]

The aesthetic also fulfils another paradox of the contemporary authentic, by simultaneously fetishising a pre-internet collegiate environment while itself flourishing on digital media in the hands of digital natives – what Simone Murray wittily dubs 'digital denialism'.[116] Whereas digital positivism assumes an inherent truth based on the presentation of online data, much like the discussion of archival processes above, we are instead invited to consider the mechanisms at play in these constructed, classicised, online personae.

It is interesting to observe that while the scholarly endeavours detailed above are often engaged in an active process of unpacking the 'classical' monolith and reconsidering the set of assumptions underpinning the term, in online communities such as Dark Academia the reverse is happening. There is a strong commercial dimension here too, as evidenced by the numerous online lists of recommended products, brands, and styles that are required to achieve an 'authentic' presentation of the Dark Academia aesthetic.

Full immersion

Presentations of the 'classical', marketed in such a way as to offer 'authentic' connection (both to the self and to the wider cultural repository which Classics promises to supply), can similarly be observed in the intersection between Classics and immersive experience. In projects (or products) which offer the classical in an interactive, explorable manner, we see again the same emphasis on embodied inclusion and personal engagement with antiquity. In immersive experiences where the created world feels *almost* real, the erotics of the *almost* encounter are heightened; what Richard

[115] Hilless (2023). 'A Morbid Longing'.

[116] Murray (2022), 347.

Cole terms ‘reality-like experiences of ancient cultures’.[117] In these instances the ‘gulf’ between real and ideal promises to be narrowed to an even more tantalising point.

In-person immersive experiences in an explicitly classical vein include immersive theatre company Punchdrunk’s 2020 production *The Burnt City*, where audience members were invited to explore a richly imagined world representing the Trojan war on a huge scale. The show took place across three buildings, making it almost impossible to capture every detail of the story in a single visit. Authenticity certainly plays a key role in the Company’s artistic goals, with a key feature of all Punchdrunk shows being ‘the uncanny, the dreamlike, via its juxtaposition with and within the touch-real authenticity of the installation […] to throw the logic of the real world out of kilter’.[118] Emma Cole, who worked closely with the company through rehearsal and production, highlights in her study of the process that authenticity as mimesis is not necessarily the intended experience. Whilst the explorable set designs on the peripheries of the space certainly maintained the ‘touch-real’, the primary areas where performances took place were ‘overtly theatrical and not mimetic to action and life’.[119] Similarly, the explorable elements of the world presented ideas of the classical through clear and explicit layers of mediation. On entering the performance, audience members were led through what appeared to be a museum exhibition, housing classical artefacts behind glass cases. The final case, however, was broken open, representing a transition from familiar observational territory to the immersive world beyond. Interestingly, after this point the explicit classical imagery similarly disappeared and was replaced by a more modern-seeming bombed-out city, army tents, and a Weimar-style cabaret bar.

There was a sense with *The Burnt City* – as with the instances of film and television setting discussed in Chapter 1 – that authenticity as ‘feeling right’ was not necessarily dependent upon

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[117] Cole, R. (2025), 145.

[118] Machon & Punchdrunk (2018), 14.

[119] Cole, E. (2024).

classical sources, if immersivity were the stated goal. However, even in the case of experiences where 'authentic', immersive reconstruction of the past *is* the stated aim, this reliance on 'feeling right' can still hold true. Richard Cole, in his work on the role of historical authenticity in immersive virtual reality and gaming experiences presenting the classical past, observes that 'accuracy and authenticity have […] become something of a battleground',[120] where the priorities of classical scholars do not necessarily align with those of production companies and audiences. Fundamentally, 'while it may be especially tempting for scholars to focus on accuracy and authenticity […] at no point in the process can we forget that immersion is equally important, and correspondingly affects the others'.[121]

In spite of, or perhaps because of, the growing internal concerns around the nature of the discipline, authentic engagement with Classics and authentic selfhood expressed *through* Classics both remain valuable commodities. And in these last few examples, the influence of economic considerations has become more keenly felt. In the case of published media or theatrical productions there is, of course, the consideration of 'what sells'; though, as the concerns around authenticity raised in the Introduction and Chapter 1 illustrated, a property which will forever remain tantalisingly out of reach lends itself extremely well to the economically-inflected preoccupations of the contemporary moment.

So long as Classics (or products conferring the classical) remain marketable, it is imperative to scrutinise how not only the term 'classic(s)' but also authenticities pertaining to it are propagated and maintained. To a not insignificant extent, Classics is responsible for literal products (books, fashion pieces, fee-paying education), but there are also mechanisms of buying and *buying into* classical authenticity that can be articulated and unpacked in comparable terms. What does the 'brand' of Classics have to tell us about modern and contemporary attitudes to authenticity, identity,

[120] Cole, R. (2025), 145.

[121] Cole, R. (2025), 150.

and relationships with the past? How might these be considered fruitfully in dialogue with very real disciplinary concerns? These questions will provide the framework for Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: ‘Products of industry’

A flashpoint in classicised consumerism

This chapter examines the factors attendant upon the interplay between ‘Classics’ and ‘authenticity’ in twentieth- and twenty-first century Britain. It pays particular attention to the development of Classics as a commodity towards the end of of the nineteenth century, when the expansion and intensification of consumerism led to a shift in popular understandings of ‘authenticity’. I argue that this needs to be read alongside concurrent attitudes towards Classical antiquity.

The changing cultural sensitivities brought about by the Industrial Revolution clearly impacted the weight afforded to the consumption, reproduction, and display of products signifying classical antiquity – particularly those promising ‘authentic’ engagement with the ancient past. As the exponential rise in the purchasing patterns of the emergent consumer became a clear means of self-identification, the role played by Classics in the curation of what we would now call one’s ‘lifestyle’ – a term coined in the early twentieth century – increases.[1]

Alongside the rise in the levels of personal affluence that permit increased purchasing power, there are notable tensions at this time between the idea of the original and the copy, the acquisition and appropriation of antiquity, and the atavistic pursuit of ‘ancientness’ with a view to legitimising contemporary value. This chapter demonstrates that understanding nineteenth-century shifts in consumerism (and consumptions of antiquity) is foundational to readings of authenticity through the classical later in the century.

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[1] For overviews of advertising and commodification in this period see McKendrick, Brewer, & Plumb (1982); Church (2000); Allen (2009). Portions of this chapter have been published as a blog post for the Classical Reception Studies Network (CRSN). C. Barnes (2022), ‘Classics and the Mass Market I: Authenticity for Sale’, *CRSN Blog*, https://classicalreception.org/classics-and-the-mass-market-i-authenticity-for-sale/ [accessed 10/1/2026].

I begin with an exploration of post-Industrial Revolution patterns of consumption, the appeal of 'authenticity', and analogous public perceptions of classical antiquity in the same period. My reading here is assisted by Elizabeth Outka's concept of the 'commodified authentic',[2] which I develop into what I call 'authenticity-as-heritage', where the commodified authentic and the classicised authentic come together in a manner that exemplifies both nineteenth-century and Modernist notions of collective and individual identity formation. It becomes apparent that shifting patterns of consumption, attitudes to heritage and time, and the makings of twentieth-century authenticity expressed through the individualism discussed in Chapter 1, are all exemplified by a turn to the classical. Similarly, the well-established phenomenon of nineteenth-century British philhellenism may also be seen as a turn to the authentic, and I suggest that these two developments may be read very fruitfully in dialogue.[3] Constructed notions of 'nostalgia', 'heritage', and 'belonging' in building emotive connections between the consumer and packaged forms of classical antiquity led to an assumed entitlement to the ancient Mediterranean on the part of the ruling classes, which became crucial to the marketing of Classics as 'rightful inheritance'.

Certain flashpoints of engagements with the ancient past in Victorian Britain are of particular importance here. First, the developing interest in archaeology across the period, and the actual intrusion of ancient physical relics on previously imaginative encounters with Graeco-Roman antiquity, make it clear that the development of archaeology both problematised and consolidated an appetite for the classical and brought material culture into the conversation. The 'Hellenomania' attendant upon the uncovering of specifically Greek artefacts is an important case in point.[4] Similarly, the Crystal Palace Exhibition (1851 onwards) – often the *locus classicus* for scholars[5] –

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[2] Outka (2008), 3. See Chapter 1 for an introduction to Outka's work on the interplay between literary modernism, authenticity, and commodification.

[3] On nineteenth-century Philhellenism in Britain, see inter alia Jenkyns (1980); Clarke (1989); Evangelista (2009); Goldhill (2011).

[4] Harloe, Momigliano, & Farnoux (2019).

[5] Cf. Hales & Paul (2011); Nichols (2015).

prompted multiple ongoing debates surrounding materiality, authenticity, and the shaping of nationhood. Alongside these tangible engagements with (and consumptions of) the 'classical past' were educational developments, in which the shifting preferences between Latin and Greek across the nineteenth century in Public Schools and Oxbridge constituted an attempt by the elite to retain what might be termed 'product exclusivity' in the face of increased access to Classics. These tensions between the original and the copy, between expansive and exclusionary Classics, continue to be evident well into the twentieth century.

Classics as commercial property

Alexandra Lianeri and Vanda Zajko, in their introduction to *Translation and the Classic*, repeatedly return to the production and dissemination of texts that are termed 'valued' (or 'marketable'), as well as the framework in which the 'classic' figures as a 'site of cultural plenitude, becom[ing] in turn a legitimation of specific meanings and values'.[6] This observation can be extended beyond the dissemination of translated ancient works and into the dissemination of cultural products conferring 'classicism' more widely, where Classics itself serves as 'culture-text', if you will.[7] What Lianeri and Zajko term 'suprahistorical value'[8] is also useful in relation to the idea of the 'classical' as (paradoxically) both universal and timely, but also elitist, culturally exclusive, and the preserve of the ruling class.

The long nineteenth century witnessed a turning point in what we might term 'mass culture' and its relationship to the acquisition of cultural capital and the markers which convey it. This turning point needs to be examined with reference to British attitudes to both social class and classical antiquity. This is the moment when the traditional preserves of the ruling classes were

[6] Lianeri & Zajko (2008), 6.

[7] As defined by Davis (1990).

[8] Lianeri & Zajko (2008), 10.

being destabilised and renegotiated, the legacy of which is still felt to this day in ongoing tussles and paradoxes in discussions about Classics as a discipline, and what constitutes 'authentic engagement' with its subject matter.

Two caveats must be borne in mind before examining these new patterns of consumption. First, a move towards the massification of a cultural product does not necessarily imply wholesale democratic access, and many of the instances explored here are strongly entangled with an emergent bourgeois consumption of antiquity. Secondly, massification does not necessarily follow from my discussion of the entrenchment of Classics within cultural elitism because working-class people already enjoyed a history of rich engagement with classicism.[9] Nevertheless, commercialised offerings of 'authenticity', broadly conceived, began to emerge in this period. Building on the familiar history of emergent middle-class purchasing power, I will uncover how Classics operated in this period as an authenticating device for cultural legitimacy. In short, my question is: Why do people at this point begin to 'buy' and 'buy into' Classics?

The development of consumerism in this period is an oft-repeated story, interwoven with the series of developments known as the Industrial Revolution.[10] Increased industrialisation demands an influx of workers moving to cities, and attitudes to labour and earnings adjust accordingly; alongside increased, crude reliance on workers, industrialisation relies on an emergent middle class with the income and willingness to match the increased production on offer. As these newly redistributed social strata look to self-actualise, their purchasing patterns demonstrate both social emulation and a desire for individual self-fashioning.

From a purely capitalist perspective, this emergent middle-class consumer could now select from a range of variations of any one object for sale, based on what a particular design, brand, or

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[9] Hall & Stead (2020), preface: '[T]he prevailing scholarly and public assumption that the intimate link between exclusive intellectual culture of British elites and the study of the ancient Greeks and Romans and their languages meant that working-class culture was a "Classics-Free Zone"'.

[10] See McKendrick, Brewer, & Plumb (1982); Allen (2009); Church (2000).

iteration of that product conferred. Advertising, too, began to gain significant traction from the mid-nineteenth century and played a huge role in familiarising a wide audience with an even wider range of available products, signposting those products' associations, and moulding consumer opinion.[11] These dramatic shifts in production and purchasing patterns led to what Outka terms 'the commodified authentic'.[12] In this new, intensely capitalist environment, such a range of potential purchases was now on offer that the consumer no longer needed 'simply [to] live a life, but select among lifestyles'.[13] The very concept of a 'lifestyle' is itself a Modernist invention, with the term commonly associated with the early twentieth century. Easterbrook, in her work on historicising Classical Reception in the context of consumption, attributes its first recorded usage to Maurice Halbwachs, when it is used – as here – to describe a particular mode of living.[14]

Buying into a lifestyle, or more specifically directing one's money, time, and resources towards buying items and concepts which promise that lifestyle, can offer up a very tantalising illusion of the ultimate product – the re-imagined self which operates beyond the constraints of one's original circumstances. The advertiser promises it and the consumer continually searches for it, just out of reach, beyond the next transformative purchase. This may also be understood through less directly transactional acquisitions, as in Bourdieu's conceptualisation of 'cultural capital'.[15] We return here again to the idea discussed in Chapter 1 of the irresistible ephemerality of the authentic as 'affective Derridean "trace" that disappears as quickly as it appears',[16] and is consequently always on sale in its latest configuration.

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[11] Church (2000).

[12] Outka (2008), 3.

[13] Outka (2008), 3.

[14] Easterbrook (2022), 27.

[15] Bourdieu (1986).

[16] Taylor (2022), v.

To consider what is at play when a consumer is seeking self-actualisation through the accrual and exchange of capital, it is first necessary to buy into a belief that the acquisition of a product will directly or indirectly unlock one's 'truest' self and make it legible to others. This is Outka's 'commodified authentic' – a paradox, but a highly seductive one. This contradictory tussle between the illusory and the authentic in the period may also be understood, according to Outka, in literary terms:

> …at the turn of the [nineteenth/twentieth] century, particularly in Britain, what began to arise was the [...] desire to unite Wildean ideas of artifice and performance and continual self-fashioning with the contrary but appealing ideas of authenticity, stability, and continuity'.[17]

'Self-fashioning' is also the term used by Stephen Harrison in his attribution of Bourdieu's cultural capital to the importance of studying Horace among the nineteenth-century male elite, for whom Horace was a way of securing acceptance and belonging for 'members of [the] elite and those who aspired to belong to it'.[18]

But how does the classical past, and consumer appetites for it, fit into this appeal for commodified authenticity? Selection from among various lifestyles not only promises an exit from one's own current circumstances but also from the contemporary moment, allowing the modern consumer to 'live within multiple pasts; not to remain fixed in one identity but to perform within many'.[19] In this sense, Classics is indeed 'tradition' or 'reception' – how it has been interpreted and packaged, and where value has been afforded. Zajko and Lianeri, too, understand this through

[17] Outka (2008), 4.

[18] Harrison (2017), 1.

[19] Harrison (2017), 4.

literary consumptions in the first instance: 'the aestheticised assumptions of value within a particular tradition are reaffirmed and propagated by reading practices which originate in the same cultural space and literary texts themselves are empowered to function as authoritative sites of self-fashioning at a whole variety of individual and collective levels'.[20]

What, then, might be conferred by placing a classical artefact, or – more accurately – an artefact which represents the 'classics' in the home? Books are, of course, obvious signifiers, as are reproductions of classical art. Intangibly, but perhaps more insidiously, the role of education as a market force is also very relevant here. In each instance, the manner in which classical antiquity is packaged and promoted to the consumer is important because a delicate line between historical fact (enough to lend a sense of legitimacy) and an appeal to the familiar (enough to make it sell) is being negotiated by the seller. Easterbrook argues that 'in many ways, classical antiquity is the perfect material for consumer culture [...] The totality of the classical past is not only unknowable, it is unsaleable'. Yet when classical antiquity is packaged up into desired fragments, it 'can easily circulate through the public sphere, influencing behaviour and forming part of a package of social identity and moral attitudes'.[21]

Tangible products of antiquity: the archaeologising impulse

It is essential to take into consideration what was happening concurrently beyond the domestic marketplace, not least the developing appetite for archaeology across Europe, which led to a consequent shift in widespread understandings of the past. As the nineteenth century gained pace, the previous century's antiquarianism began to give way to an increasingly professionalised (and monetised) field. The materiality and tactility of the past was suddenly much more present,

[20] Lianeri & Zajko (2008), 18.

[21] Easterbrook (2022), 48. Easterbrook's theorisations have been extremely helpful for this chapter, and I thank her for an early conversation on Classics and consumerism which first introduced me to Outka's work.

contributing significantly to a confluence of factors rendering the classical past more approachable and more marketable. The popular press (thanks also to the advent of photography) was covering new archaeological finds, such as Schliemann's excavations at Hisarlık and, later in the century, Grenfell and Hunt's at Oxyrhynchus. Take, for instance, the much-publicised 1873 photograph of Sophia Schliemann draped in jewels from the 'treasure of Priam': a woman of the time presented as 'trying on' antiquity for herself, however problematically.[22] Access to the jewels themselves was not widely available, but the photograph and its imaginative implications (including that of adopting, as it were, an 'authenticating' mantle of ancientness) was circulated in the press. Similarly, reproduction artefacts became 'a significant and serious enterprise' for collectors as well as museums.[23]

Harloe and Momigliano note that whilst 'intense interest in Hellenic culture, including material culture, stretches back well beyond medieval humanism into classical antiquity itself', nineteenth-century developments in technology, self-actualisation, and empire-building all combine to create an amplifying effect.[24] A turn towards art and *material* culture, in particular, can act on a very individual level as well as a collective one, offering up the sense of an unmediated 'transformative encounter with the ancient past which occurs via heightened experience of an object believed to be authentically ancient'.[25] There is a particular quality to the Greek rather than the Roman here, with the former offering a heightened level of 'authentic ancientness' due to Greek art having largely been experienced through Roman copies.[26] Jenkyns situates this turning point with the Parthenon Marbles arriving in London at the beginning of the nineteenth century.[27] Comparable

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[22] See Macintosh & Kenward (2023),10-12 for a discussion of how coverage Schliemann's dig had a direct impact on visual understandings of ancient Greek appearance and dress.

[23] Foster & Curtis (2016), 122.

[24] Harloe & Momigliano (2018), 1.

[25] Harloe (2018), 47.

[26] Yalouri (2018), 315.

[27] Jenkyns (2018).

phenomena operating similarly on both the individual and national psyches include the fascination for all things Egyptian growing out of late eighteenth-/early-nineteenth-century European involvement in the region and the 'Cretomania' that emerged early in the twentieth century following Arthur Evans' excavations at Knossos.[28] Minoan Crete, abstracted even further from the nineteenth-century northern European psyche, offered up a particular fascination all of its own.

Digging up the past also served to drag it into the present, co-existing amongst all the other rapidly unspooling discoveries of the industrial age. Suddenly, a synchronicity with the past (or the illusion of such) was made possible, offering up significant potential for new alliances with and reinterpretations of classical antiquity. This was happening alongside monumental paradigm shifts in the understanding of the past, 'deep time', and the unprecedented immensity of human and pre-human history in the nineteenth century.[29] From an archaeological perspective, the impact of this upheaval may be understood as another paradox: on the one hand, it was destabilising; on the other, it provided an opportunity for reinvention with access to unprecedented knowledge that lent 'the excavator [...] the power to move objects from one time into another'.[30] Time, in this reinvented context, might be understood as existing in parallel and not in sequence.

This literal digging up of the past, then, was facilitating a figurative one, with the emotive power of the fragment and the archaeologising impulse making their way into other disciplines, notably the burgeoning field of psychology.[31] Freud admitted to having read 'more archaeology than psychology'[32] and, as early as the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, he was peppering

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[28] For Egypt, see Curran (1996); Preziosi (2018). For Crete, see Momigliano (2018).

[29] Cf. also Gioambattista Vico's notion of 'cyclical history', used as an intellectual framework for understanding the timelessness of the natural world in Luke Turner's *Out of the Woods* (2019).

[30] Zimmerman (2008), 7.

[31] I am indebted to Fiona Macintosh for many of the ideas in this section; in particular her lectures on Modernist thought as part of her lecture series on The Reception of Classical Literature in Poetry in English since 1900 (co-convened with Constanze Güthenke) which introduced me to these vital connections between the Modernist psyche and the archaeologising impulse.

[32] Armstrong (2008), 34.

his psychoanalytical theories with archaeological metaphors – likening an archaeologist's excavation to working through psychological layers to consider a patient's 'core' (authentic?) psyche. Armstrong, in his comprehensive study of Freud's relationship with archaeology, quotes from a 1901 note on a case of 'hysteria':

> In face of the incompleteness of my analytic results, I had no choice but to follow the example of these discoverers whose good fortune it is to bring to the light of day after their long burial the *priceless though mutilated relics of antiquity*. I have restored what is missing, taking the best models known to me from other analyses; but, like a conscientious archaeologist, I have not omitted to mention in each case where *the authentic parts end and my constructions begin*.[33]

Of particular interest here is the equivalence drawn between something antiquated or long buried and the authentic. So too is the tantalising incompleteness of this uncovered authenticity, inviting an imaginative leap to flesh out the 'mutilated' fragments. This serves as an invitation, once again, to pick up the story oneself in the present moment. The impact of archaeological finds on the popular imagination might also be understood as democratising. Indeed, one did not necessarily even require mastery of classical languages to access elements of those civilisations. Increasingly, it was possible to conceive of the classical past as close to home – a physical layer into which anyone could reach and 'earth' themselves.[34]

In rarefied academic spaces, however, the scholarly legitimacy of archaeology for students in Britain was a not uncontested issue. 'Art and archaeology' joined the Cambridge Tripos in 1879 and an archaeology chair was elected to Oxford a decade later, but it was not until 1890 that

[33] Armstrong (2008), 124. *Italics mine.*

[34] See also Wallace (2004).

Classical Archaeology was accepted as an examination subject for Oxford students (though not for their final exams) and Archaeology as a stand-alone Honours degree did not appear until 1915 in Cambridge.[35] Bowen notes that in Oxford, Benjamin Jowett (Regius Professor of Greek 1855-1893) 'strenuously opposed archaeology', tellingly because archaeology challenged and undermined the highly Romantic, idealised image of ancient Hellas which underpinned ruling-class ideology, and 'on which dons and public school masters could wax lyrical'.[36]

Tangible archaeological findings impacted considerably on the marketability of classical antiquity and the cultural cachet afforded to it. There is a visceral, tangible appeal to a past made readily accessible, but it was not from *British* soil that the majority of these artefacts were being exhumed. Colonialising influences, never far away in this age of empire, are of particular relevance here. Cultivating a 'classical feeling', certainly inspired by but also operating at one remove from the physical relics of the southern Mediterranean, was necessary in order to re-insert a British dimension into this historical narrative.

Authenticity-as-heritage and marketable nostalgia

The seismic popular and scholarly shifts in conceptions of time and space brought about by the discovery of 'deep time' in this same period risked significantly destabilising established narratives. As 'the bottom dropped out of time, exposing a nearly endless vista',[37] one historicising view was to reassert the value of 'western civilisation' and its foundations, with the tellingly-named period of *prehistory* operating more as a conceptual 'buffer zone'.[38] The study of 'classical civilisations', therefore, now served as an anchoring mechanism, both in terms of time (viz. 'history has to start

[35] Jenkyns (1980 and 1992); Stray (1998 and 2018).

[36] Bowen (1989), 177.

[37] Smail (2008), 1.

[38] Smail (2008), 2. For theorisations of deep time in general, see Gee (2000) and, more recently, Gordon (2022).

somewhere') and space (the uncomfortable archaeological reminder of geographical distance between Britain and the ancient Mediterranean).

In her analysis of how the affective power of authenticity is leveraged to encourage consumption, Outka considers the role played by heritage, belonging, and familiarity in ensuring consumer loyalty.[39] I would argue that similar mechanisms are at play in the reconfiguration and promotion of classicism to serve Victorian ideals, which build on the archaeological impulse to *cement* British ties with antiquity in order to detract from any geographical tenuousness. The classical world, particularly Greece, 'had the charisma of an antiquity so remote that it was original',[40] offering a powerful opportunity for nationwide self-fashioning and self-insertion into this two-to-three-thousand-year space of imaginative potential.

From the promotion of classical languages in education to the use of classical allusion as a shibboleth for British high society, not to mention the physical pillaging of the ancient Mediterranean and the foundation of 'museums […] to exhibit the loot',[41] the manner in which the ancient world is appropriated in nineteenth-century Britain looks very similar to the preservation of a nation's own heritage, and a wistfulness towards the grandeur of its former days. By understanding classical antiquity as 'the cradle of western civilisation' and countries such as Britain as the current (self-defined) proponents of this sentiment, heritage and inheritance can be decoupled from their associations with physical geography and instead operate on an intellectual level. Eleana Yalouri emphasises that Greek antiquity was 'appropriated' in this period not only physically (with the collection of artefacts for display) but 'more generally, to produce hermeneutic and experiential (individual and collective) strategies and practices which involve taking something out of one

[39] Outka (2008).

[40] D. Birch (1992, 25 June). 'Common Sense and the Classics', *London Review of Books 14*(12), https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v14/n12/dinah-birch/common-sense-and-the-classics [accessed 27/11/2015].

[41] Bowen (1989), 177.

context and putting it into another'.[42] The increasing globalisation of, and individual access to, signifiers of 'Greekness' especially resulted in a 'vigorous contestation over what might constitute the most "authentic" experience of it' among its appropriators.[43]

Varouxakis[44] and Hobson[45] both trace the language of the British empire as the rightful inheritor of a civilising mission born of Greek ideals back to the early nineteenth century, as seen in George Grote's multi-volume *A History of Ancient Greece* (1846-1856), followed by a concretisation of the 'Western civilisation' narrative in the 1890s. This involved engaging in a 'major intellectual acrobatic' where 'European thinkers suddenly elevated Ancient Greece to the birthplace of European civilisation, given its alleged democratic institutions and scientific rationality'.[46] By this logic, authenticating a sense of belonging to a classical tradition ensures a sense of belonging to nineteenth-century British society. There are clear racist underpinnings to this line of thought, embroiled uncomfortably with ideas of the 'authentic' as 'pure' or 'untainted', with Greek history reconfigured as 'the particular vision of a "pure" and "original" Greece that arose among northern European[s] […] at the turn of the nineteenth century and was driven by romantic and racist notions of European and Christian (especially Protestant) superiority'.[47]

Outka identifies a nineteenth-century appetite for 'nostalgic nationalism',[48] whereby the imagined past might be enjoyed in the present without any of its inconvenient realities. By evoking a past which 'really' happened, however extrapolated, and implying a heritage connection for the contemporary individual, we see 'the rapid emergence of what would become one of the most popular versions of the commodified authentic: an appeal to a nostalgic, often nationalistic

[42] Yalouri (2018), 315.

[43] Yalouri (2018), 314.

[44] Varouxakis (2020).

[45] Hobson (2004).

[46] Hobson (2004), 227.

[47] Harlow & Momigliano (2018), 2. Cf. Bernal (1987).

[48] Outka (2008), 9.

authenticity'.[49] Much like the archaeologist pulling the past into the present, or the Freudian imagining-in around the fragment, 'nostalgic authenticity allowed an enticing manipulation of time – fracturing it, disrupting it, expanding it, condensing it' with the past now 'a saleable item, one that might be altered, purchased, and owned'.[50] In a nineteenth-century context, this can be seen through the English pastoral – tracing a line through the Arthurian revival and the Arts and Crafts Movement. But one could equally add that the same process is being enacted in the appeal to the *classical* past in this same period with an identical play for 'nostalgia', only this time it is a conceptual *nostos* rather than any homecoming to the physical Britain of one's forefathers. This classical turn, therefore, is a variant on the wider phenomenon of commodified authenticity's nostalgic nationalism identified by Outka, though operating at a physical remove. I term this particular variant 'authenticity-as-heritage'.

As with the paradox of the 'classic', authenticity-as-heritage must simultaneously retain the marker of the special or particular (an authenticating 'aura', to quote Benjamin)[51] and be sufficiently replicable to ensure its ongoing cultural value. Adorno, in his work on authenticity and the culture industry in late industrial society, argues that claims of authenticity in cultural experience in fact serve to legitimise massification, with the heritage industry presented as 'authentic' precisely when it is at its most standardised. The aforementioned 'jargon', too, acts as a means of repackaging the past into a palatable format. He writes:

> …the jargon [of authenticity] takes what is historically produced and socially mediated, and presents it as if it were eternal, immediate, and true. In this way, the socially conditioned is passed off as nature.[52]

[49] Outka (2008), 9.

[50] Outka (2008), 9.

[51] Benjamin (1936).

[52] Adorno (1973), 8.

Adorno's concerns over the 'false consciousness generated by the "culture industry"'[53] closely relate to the reconstituting and marketing of authenticity-as-heritage in order to sell not only tangible products or experiences but intangible understandings of the past. In their presentation and dissemination of the past – or in this case classical antiquity for the industrial age – these patterns of heritage consumerism promote belonging and social emulation, standardisation and rarefication.

The case of the Crystal Palace

Nineteenth-century scholars often cite the Great Exhibition of 1851 as a turning point in both British attitudes to the past and the appetite for consuming more of it into the future. The Exhibition is also illustrative of both forms of historicised authenticity outlined above: the commodified authentic (how the British public might 'buy into' this manufactured legitimacy) and authenticity-as-heritage (how Victorian Britain is underpinned by classical precedent).

Part of a global trend towards World's Fairs, the five-month installation in London was also known as the 'Crystal Palace Exhibition' with reference to Joseph Paxton's purpose-built glass structure which housed it. The Crystal Palace was subsequently relocated to nearby Sydenham Hill and its famous 'fine arts courts' remained open to the public until 1936, including many of the classical reproductions outlined below. Narratives of the Exhibition regularly centre on its popularity and the societal cross-section it sought to attract. Entry to the exhibition ranged from three guineas to one shilling (around £5 today), with the shilling tickets proving especially popular – four and a half million were sold. Items suggestive of colonial might were given prominence, such

[53] Adorno (1973), ix.

as the Koh-i-Noor diamond 'acquired' from India as part of the Lahore Treaty in the previous year.[54]

The original exhibition's full title – 'The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations' – encapsulates two particularly Victorian preoccupations: industrial might, and empire. In seeking to cement British associations with both, it was not just the world of the moment that exhibition attendees were invited to explore. Displays of contemporary innovation were also interspersed with recreated works from antiquity, from dedicated Assyrian, Greek, Roman, and Egyptian 'courts' to casts of classical art and sculpture. To quote Connor, 'Hercules, Artemis, Apollo, Fauns, Bacchus, were scattered in profusion inside and outside the building'.[55] The 'Great Exhibition effect' is an interesting case study for nineteenth- (and early twentieth-) century modes of replication and consumerism, offering both the promise of immersivity (through ancient replicas and recreations on display) as well as reproduction artefacts available for purchase as souvenirs, competitively priced like the tickets. As Hales explains: 'The Crystal Palace presented an antiquity geared for the era of mass production',[56] inviting the possibility of a 'total recreation' – and acquisition – of things past. Such a large-scale project contributed not only to the massification of cultural artefacts – visiting the Exhibition in London for a shilling was, of course, considerably more accessible than participating in the vogue for archaeological tourism gaining popularity among the wealthier classes – but it also contributed to the shaping of cultural values around history and nationhood.

The Exhibition's preoccupation with 'products of industry',[57] with paintings and sculptures included as demonstrations of cultural progress rather than ornamentation or works of art in their own right, is notable. Classical art was in turn judiciously inserted for what it represents; and by

[54] Tarshis (2000).

[55] Connor (1989), 209.

[56] Hales (2006), 119.

[57] Hales (2006), 119.

incorporating and appropriating antiquity so consistently, the mechanism of 'authenticity-as-heritage' was once again at work – situating and legitimising contemporary imperialism with classical imperial precedent. Here in particular we see evidence of 'modernity's power to create anything, including its own standards of authenticity out of an imagined past'.[58]

Among the team behind the Exhibition were architect Owen Jones and designer Digby Wyatt, who were commissioned to source casts and drawings from across Europe, and George Scharf, soon to be Director of the National Portrait Gallery, who contributed to the development of the Greek, Roman, and Pompeian reconstructions in the Crystal Palace. Scharf would have been well versed in the growing regard for archaeology: he was a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and had accompanied British Museum-funded archaeological expeditions in the 1840s. Jones, too, was sensitive to the relationship between archaeological findings, the imaginative capacity of the classical, and the immersive potential of a walk-through exhibition filled with such artefacts. Outka, in her discussion of nostalgic authenticity, notes the impact of 'the actual or imagined body' moving through spaces in which 'a sense of time's passage might be inscribed onto objects or architectural details, suggesting a range of past moments simultaneously available in the present for a given consumer'.[59] It would have been a delicate balance to construct a visual experience which spoke to contemporary expectations of the classical whilst also adhering to understandings of historical accuracy. The Exhibition's mission statement proclaimed that its displays used 'the medium of the eye to receive impressions kindling a desire for knowledge and awakening instincts of the beautiful'.[60] There are obvious parallels here with the forms of immersive, classicised experience discussed in the previous chapter, with similar affective responses being stirred for the visitor and similar concerns around historical accuracy versus 'feeling right'.

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[58] Easterbrook (2022), 40.

[59] Outka (2008), 9.

[60] Nichols (2014), 9.

One such example of this tension was Jones's decision to use bold primary colours in his reconstructions of Greek art and architecture, developing this further after the move to Sydenham with a fully painted section of the Parthenon frieze. This move away from a romanticised, whitewashed Hellas would have been in keeping with archaeological findings and an ongoing debate in the scholarly community around the polychromy of classical marbles. So controversial was this rude intrusion of historical reconstruction that Jones published *An Apology for the Colouring of the Greek Court* in 1854, justifying his choices in archaeological terms and bolstering his argument with contributions from prominent archaeologists of the time. Tellingly, he addresses the problem of perceived classical authenticity in the contemporary moment:

> …the artificial value which white marble has in our eyes. [...] Such an idea belongs only to an age like that through which we have just passed [...] when refuge is taken in whitewashing. Under this influence, however, we have been born and bred, and it requires time to shake off the trammels which such early education leaves.[61]

In a further instance of the relocation to Sydenham bringing with it a renewed emphasis on polychromatic immersivity, the 1854 Crystal Palace included a Pompeiian house, intended as a full reconstruction of the House of the Tragic Poet. Such an inclusion is clearly part of a general appetite for Pompeii in this period, with similar recreation houses in Bavaria (the Pompejanum, built as a tourist attraction in 1840) and Paris (la Maison Pompéienne, built as a private house by Jérôme Napoléon in 1856). The 1834 novel *The Last Days of Pompeii* was enormously popular, and Bulwer-Lytton used the latest archaeological work on the site as inspiration – even locating his

[61] Jones (1854), 1.

protagonists within the House of the Tragic Poet itself.[62] Scholars have commented on the significant influence of Bulwer-Lytton's book on the popular imagination, and it serves as a further instance of that which 'feels (authentically) classical' being given greater credence than historical fact. Hales and Paul emphasise that, whilst Bulwer-Lytton certainly made good use of the archaeological findings of the time, the novel's commercial success lay in 'the power of his communion with the Pompeians […], his investment of them with authentic feelings, and his connection of those emotions to those felt by his readers'.[63] The tantalising prospect of 'connection and continuity'[64] with antiquity was a huge selling point, with Bridges noting that it was 'emotional rather than scholarly authenticity [which] boosted the novel's sales'.[65]

Originally intended as a tea room, the Pompeiian house at the Crystal Palace ended up being brought to the fore as an exhibit in its own right, bringing with it its own set of symbols to influence the Victorian daytripper. The choice of a domestic dwelling, for instance, might have prompted consideration of traditional family values stretching back to antiquity, or 'an encouragement for British interior design'.[66] Here, too, the imaginative interplay between immersive recreation and archaeology was being debated. In an 1854 speech to the Royal Institute of British Architects, artistic director for the Pompeian Court Giuseppe Abbate argued for the validity of these kinds of exhibitions, since 'meditation on the past is one of the most powerful legends in the intellectual education [...] it must be obvious that the actual inspection of a restoration of a Pompeian house cannot but instill into the mind sensations more profound than those which are called into being [...] even by the abstract investigations of archaeology'.[67] Here too are the tensions between what comes

[62] Hales (2006), 105.

[63] Hales & Paul (2011), 10.

[64] Hales & Paul (2011), 10.

[65] Bridges (2011), 92.

[66] Nichols (2014), 248.

[67] Nichols (2014), 88.

out of the soil and how the individual or society receives them, where they are interdependent rather than entirely contradictory. As we have seen, the imaginative impulse of the incomplete archaeological fragment is contingent upon very real scientific work. It may, however, require a degree of poetic license to render it more saleable, and to play into a viewer's own culturally dictated 'atmosphere of antiquity', which can 'figure forth a particular variety of authenticity'.[68]

This re-centering of the response of the individual here, whether or not they have been schooled in classical art, naturally brings with it a degree of challenge to the status quo where classical antiquity is perceived to be the sole preserve of the elite. The mass marketability of products and experiences conveying a sense of the classical presents a similar challenge; and, through the appeal of authenticity-as-heritage, mass marketability extends a sense of *entitlement* to the classical to the middle-class consumer as well. Representations of ancient Greece and Rome were making their way into suburban drawing rooms via other routes, too: painters such as Alma-Tadema produced highly-coloured depictions of scenes from antiquity, with reproduction rights for prints worth significantly more than their original works. As with Bulwer-Lytton's *The Last Days of Pompeii*, these idealised versions of antiquity resonated as much as, if not more than, the 'real thing'. Stinis notes that 'the Victorians were eager to see Alma-Tadema's creations as authentic, since the works could serve as an entry into a past with which they self-identified'.[69] In many ways, these reproductions mark the appeal of 'authenticity-as-heritage', as well as the 'heritage industry' itself, and are prototypical of its inherent debates.

This development towards a mass marketable heritage industry certainly troubled the 'constant patina of privilege' associated with access to – and a sense of having inherited – classical antiquity.[70] We encounter here the perennial paradox which vexes the 'classic': in order to have

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[68] Nichols (2014), 88.

[69] Stinis (2025), 106.

[70] Goldhill (2011), 16.

classic(al) status afforded to it, a work must simultaneously enjoy widespread familiarity *and* an association with 'high' culture. We can see instances of this discomfiture in nineteenth-century concerns over the 'vulgarisation' of classical art, notably as it appeared at the Crystal Palace. John Ruskin's lecture *The Opening of the Crystal Palace* in 1854 gives voice to a more generalised anxiety of the Victorian elite concerning the loss of classicism's moral authority in the face of democratisation.

In an appeal to high culture, Ruskin bemoans the fact that 'we have vaunted the divinity of the Greek ideal – we have plumed ourselves on the purity of our Italian taste [...] and behold the end! Our taste, thus exalted and disciplined, is dazzled by the lustre of a few rows of panes of glass'.[71] According to Ruskin, the Palace courts' artistic value was 'of the smallest utility' and the aesthetic value of a Greek cast was lost on the 'party of children chasing around it'.[72] The cast was also of little interest to their middle-class parents, whom he believes will dismiss it as 'a brittle white spectre [...] a damping and solemnising feature of the Palace, fatally destructive of merriment'.[73] The *Athenaeum*, too, speaks disparagingly of the privileging of general enjoyment over artistic appreciation at the Exhibition, because popularity was ultimately what sold tickets and souvenirs: 'Let Trade, then, fly to Art, and ask her to look over his books, and help him in filling the till'.[74] Nichols clearly articulates this phenomenon that persists to this day: 'the idea that the past might become a recreational space has been greeted with hostility; critics align mass audiences with inauthenticity, and marginalize the deep engagements with the past that 'heritage' might constitute'.[75] Here is the paradox of both the authentic and the classical, which are heightened even further because they are expressed through the direct commercialism of ticket and souvenir sales.

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[71] Ruskin (1843), 419.

[72] Ruskin (1843), 425.

[73] Ruskin (1843), 425.

[74] Nichols (2021), 148.

[75] Nichols (2015), 87.

Debates around the replication of culture diminishing its worth and the role of the elite in this process were rife in the period, but the emergent consumer class proved especially disruptive. Rose notes the resulting 'confusion of neat intellectual hierarchies', necessitating a doubling down on behalf of the elite to preserve the 'patina' of cultural scarcity.[76] For example, Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) bemoans what he understands as a middle-class preoccupation with materiality – juxtaposed, tellingly, with the cultural exemplars of ancient Greece and Rome. From the perspective of access to classical antiquity, this significant redistribution of cultural capital required 'intensified policing of the borders'.[77] Guarding access to classical art, in the eyes of its gatekeepers, was already a lost cause; so, too, increasingly, was literature in translation with the advent of 'cheap classics' being made readily available.[78] But one frontier remained: classical literature in its *original* languages.

'Policing of the borders'

A classical education had long been the marker of gentlemanly success – that 'ultimate marker of education and polish'[79] – and a paid-for education was just as marketable a commodity as a ticket to the Crystal Palace, a souvenir replica cast, or an Alma-Tadema print. With Etonians proclaiming that 'if you do not write good longs and shorts, how can you ever be a man of taste? [...] how can you ever hope to be of use in the world?',[80] it follows that those with the income to do so were keen to enter their children into establishments which offered these cultural keys to social-climbing success, even if Eton (and similar Public Schools) remained out of reach. Similarly, Thomas Gaisford (1779-1855) promised that studying Greek literature would 'not only elevate above the

[76] Rose (2002), 432.

[77] Jann (2016), 93.

[78] Domeneghini (2024).

[79] Newman (2016), 26.

[80] Stray (1998), 83.

vulgar herd, but lead not infrequently to positions of considerable emolument'.[81] The advent of 'cheaper' private schools for the middle classes, as opposed to historical Public Schools, elicited fears that anyone might buy their way into the classical *cognoscenti* through the purchase of 'ornamental educations that disqualified their children for the "workaday" tasks appropriate to their station'.[82]

This widening of access to the Classics needs to be understood in light of wider socio-political conflicts in this period, with Britain perhaps registering these particularly keenly. As Bowen notes, Britain was a 'pacesetter in industrialisation, [where] conditions favoured the breakdown of traditional agrarian society and the formation of social classes created by new modes of factory production'. This sharpened the necessity for 'ideologies which would inform, sustain, and guide the new classes [...] themselves in competition'.[83] A renewed focus on the teaching of Latin and Greek in Public Schools, then, was not solely an attempt to retain product exclusivity but also a way of 'preserving privilege and using the educational system to emphasize class differences'.[84]

How, then, were these increasingly porous boundaries policed? The offering of classical subjects alone was no longer sufficient to operate as a 'bulwark against religious and political liberalism'.[85] It is here, therefore, that a differentiation between the marketability of Latin and Greek becomes important. There are many complex reasons for the Philhellenist 'moment' in nineteenth-century Britain, but of significance is the shift in preference for Greek rather than Latin as an admission credential for Oxbridge, and its consequent privileging on the curricula of elite Public Schools. A functional mastery of Latin would have been comparatively more accessible

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[81] Quoted in Tuckwell (1900), 129.

[82] Jann (2016), 94.

[83] Bowen (1989), 161.

[84] Bowen (1989), 172.

[85] Stray (2018), 333.

through less elite schooling, with Latin increasingly on the curriculum in private and Grammar Schools. Greek, by contrast, remained that little bit more arcane. As Hall and Stead note:

> …the rarity of knowledge of ancient Greek and its strange alphabet gave the language a mystique in the popular imagination. In low-class circles, more often than Latin, Greek was associated with extreme, other-worldly intellectual prowess.[86]

Compulsory Greek remained in place for Oxford admission until 1920, with Cambridge following suit and dropping it a year later. After World War 1, shifting cultural attitudes rendered the previous century's aristocratic cultural gatekeeping no longer relevant to developments in class attitudes and cultural reform. Interestingly, compulsory Latin remained in place until 1960 for both Oxford and Cambridge, representing a new marketability for the subject to a growing audience: Latin remained embedded in private and Grammar School curricula through the first half of the twentieth century, continuing to represent 'the gateway to university education, professional careers, and middle-class respectability'.[87] Finally, Latin too lost its status later in the twentieth century, when the ancient languages were deprioritised and eventually even modern languages too within the STEM-shaped new curricula.[88] Stray identifies this late-nineteenth to early-twentieth period of transition as a 'crisis of classical studies'[89] with both languages under threat; figures such as W.H.D Rouse are notable in this period for more democratising approaches to classical pedagogy, inspired

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[86] Hall & Stead (2020), 324.

[87] Stray (2018), 253.

[88] See Easterbrook (2022), 28 for classical antiquity and a consumerist lens, which is in part a response to the invitation in Hardwick (2018) to consider how classical material is circulated differently when its presence on educational curricula is greatly lessened.

[89] Stray (1992), 7.

by the methods used in the teaching of modern languages which were beginning to supplant Classics's privileged status.[90]

Looking ahead

The twentieth century's dilution of the status of Classics within the education system did not negate its marketability but rather redirected it into different channels. This, in turn, led eventually to the contemporary state of classicised authenticity and its expressions in my three case studies. Here, too, the 'classic' remains paradoxically both expansive and exclusionary, as is the case with contemporaneous understandings of the 'authentic' on both a personal and collective level. Social change moving into the twentieth century, too, meant that 'the potential for ever greater numbers of people to access commodities and experiences related to antiquity occurred precisely at the moment when the place of Classics within academic and civic life looked less certain'.[91]

The high Modernism of the early twentieth century continued to perpetuate a connection between rarefied culture and commercial possibility, as well as with heritage, belonging, and (most perniciously of all) nostalgic nationalism. Artistic modernism was defined by its delicate balance of 'something that was constructed and marketed and yet purified and noncommercial', with Outka citing Henry James, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf as examples of literary Modernists whose 'high-art aesthetic was also dependent on a familiarity with "savvy marketing"'.[92]

Early twentieth-century and Modernist writers were in many cases also having to navigate their own transition from the classicism of the nineteenth century – often themselves products of an elite education such as those outlined above – into a new set of associations with the classical past, the British present, and where – if at all – the now elusive authentic connection might be made.

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[90] Stray (1992).

[91] Easterbrook (2022), 28. Cf. Hardwick (2018).

[92] Outka (2008), 9-10.

Part II: Literary case studies

Chapter 4: E.M. Forster: 1904-1971

Behold Adonis walking west

For tennis at the rectory dressed,

His college blazer white and red

The panama upon his head

[…]

Behold young Vulcan walking east,

Invited to no rectory feast

Silent with clumsy gait he passes,

A member of the working classes[1]

Authentic, interpersonal engagement – 'only connect'-ing[2] as it were – is a peculiarly Forsterian preoccupation. In addition to Forster's frequent interspersal of classical intertexts, this 'only connec[ting]' makes his work an ideal paradigm for an investigation into classicised authenticity as well as responses to Classics and the authentic self in the cultural and educational climate of the early Edwardian period. What happens, for example, when characters interact with classical material in what is for Forster an 'authentic' way? Furthermore, does this modality of authenticity have any bearing on the characters' (in)authentic engagements with the wider world? This chapter argues that, in both instances, moments of authentic connection are presented as occurring at moments of breach or rupture within the status quo. In these moments of breach, Forsterian

[1] Section from autograph manuscript of 'Vulcan and Adonis' c.1961, King's College Cambridge Archive, E.M. Forster Papers, call mark 14/3/A.

[2] This key Forsterian maxim is notably outlined in *Howards End* (1910), 159: 'Only connect! … Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its height. Live in fragments no longer. Only connect, and the beast and the monk, robbed of the isolation that is life to either, will die'.

characters undergo something of an 'authentic epiphany' in their relationships with both the self and the classical. Several forms of authenticity and authenticating devices discussed in Part I are in evidence here, particularly those instances marking a phenomenological turn towards embodied, authentic experience. Forster regularly implicates Classics in these transformative experiences but, as this chapter will demonstrate, not necessarily in ways that one might expect. In many of these examples, the classical is presented at its most authentic precisely when it is divorced from scholarship, with scholarly figures frequently presented as somewhat 'missing the point' about their object of interest. Conversely, the figures who experience the most authentic moments of union within themselves, with others, and with antiquity are those who, for various reasons, operate beyond the norm.

Issues of class and of sexuality are inevitably very present here, as would be expected with Forster. It is also for this reason that the majority of my examples are drawn from Forster's more intimate and experimental writing: the short stories (many of which were only published posthumously) and *Maurice* (written in 1913-14 with some later revisions, but withheld from publication by Forster under after his death), as well as archival material including letters, diary entries, and unfinished/unpublished work. Forster's periods of silence between published work – fourteen years between *Howards End* (1910) and *A Passage to India* (1924), then no further novels until his death in 1970 – have been understood as reflecting a disconnect between the forced heterosexuality of his published novels and his inner struggles with his own closeted homosexuality.[3] Writing in his confidential journal, Forster himself attributes his 'sterility' and 'drying up' to 'weariness of the only subject that I both can and may tread – the love of men for

[3] Wyatt-Brown (1983); Cregan-Reid (2013). For a semi-fictionalised account of Forster's struggles with identity and writer's block see Damon Galgut's 2014 novel *Arctic Summer*, which makes significant use of the materials held at the Kings College Cambridge Archive, E.M. Forster Papers; it takes its title from the unpublished novel with which Forster spend much of this time wrestling.

women and vice versa'.[4] If 'Forster's writer's block is characterized by a persistent attempt to write sexuality between the lines',[5] it is perhaps unsurprising that his work 'behind the scenes' of the famous novels is the more fruitful territory for a consideration of his preoccupation with the authentic self.

My use of the idea of the 'backstage' for Forster is in part influenced by David Scourfield's discussion of Forster's spoof Greek tragedies, *The Tragic Interior* and *The Tragic Interior II*, both penned whilst an undergraduate at King's College, Cambridge.[6] These 'para-tragedies' take place backstage during a production of the *Agamemnon*, enabling two realities to be presented concurrently. Whilst the Aeschylean story unravels in the background, the characters – in more quotidian roles – quibble over props and plot. Scourfield highlights these early experiments as 'Forster playing […] with the notion of interior and exterior – public and private – worlds, appearance and reality, questions that will come to inform much of his life and work'.[7] In his journal entry about his own creative block, Forster references the Aeschylean tragedies and aligns himself with Cassandra as 'the outlet for all our churned conflicting emotions'.[8] The short stories and posthumously published works under discussion in this chapter offer something of the 'backstage' themselves, repeatedly probing what happens when literary as well as societal expectation is breached; and as might be expected in Forster's writing, several of these moments of rupture or disorder are born out of anxieties about sexuality and refutations of heteronormativity.

That Forster uses the classical to navigate the personal is unsurprising given his background, with the 'stories of the early post-Cambridge years especially rich in classical reference and

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[4] Entry from 16 June 1911 in 'The Locked Journal', held at King's College Cambridge, Forster Papers, call mark vol. 4/4.

[5] Cregan-Reid (2013), 453.

[6] J.H.D. Scourfield (2016, 10 August). 'E.M. Forster's Tragic Interior', *Reimagining Ancient Greece and Rome: APGRD Public Lectures* (podcast), https://www.podcasts.ox.ac.uk/e-m-forsters-tragic-interior [accessed 12/7/2021].

[7] Scourfield (2016) 'E.M. Forster's Tragic Interior'.

[8] Entry from 16 June 1911 in 'The Locked Journal', held at King's College Cambridge Archive, Forster Papers, call mark vol. 4/4.

allusion'.[9] However, he makes these links in unexpected ways because they are contiguous with broader concerns around modernity, authenticity, and the self. I also argue here that Forster goes further in his reappropriation of the classical (queer) ideal by distinguishing himself from the Wildean hinterground of the late nineteenth-century's classicised aestheticism. Indeed, neither is the Platonism of the Cambridge Apostles necessarily a comfortable home for Forsterian engagement.

This chapter focuses on Forster's classicised presentation of nature as an almost pre-moral locus of originary authentic connection. The Pan figure is of wider importance during this period, yet Forster is not necessarily an obvious candidate for its inclusion: a rounded, realist, Forsterian character might not initially sit comfortably next to this seemingly unlikely tropic figure. However, the 'backstage' potential of Forster's short stories, in particular, appear to offer him opportunity for a non-canonical exploration of the Pan figure as representative of a profound engagement with the world beyond contemporary industrialisation and capitalism. Forster's presentation of the natural world and specifically the English countryside is of particular relevance here, and is frequently shown through a deeply classical prism of satyrs, naiads, and pastoral invocation. I offer here a close reading of one short story in particular – *Other Kingdom* – because it illustrates these points concurrently and efficiently: a Latin tutor, a love triangle, and a heteronormative businessman all go into the woods – where that Edwardian perennial the Great God Pan just so happens to be lurking...[10]

British philhellenism, sexuality, and the self

Links between nineteenth-century Britain's privileging of classical study and the development of non-normative ideals have been much discussed. These links culminated in a flashpoint of British

[9] Scourfield (2019), 295.

[10] Portions of this chapter have been published as part of an article on Forster, queerness, and the classical pastoral. See Barnes (2021).

philhellenism which came a little later than that of mainland Europe.[11] The confluence of scholarly and popular imaginations indulged in what Clarke has termed:

> The romantic separation of Greece from the stereotypes of the Renaissance (dominantly Roman) classical tradition [giving] rise to a vision of Hellas as a remote Theocritean Arcadia, primitive, unspoiled, pastoral.[12]

This 'Theocritean Arcadia' married all too well with the 'English philosophy of the Picturesque',[13] and is clearly the Greece of the Claude glass (see the Introduction) and redolent of the 'primitivism' ascribed to the classical past (see further Chapter 2). For Forster, a 'primitive, unspoiled, pastoral' is offered up as an authentic experience as he deploys classical imagery to navigate interpersonal relationships. In turn, these encounters throw new light on what constitutes a Forsterian understanding of authentic engagement with Classics itself.

This nineteenth-century classicising tendency has its roots in a German philhellenism that stems from the studies of Winckelmann, whose interplay between classical aesthetics and homoeroticism has been well documented.[14] Alongside the idyll of the unspoiled Arcadia, we can also see what Daniel Orrells terms a 'counter-discourse', in which the homoerotic potential of the Hellenic is shown to offer a powerful response to the 'legal criminalization and medical pathologization of […] male-male desires'.[15] Whilst controversial Victorian sexologist Havelock Ellis did not understand the Greek (predominantly pederastic) model as relevant to modern homosexuality, his 1897 work *Sexual Inversion* notably includes an article from John Addington

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[11] See Clarke (1989); Evangelista (2009); Matzner (2010); Harloe (2013); Prettejohn (2019).

[12] Clarke (1989), xi.

[13] Clarke (1989), xi.

[14] Gustafson (2002); Harloe (2013).

[15] Orrells (2011), 16; see also Matzner (2010).

Symonds arguing to the contrary.[16] Symonds' stance is illustrative of an elitist, often queer-coded, philhellenism, which is both urban and urbane, and strongly implicated in university scholarship. Simon Goldhill, in his recent work on queer Cambridge (with a particular focus on the community at Forster's own King's College), notes that 'reading books on Greek love and on sexology formed a crucial part of many men's self-understanding and self-recognition'.[17] Greek at Oxford remained compulsory throughout this time, and prominent works on Plato by the likes of Pater and Jowett were bringing ideas of Platonic love, as deep spiritual love between two males, to the fore.[18] Wilde, and writers of the Decadent movement, transported these influences more widely, whilst interpolating a more sensual, practical application into the Platonic ideal.[19]

It is not at all surprising, therefore, that Forster – as a product of a late Victorian/early Edwardian pedagogical system, of Tonbridge School and Cambridge – makes frequent allusions to antiquity in his work. As a middle class, queer man, it is also not surprising to discover that he applies these classical tropes to intimate homosexual desire in his writings: one character asking another if he has read Plato's *Symposium* is a tacit way of reading his sexual preference, as one of Maurice's early interactions at Cambridge reveals:

> 'The Greeks, or most of them, were that way inclined, and to omit it is to omit the mainstay of Athenian society.'
>
> 'Is that so?'
>
> 'You've read the *Symposium*?'
>
> Maurice had not, and did not add that he had explored Martial.

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[16] Crozier (2008). Addington Symonds' name was originally uncredited due to the controversial nature of the subject matter.

[17] Goldhill (2025b), 10.

[18] Prettejohn (2019).

[19] Riley, Blanchard, & Manny (2017); Evangelista (2009 and 2019).

‘It’s all in there […] you ought to read it. Read it this vac.’[20]

Goldhill notes how a reference to *Sexual Inversion* could similarly operate in this clandestine way, identifying at least one letter from the King’s College Cambridge Archive where ‘“He has read Havelock Ellis” could be a coded wink between men’ seeking to express a desire for queer connection under censorship.[21]

But what is happening in Forster’s navigation of classicised queerness is not just a reflection of these pervasive themes; it is a direct confrontation of them. *Maurice* and the earlier short stories represent comparatively early responses to a post-Wildean world, and might be seen as representative of a reassessment and refutation of the queer classicisms planted during the previous century. A broader thematic line may also be drawn through Forster’s ‘queered’, destabilised classicism and his preoccupation with authentic connection: both interpersonally with one’s contemporaries and with what might loosely be termed a decidedly new sense of ‘the classical’ or the ‘classical past’.

Indeed, many of the themes evident in *Maurice* and the early short stories represent a key turn in attitudes towards classical literature in this period, with Forster firmly contributing his own layer of reception. To continue with the image of reception as ‘mirror’ discussed in the Introduction, together with Forster’s own imperative to consider the ‘coat[s] of quicksilver’[22] applied to it, the mirror inherited from the long nineteenth century was one gilded by Ellis, Symonds, Pater, Jowett, and Wilde. If the nineteenth century sought (at best) to define, (at worst) to pathologise male homosexual desire, imposing more concrete gender boundaries and the ‘canalization of sexuality between the banks of homo- and hetero-sexuality’,[23] the Edwardian period begins to introduce –

[20] Forster (1971), 42.

[21] Goldhill (2025b), 10.

[22] Forster (1927), 27.

[23] Orrells (2011), 24.

however tentatively – a greater degree of nuance. Is it possible here, perhaps, to identify elements of a prototype for conversations which are only now beginning to gain significant traction, both in terms of the plurality of queer experience *and* the plurality of engagements with classical subject matter? An awareness of personal experience and subjectivity is detectable, which might also be applied to Forster's presentation of classical engagement – in moments of crisis, his characters tap into 'their' Classics, and now they do so on their own terms. This is especially noteworthy when one considers the context of classical scholarship and its role in shaping establishment attitudes during this period.

Unseating the schoolmaster – and other establishment figures

Classics in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Britain was not, simply, a playground for queer or indeed alternative thought, even among the elite who sought to identify themselves with it. This was particularly the case for products of the British Public School System.[24] The reified, colonialised, classical experience which Forster would have been trained in is expertly outlined in Christopher Stray's observation that 'in learning grammar by rote in the lower forms of public schools, boys (as they almost all were) were learning both to learn and to obey: the two faces of *disciplina*'.[25] Classical subjects still comprised the mainstay of establishment attitudes – including those which defined masculinity, and the type of man which British educational institutions ought to be producing. Latin and Greek both loomed large on the curriculum, and any dilution of this was often interpreted as a risk to the fabric of masculine scholarly identity itself. Christopher Wordsworth, head of Harrow School 1836-1844, was not alone in his impassioned criticism of the use of English seeping into the study of Classics – tellingly, he worries that this will invite 'mental

[24] Hurst (2019).

[25] Stray (2018), 287.

effeminacy'.[26] There is, consequently, a doubly inherent subversion to Forster's use of classical material to explore queer identity *and* to his intentional presentation of successful engagement with Classics as embodied rather than intellectual.

It is this spectral schoolmaster figure who, on a surface level, many of Forster's classical allusions seem to be unseating. His tenure is over, and he can no longer dictate the terms of classical engagement.[27] The hero of *The Celestial Omnibus*,[28] a small suburban boy, discovers a magic omnibus service which transports him to an Arcadia populated by classical heroes and legendary literary figures. When he tries to share his experiences with his parents on returning home, the boy is disbelieved and punished for lying: he is made to 'learn poetry as a punishment' and is caned by his father.[29] This juxtaposition of literature and violence recalls Stray's anecdote that in one leading Victorian prep school 'the Latin grammar was customarily clenched between the teeth of small boys while they were being beaten'.[30] For Forster's fictional small boy, his new discovery still marks 'the greatest day of his life, in spite of the caning and the poetry at the end of it'.[31] The abuse of Classics is made amply clear in both the short story and the Stray anecdote; and it is therefore essential, in a Forsterian context, to seek radically different – potentially non-scholastic – modes of engagement to find any authentic connection with Classics.

The boy's adventures also incur the disapproval of Mr Bons, the self-important president of a local Literary Society, though for entirely different reasons. On recounting the literary grandees he

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[26] Stray (2018), 295. Chapter 2 also demonstrated the role of classical education as a class differentiator.

[27] It is worth noting here, however, that schoolmasters *qua* schoolmasters are not inherently figures of scorn in Forster's work – *The Longest Journey*'s Rickie (soon to be a teacher of Classics, no less) is a particularly notable exception.

[28] Forster (1908).

[29] Forster (1908), 38.

[30] Stray (2018), 295.

[31] Forster (1908), 38.

met on his adventure, including figures from both classic texts and ancient myth,[32] the boy has failed (according to Mr Bons) to appreciate such elevated company – for instance mistaking Dante Alighieri for a bus driver called Dan, and being unable to tell Achilles apart from Tom Jones. Yet when Mr Bons insists on accompanying the boy on his next visit, he fails – for all his Literary Society credentials – to engage with the beauty before him and ends up hurled earthwards, finding a particularly undignified end behind Bermondsey gas works. Instead, it is the honest, earnest boy who is crowned with laurels and raised aloft on Achilles' shield to sit alongside heroes – becoming part of the ekphrastic moment best known from Book 18 of Homer's *Iliad*:

> Achilles raised him aloft. He crouched on the wonderful shield, on heroes and burning cities, on vineyards graven in gold, on every dear passion, every joy, on the entire image of the Mountain that he had discovered, encircled, like it, with an everlasting stream. 'No, no,' he protested, 'I am not worthy. It is Mr Bons who must be up here'.[33]

Compare the following two lines from Homer's Greek:

> ἐν δ' ἐτίθει σταφυλῇσι μέγα βρίθουσαν ἀλωὴν καλὴν χρυσείην
>
> There he also placed a vineyard laden with clusters of grapes, beautiful and wrought in gold (561)[34]

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[32] In order of appearance: Sir Thomas Browne, Petrarch's Laura, Charlemagne, Cerberus, Percy Shelley, naiads by the River Acheron, characters from Dickens' *The Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit*, Keats, Dickens himself, Achilles, Homer, Shakespeare, Tom Jones, The Duchess of Malfi, and Wagner. The irreverent, higgledy-piggledy interweaving of authors, characters, genres, and time periods, united only by their favourable responses to the boy, serve to highlight the arbitrariness of canon formation and mock the snobberies of Mr Bons.

[33] Forster (1908), 44-45.

[34] *Iliad* XVIII.561. Translations mine.

ἐν δ᾽ ἐτίθει ποταμοῖο μέγα σθένος Ὠκεανοῖο

There he also placed the great might of the river Oceanus (607)[35]

In the *Iliad* the ekphrasis takes place over several hundred lines, depicting all of the wondrous vignettes on the shield. But Forster's brief section clearly nods to these lines in particular – notably in his mention of the golden vineyards and the 'encirc[ling], everlasting stream'. The boy may not hold the traditionally accepted keys to literary engagement, yet his unpretentious naïvety is prized by the literary grandees at the other end of the omnibus ride. He protests to Achilles that 'I am ignorant and vulgar'[36] and that Mr Bons would be a worthier candidate to sit upon the shield. But Mr Bons cannot see either Achilles or the shield, let alone join them. He begs the omnibus driver, previously revealed to be Dante, to save him:

> 'I see no one. I see nothing. […] Save me! Let me stop in your chariot. I have honoured you. I have quoted you. I have bound you in vellum'.[37]

Dante, however, explains that 'I cannot save you. For poetry is a spirit; and they that would worship it must worship in spirit and in truth'.[38] They must, in essence, experience *authentic feeling*. The end of the story is marked 'τέλος', and an addendum – presented as a newspaper clipping – announces the discovery of Mr Bons's body and reveals him to be a fraud: among his personal effects is found a 'bijou pronouncing dictionary'.[39] A 'thorough investigation is pending by the

[35] *Iliad* XVIII.607.

[36] Forster (1908), 45.

[37] Forster (1908), 45.

[38] Forster (1908), 45.

[39] Forster (1908), 46.

authorities' who suspect 'foul play',[40] wryly demonstrating the helplessness of Edwardian law-enforcement when faced with the poetic and the divine.

In a different short story titled *The Classical Annex*,[41] there is another establishment figure – this time a beleaguered museum curator – who finds himself at odds with the aestheticised potential of the Hellenic and its irrepressible hold over his guileless young son. The story was not published during Forster's lifetime, and for that reason, perhaps, he was at liberty here to illustrate his personal resistance to Romantic Hellenism more facetiously, and to do so through direct engagement with queer bodily experience. Again, this story takes place in suburbia and the local curator of a local museum might be understood as an extension of the heritage industry introduced in the previous chapter. Classical art, and its affective potential, however modestly, is encroaching on the suburban mind. In *The Classical Annex*, Forster is destabilising the nineteenth-century establishment's classicism by grasping it right at its prudish core: the fig leaf, and all it represents.

The curator is depicted battling to replace a classical statue's fig leaf which keeps falling off, and his attempts prove to be in vain when the artefacts in the annex develop their own agency and the offending statue becomes grotesquely priapic:

> It might have been a dream but for an obscene change in the statue's physique. He gazed from his asylum in horror. He glanced at the fig leaf, now all too small.[42]

This could be read as an inversion of the Galatea myth:[43] Pygmalion lusted after his own carved creation and sought to possess her wholly, whereas here the animated statue seduces the curator's

[40] Forster (1908), 46.

[41] Forster (1972).

[42] Forster (1972), 105.

[43] See Ovid *Met.*X.243ff.

young son Denis (a clear ironic allusion to Dionysus).[44] Pygmalion pulls Galatea into his own world of the living, whereas here the two figures return to stone together and are immortalised in the act of penetration. (Forster very wryly has art historians interpret this position as a 'wrestling scene' between two brothers.) Again, it is the symbolically 'unspoiled', unpretentious boy who engages with the classical world (however problematically by contemporary understandings), and does so through the 'authentic' mode of embodied experience.

An early draft of *The Classical Annex* emphasises this bodily connection both graphically and in an explicitly classical manner. The curator's suspicions are aroused by the sounds of not only Denis's giggling but also 'Mediterranean gasps, grunts, post-classical suctions'.[45] In much of Forster's unpublished and posthumously-published work, queer experience is expressed very baldly through classical terms. But it is never represented as rarefied intellectualism or suggestive of Platonic connection: often these interactions are borderline pornographic, and (as might be expected of Forster) they concern protagonists who are uneducated in matters classical. In an unpublished comic-pornographic poem, 'Vulcan and Adonis', a smart public schoolboy in 'college blazer' and a young mechanic on the run from the police ('a member of the working classes' to boot) meet in a woodland and have graphic sex before 'rais[ing] a shrine to Love and Panic'.[46] The lurid sexual details are grounded in the language of the classical pastoral (the beech woodland is a *locus amoenus*, with the 'zephyr singing' through the trees, the pagan gods and goddesses looking on), representing the forms of classicising and primitivism prevalent in this period (see further Chapter 2). That the encounter occurs across the class divide is typically Forsterian, no doubt characteristic of a further 'primitivising' habit of representing working-class characters as intrinsically and wholly

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[44] 'Denis' as a more suburban configuration of 'Dionysus' is both amusing in its bathos and is suggestive of the sensual potential of the Dionysiac.

[45] Typescript sheet with autograph manuscript revisions c.1930s-50s, King's College Cambridge Archive, Forster Papers, call mark vol. 8/18.

[46] Section from autograph manuscript of 'Vulcan and Adonis' c.1961, King's College Cambridge Archive, Forster Papers, E.M. Forster Papers, call mark 14/3/A. The archivist's note suggests that the poem may have been modelled on Swift's 'Baucis and Philemon'.

'authentic' (see Chapter 1). The classical pastoral and its libidinous potential are further consolidated in the shrine to 'Love and Panic', a recognition that the spirit of the god Pan may well have been present in the woods with them both.

The Great God Pan

This troubling of socio-sexual norms, combined with an emphasis on the authenticity of the body, is frequently associated with one of the most prominent classical tropes of Edwardian literature: the 'Great God Pan'. This god of the wild unsettles not only the nineteenth-century public schoolmaster but the wholesale valorisation of classical literacy itself. His symbolic association courses through Edwardian literature – one only has to think of J.M. Barrie's eponymous work (1904), or the 'Piper at the Gates of Dawn' in Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908). The nineteenth-century forebear is undoubtedly Arthur Machen's 1894 novella *The Great God Pan,* though in this earlier context Pan is an unequivocally demonic entity, whereas in Edwardian readings his sensual potential comes to the fore. Jonathan Rose proffers a number of possible reasons for the Edwardian 'cult of Pan' in relation to sexual self-expression:

> A combination of spiritual and sexual anxieties led [the Edwardians] to a surrogate religion of sexuality. The principal deity of this religion was Pan, the premoral nature god to incarnate the Edwardian Id.[47]

Somerset Maugham, writing in 1930, reflects back on this earlier literary vogue:

[47] Rose (1986), 89.

> In a hundred novels his cloven hoof left its imprint on the sward; poets saw him lurking in the twilight on London commons, and literary ladies in Surrey and New England, nymphs of an industrial age, mysteriously surrendered their virginity to his rough embrace.[48]

Indeed, Maugham himself contributed to this list of caprine cameos,[49] as we heard in Chapter 2, with the discussion of *The Moon and Sixpence*'s Charles Strickland as being instrinsically 'authentic'. Strickland 'seemed to partake of those obscure forces of nature which the Greeks personified in shapes part human and part beast, the satyr and the faun'.[50] Maugham describes Strickland's seduction and ruination of a woman as 'disconcerting and rather horrible […] The satyr in him suddenly took possession, and he was powerless in the grip of an instinct which had all the strength of the primitive forces of nature'.[51]

In Saki's short story *The Music on the Hill*,[52] Pan is dubbed the 'equivocal' god.[53] Here there is a very typical clash between, on the one hand, urban, contemporary affluence and, on the other, the natural world, sensuality, and murky, primal instinct. The ironically named Sylvia is accustomed to nothing much more sylvan than 'leafy Kensington'[54] and scoffs at her husband's Pan-worship when visiting his country estate. She is irritated by its unkempt woodlands and throws away a bunch of grapes left out as an offering to the Great God, whose retribution is swift and merciless: Sylvia is gored to death by a stag following his bidding. This trope of the urban elite finding their comeuppance when refusing to honour rural beliefs is perhaps representative of wider anxieties

[48] Maugham (1920), 122.

[49] A comprehensive, though now rather dated list may be found in Merivale (1969), *Pan the Goat-God*.

[50] Maugham (1919), 96.

[51] Maugham (1919), 165.

[52] Saki (1911).

[53] Saki (1911).

[54] Saki (1911), 2.

about increased industrialisation. Similar explorations can be found in the work of Forster, for whom the erosion of the English pastoral is a persistent concern, and who identifies a 'brisk suburbanisation and demographic shift […] conspiring to overturn the expansive prospects and pastoral possibilities' of what he views as 'a beleaguered rustic England'.[55]

Forster's Pan similarly comes into conflict with normative societal restrictions and is regularly presented as the disinterested face of classicism, operating beyond the text to redress imbalance in a world out of kilter. He breaks up stale marriages, precipitates sexual awakenings, and calls into question deep-seated mores regarding gender, capitalism, and industrialisation. Much like the inconvenient physicality of a classical nude bringing his fig leaf crashing down, the figure of Pan is a force of nature, regularly intruding on the picnics, holidays, and social calls representative of superficial Edwardian respectability.

In Forster's appropriately named *The Story of a Panic*,[56] Pan is expressed through Gennaro, the queer-coded Italian boy (doubly 'Other') who takes repressed public schoolboy Eustace into the woods and saves him from living inauthentically. Eustace is last seen running barefoot into the woods, uttering a 'strange loud cry', and Gennaro declares that 'he [Eustace] has understood and he is saved'.[57] Elsewhere, in *The Curate's Friend*, Pan appears in person, romantically presented as a relic from the Roman occupation of Britain who flourished because 'there is nothing particularly classical about a faun'.[58] The narrator is the Curate himself, who emphasises the ubiquity of Pan as a force of nature that operates beyond the classical: 'you will find him in the "Tempest" and in the "Benedicite"; and any country which has beech clumps and sloping grass […] may reasonably produce him'.[59] Here, too, Pan is a conduit for sexual awakening: Emily, the Curate's intended,

[55] Radford (2007),171.

[56] Forster (1904).

[57] Forster (1904), 22. See D.H. Lawrence's dismissive response to Forster's presentation of Pan in this story below.

[58] Forster (1907), 71.

[59] Forster (1907), 71.

finds herself driven into another man's arms following his divine intervention, and the Curate is made to confront forces far wilder than his respectable parish life.

Forster's Pan is not rapacious or predatory as we find in the more canonical examples from the period; rather than dwelling solely in the Id, his Pan offers up and embodies the promise of an authentic Self in Freudian or Jungian terms. Pan's intrusion into Edwardian niceties might be understood as striking a personal note, too, with the authentic Forsterian Id rupturing forth and representing the unspoken repression underneath the Forsterian novel. As Radford explains: 'Pan worship […] may echo Forster's own awkward sense that the suburban comedy of manners infusing his own early tales […] not only chafes against, but also invalidates his imaginative pursuit of chthonic vitality'.[60]

Whilst the late nineteenth-century's queer, classicised aestheticism may be understood as grounded in the city and the university, what Forster offers here in his short stories is a more widely accessible classicising, authenticating spirit – that is evident anywhere in the natural world, should one wish to look. But it is not only the Classics of the heteronormative which is beginning to be recast in the new century. This use of Pan is also related to more generalised attitudes to identity and authenticity, and particularly related, as we have heard, to a backlash against the pure aestheticism of Wilde's legacy – where, to quote Wilde himself, 'illusion is the first of all pleasures'. There is a striking parallel here with Outka's observation (discussed in Chapter 3), that the turn of the twentieth century saw a development from pure Wildean 'artifice' towards a form of 'self-fashioning' that incorporated notions of 'authenticity' too.[61]

The wholesale valorisation of an imagined Greek ideal, at a significant temporal and geographic remove from the ancient Mediterranean, clearly epitomises these notions of the artificial and performed. Forster's liminal identity – not quite Modernist yet not entirely Edwardian; not quite

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[60] Radford (2007), 183.

[61] Outka (2008), 3. See further, Chapter 3.

aligning with his own sense of self – lends a degree of nuance to his interpretation of this paradox. As may be noted in *The Curate's Friend* (1907), Forster understands the force of classical imagery and its allure in the British mentality as a kind of false nostalgia against rapid modernisation. Yet, at the same time, he employs a judicious layer of critique through which one might re-evaluate these assumptions:

> It is uncertain how the Faun came to be in Wiltshire. Perhaps he came over with the Roman legionaries to live with his friends in camp […] they in the joy of their recall forgot to take him on board, and he wept in exile; but at last he found that our hills also understood his sorrows, and rejoiced when he was happy. Or, perhaps he came to be there because he had been there always. There is nothing particularly classical about a faun; it is only that the Greeks and Italians have ever had the sharpest eyes.[62]

As elsewhere in the period, Forster's Pan has much in common with goat-like, Dionysian creatures, and is often used interchangeably with fauns and satyrs. Easterbrook explores the usefulness of this interchangeability in her study of the Pan figure and commodified antiquity in middlebrow Edwardian theatre.[63] She notes that this is not a specifically Edwardian invention, citing Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (see Chapter 2) alongside earlier examples. Early modern pastoral literature might also offer an even earlier example of Satyr-like figures who range from the purely sexual-comedic to the morally symbolic.[64]

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[62] Forster (1907), 71.

[63] Easterbrook (2022).

[64] Nivre (2015); Gifford (2020).

There is a clear link here between Forster's interest in the relevance of the classical to the English pastoral and the image of the rural as seen in the work of the Cambridge Ritualists. Radford notes that 'Forster was exactly situated to take advantage of the research spearheaded by Jane Harrison and the other Cambridge anthropologists', and he suggests that Forster and Harrison may well have met, and certainly had friends in common.[65] The autochthonous, rather than imported, qualities of Forster's Pan-figures represent 'a primeval potency that might refurbish the etiolated mythological annals of [Forster's] homeland'.[66]

Other Kingdom

In *Other Kingdom* (1909), the narrator is a Classics tutor, who is here employed in a household which implodes after the eldest son of the house, Harcourt Worters, a thrusting young businessman and product of the post-industrial age, attempts to privatise and domesticate a patch of woodland so as to make a misguided gift for his reluctant fiancée, Evelyn. In another classicised exploration of sexuality and gender (or, perhaps more accurately here, an exploration of the classical through 'authentic' sexual identity), Evelyn's distress results in her invoking the primal wrath of 'Universal Nature' (read Pan, or a Pan-like figure). Again seeking to re-establish his pastoral supremacy, Pan rips up the carefully manicured paths and arbors which have been imposed on his land, and Evelyn herself becomes one with the wood – disappearing into it entirely. In *Other Kingdom*, therefore, we find an interweaving of multiple classical allusions alongside further Forsterian commentary on Classics, its stories, and what constitutes 'authentic' engagement with both.

The story of Daphne and Apollo is seeded very early on in the short story, and deftly re-emerges at strategic points so that it is strongly implied that Evelyn's disappearance is more of a metamorphosis: she has turned into a tree, Daphne-like. Evelyn thus defies the two themes of

[65] Radford (2007), 176.

[66] Radford (2007), 13.

restriction evident throughout the story: the figurative bonds of marriage, and the literal ones imposed on the natural world when it is cordoned off as private property. The story opens with the Classics tutor (wryly named Inksip) midway through a tutorial with Evelyn and Ford, a young scholar to whom Harcourt Worters is guardian. Ford teases Evelyn by suggesting the study of classical literature is all about learning to dodge lusty masculinity, using Daphne as his primary example:

> Suppose that long-haired brute Apollo wants to give you a music lesson. Well, out you pop into the laurels. Or Universal Nature comes along. You aren't feeling particularly keen on Universal Nature so you turn into a reed.[67]

The euphemistic nature of 'music lesson' invites comparison with 'Vulcan and Adonis' above, where a similar situation plays out but in more explicit terms. Pan, who is after all to be found in 'most places, as the name implies',[68] is also making a reappearance under the familiarly Edwardian guise of 'Universal Nature' (it was his pursuit of Syrinx which turned her into a reed). Much like Daphne, for whom 'the nuptial torch seems criminal' (*velut crimen taedas exosa iugales*),[69] Evelyn is repulsed by these notions, crying 'I won't be touched! […] I shan't!'[70]

Later, when the party takes a stroll round Other Kingdom Copse, Harcourt's newly acquired woodland, Evelyn whimsically impersonates a tree in a manner strikingly similar to Daphne's metamorphosis in Ovid:

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[67] Forster (1909), 48.

[68] Forster (1909), 47. Cf. also this same theme of Pan's ubiquity in *The Curate's Friend* above.

[69] Ovid *Met.*I. 483.

[70] Forster (1909), 47.

> She flung her arms up above her head, close together, so that she looked like a slender column. Then her body swayed and her delicate green dress quivered over it with the suggestion of countless leaves.[71]

> *mollia cinguntur tenui praecordia libro*
> *in frondem crines in ramos bracchia crescunt*
> *pes modo tam velox pigris radicibus haeret*
> *ora cacumen habet remanet nitor unus in illa*
> Thin bark closed around her soft breast
> Her hair became leaves, her arms became branches
> And her swift feet stuck to the ground as clinging roots
> Her face was hidden with encircling leaves …[72]

Compare also the party's search for Evelyn after her disappearance:

> We searched, gaily at first, and always with a feeling that Miss Beaumont was close by, that the delicate limbs were just behind this bole, the hair and the drapery quivering among those leaves. […] here was her footstep on the purple-brown earth – her bosom, her neck – she was everywhere and nowhere.[73]

Again, however, what initially appears to be a straightforward classical allusion is brought to an abrupt halt, refuted, and re-evaluated.

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[71] Forster (1909), 50.

[72] *Met.*I.548-551; translation mine.

[73] Forster (1909), 69.

First, Evelyn's impression is of a beech, not Daphne's laurel, and secondly, unlike Daphne she is in control of her own transformation. Laniel notes that this proves Inksip wrong ('he turns you – you don't turn yourself'),[74] and aligns Evelyn with the *Ninfa* figure as identified by Aby Warburg.[75] Certainly there is something of the nymph or dryad apparent in the appropriately named Evelyn *Beaumont*. The Daphne figure here also eludes her pursuer completely: Apollo may caress the laurel trunk and Pan may pluck Syrinx's reed to craft his pipes, but Harcourt Worters is left empty-handed and humiliated. He confronts Ford, accusing him of having eloped with Evelyn, only to be told:

> She has not practically escaped you. She has escaped you absolutely, for ever and ever, as long as there are branches to shade men from the sun.[76]

However, it is not only from the yoke of an unsought-after husband from which Evelyn is escaping; she is also eluding those typical Forsterian tyrannies – heritage, nostalgia, and property ownership. Replacing Daphne's laurel with Evelyn's beech is no coincidence since the story opens on Inskip translating *Eclogues* II.60 for his tutees:

> *Quem*, whom; *fugis*, are you avoiding; *ah demens*, you silly ass; *habitarunt di quoque*, gods too have lived in; *silvas*, the woods.[77]

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[74] Forster (1909), 60.

[75] Laniel (2020).

[76] Forster (1909), 78. Cf. similar timelessness at *Met.*I.564: *tu quoque perpetuos semper gere frondis honores* (you will also wear your leaves forever, unchanging in your glory).

[77] Forster (1909), 47.

Evelyn's flight is foreshadowed, as is the Pan-like woodland deity that might facilitate this. The line is not taken from the story of Daphne or Syrinx, however, but Corydon's song of unrequited love for Alexis (perhaps a subtle queer motif for the classicists among Forster's readership). Crucially, the shepherd Corydon is sitting in a beech grove (*fagos*) as he plays his *fistula* (what we might call 'Pan-pipes') and calls after his love. Other Kingdom Copse is replete with beeches (as was the location for Vulcan and Adonis's tryst), although Inskip states that it is just like any other beech-copse, and 'I am therefore spared the fatigue of describing it'.[78] Perhaps the invoked Virgilian ghosts have done the job for him, making Other Kingdom something of an ur-copse or *locus amoenus* – a textbook poetic space where poetic tropes can play out.[79]

Other Kingdom Copse provides a physical manifestation of the tension between gatekeeping and authentic engagement. Forster has a broader preoccupation with restriction, possession, and exclusivity garnered from the new, intensely consumerist, attitudes described in the previous chapter. Here, he explicitly makes this link between the figurative acquisition of classical learning and the material acquisition of land. Evelyn's resentment towards Harcourt is twofold: he does not understand her interest in Classics and he wants to possess Other Kingdom by putting a fence around it (and, by extension, her free will). As she complains:

> He won't let me do what I want. Latin and Greek began it: I wanted to know about gods and heroes and he wouldn't let me: then I wanted no fence round Other Kingdom and no bridge and no path – and look![80]

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[78] Forster (1909), 53.

[79] See Scourfield (2019), 295 for a reading of this as a metamorphosis in itself, from Virgil to Ovid: 'from the object of linguistic dissection in the opening line to a potent force for transformation and integration'.

[80] Forster (1909), 65.

It is interesting to note that some years later Forster too experienced the dilemma of woodland preservation and ownership at first hand. In 1924 he acquired Piney Copse in Surrey with the proceeds from *A Passage to India*'s American royalties. Distressed to see workmen digging the foundations for a housing development near his Abinger home, he intervened and was able to take possession of the small section which linked West Hackhurst to Gomshall Station. Like Other Kingdom, Piney Copse was in regular use by locals. Evelyn and Harcourt fight over whether or not to allow the local children to continue using their copse; Evelyn adores the local custom of lovers carving their initials in the trees whereas Harcourt wants to keep them out with a 'simple fence […] a gate [and] two keys, one for me and one for you, not more'.[81]

In his essay *My Wood*, after noticing locals picking blackberries in Piney Copse, Forster writes of a similar internal tussle:

> A boundary protects. But – poor little thing – the boundary ought in its turn to be protected. Noises on the edge of it. Children throw stones. A little more, and then a little more, until we reach the sea. Happy Canute! Happier Alexander! And after all, why should even the world be the limit of possession? A rocket containing a Union Jack will, it is hoped, be shortly fired at the moon.[82]

The essay is shot through with a rich vein of self-mockery and social critique. Forster notes that property changes a person: it 'produces men of weight, and it was a man of weight who failed to get into the Kingdom of Heaven'. Harcourt, something of a proto-Mr Wilcox in *Howard's End*,[83] is perhaps one such 'man of weight', of whom to be wary. Interestingly, in a 1950 journal entry

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[81] Forster (1909), 59.

[82] Forster (1926), 23.

[83] Indeed, *Howards End* was only published a year after *Other Kingdom*, in 1910.

Forster explicitly situates intellectual life and embodied, pastoral connection in opposition to one another by invoking Piney Copse: he is feeling 'ashamed of [his] own writing' and 'cannot attend to my stupid lectures as much as to the trees I am planting in Piney Copse. They too are stupid but I do not think so while at work'.[84] On the matter of property, Forster's public-spiritedness won out and he left Piney Wood to the National Trust following his death in 1970; he also discouraged the 'overly patriotic' British oak and instead planted *beech trees*.[85]

In the case of Evelyn's beech trees, there is an uneducated earnestness to her engagement with Other Kingdom and its flora. For all her love of the woodland and passionate defences of it, she is not entirely clear what a beech tree looks like. Ford points this out when she 'performs' her impression discussed above:

> 'You admire beeches, Evelyn, do you not?'
>
> 'I forget always which they are. Like this?'
>
> […]
>
> 'No: that is a silver birch', said Ford.[86]

A comparison might be drawn here with her attitude (and indeed aptitude) towards her classical studies. Much like the humble schoolboy who successfully rode the Celestial Omnibus, Evelyn is accorded the honour of a classical allusion. Yet Forster is also at pains to emphasise that she is actually very bad at Latin. 'Evelyn was very earnest over her classics' yet 'she wished she could have said what good they had done her';[87] she also frequently has her enthusiastic classical

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[84] From an entry dated '8.11.50' in Forster's Commonplace Book (page 19), held at the King's Archive, Forster Papers, call mark vol. 6/12.

[85] Finch (2012).

[86] Forster (1909), 50.

[87] Forster (1909), 48.

references corrected by Inksip. She is depicted as strong-willed and perceptive when faced with questions of morality (retaining the wildness of the wood for the community), yet she is consistently presented through Inksip's scholarly lens as utterly naïve and 'in a sense new to our civilisation' of which 'Latin is one of the subjects in her entrance examination'.[88] Notions of othering and colonialising 'primitivism' are also at play here, as Evelyn has been brought over by Harcourt from her home in Ireland, and her presentation as unspoiled and 'new to our civilisation' from Inksip's perspective may be understood in these terms. In a Forsterian sense, this outsider status is almost a prerequisite for authentic connection. Like the Warburgian *Ninfa* figure, is it Evelyn's very ingenuousness which enables her to connect with both the text and the wood in an authentic, unaffected manner?

There is, albeit differently, a naïvety to Inksip himself: Forster presents him as operating at a safe scholarly remove from the human drama playing out before him. Appropriately named, Inksip understands human nature by 'sipping' at texts and using them as a framework for mechanistic social niceties. When Harcourt and Evelyn start to argue, Inksip defuses the situation by disingenuously comparing Other Kingdom to Veii, even though 'I have never been near Veii. But it is part of my system to make classical allusions'.[89] Forster himself travelled extensively in the Mediterranean, with his journal entries from these visits emphasising the importance of connection with the *authentic* lands from which classical literature hails: 'It is only by seeing classic countries that the meaning of classic texts become clear'.[90]

For Inksip, however, his classical scholarship is a limitation rather than something which can be used to facilitate connection and encourage debate. He struggles to see beyond the trammels that Cambridge has carved out for him, refusing to participate in a conversation about the existence

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[88] Forster (1909), 49.

[89] Forster (1909), 56.

[90] From a notebook entry c.1902 discussing the Via Nomentana. King's Archive Forster Papers, call mark vol. 1/4.

of humanity because 'I did not take the Moral Science Tripos'.[91] Instead, he watches life unfold from behind his scholarly lens – indeed his scholarly lens*es*, since much is made of his wearing glasses. He only takes them off to polish in a moment of vulnerability, when Ford asks him the dreaded question 'what good has Latin done us?'.[92] He then promptly retreats behind his scholarly uniform almost immediately and fails to provide an adequate response. Classics is quite literally Inksip's *raison d'être*, and yet the best he can offer is 'My dear Ford, what a question!', privately observing that 'the arguments for the study of Latin are perfectly sound, but they are difficult to remember, and the afternoon was hot, and I needed my tea'.[93]

Intuitive Evelyn, by contrast, embraces Classics wholly and uncomplicatedly, and is presented as living on instinct – a trait highlighted elsewhere in Forsterian characters such as *Passage*'s Mrs Moore and *Howards End*'s Helen Schlegel. She explores Inksip's poems, and their presentations of the pastoral, in embodied terms – as demonstrated by her love of Other Kingdom and her learning the names of trees through physically representing their shapes.

Dative absolutes corrupt absolutely

Elsewhere in Forster's writing, an individual's attitude to the study of Classics operates as a useful metonym for their attitude to normative values and their degree of engagement with 'authentic' interpersonal experience. When we meet *Maurice*'s eponymous protagonist in his schooldays, he is caught daydreaming in a Latin class and tries to redeem himself by responding 'Sir – oh! Dative absolute?',[94] a Latin construction which does not exist. Later in life, this ambivalence deepens to antipathy and Maurice 'hates the very word [Greece]', associating it with 'morbidity and death'.[95]

[91] Forster (1909), 64.

[92] Forster (1909), 48.

[93] Forster (1909), 49.

[94] Forster (1971), 16.

[95] Forster (1971), 100.

This queer hero of a queer love story has, by his own admission, little interest in the ancients whom he is supposed to consider his sexual, as well as intellectual, forebears.

The daydream Maurice is enjoying, prior to his rude awakening by the schoolmaster, involves the face of a handsome young man. He ponders: 'Was he a Greek god, such as illustrates the classical dictionary? More probable, but most probably he was just a man'.[96] Sitting in his Victorian British public school, the air redolent with classicised potential, Maurice considers making a link between the queer and the classical and immediately dismisses it. He may be surrounded by Classics, but it fails to work for him. Crucially, the narratorial voice later notes that Maurice's 'interest in the classics had been slight and obscene, and had vanished when he loved Clive'.[97] Maurice, on arrival in Cambridge, had admitted to never having read the *Symposium*, but the need for it now seems redundant as Clive has provided him with the 'real thing' – experienced not in a library but interpersonally and through the body. The reference to a classical dictionary is additionally interesting, as we know from biographers that the young Forster enjoyed perusing different classical dictionaries not for communion with the Platonic ideal, but for the chance sighting of undraped male 'dirties' – Forster's euphemism for the penis.[98] Similarly, one might expect these woodcuts of classical nudes to be discarded once the 'real thing' came along.

Orrells points out that it is Clive – whose Platonism in many ways echoes that of the Cambridge Apostles – who makes the required pilgrimage to Greece, while Maurice stubbornly remains at home.[99] Clive returns from Greece with his future wife in tow but also physically unwell with a fever and diarrhoea, his body physically rejecting a core aspect of himself and failing to reconcile itself with his decision ('my inside's all wrong').[100] On the other hand, we see Maurice –

[96] Forster (1971), 16.

[97] Forster (1971), 99.

[98] Stray (2018); Furbank (1978). Discussed at length in 'About Sex', pages 144ff. of 'The Locked Journal', King's Archive Forster Papers, call mark vol. 4/4.

[99] Orrells (2011).

[100] Forster (1971), 97.

unashamedly Greekless Maurice – flourishing, finding his true love Alec in an otherwise unremarkable English garden of which the Wiltshire Faun in *The Curate's Friend* might approve. For Forster their happy ending is the 'greenwood', the safe pastoral space of outlawry where he ensures that 'the lovers get away unpunished'.[101] As Robert Martin illustrates: 'the novel opposes two kinds of homosexuality – one that is identified with Cambridge and Clive, and one that is identified with Alec and the open air'.[102] There is a knowing paradox at play here: classicism is unseated, only to be reinstated in a very contemporary, localised setting. Late nights poring chastely over the *Symposium* are out, and passionate rendez-vous with Theocritean men of toil are in. Forster, discussing *Maurice* in a 1915 letter, states that he has 'created something absolutely new, even to the Greeks'.[103]

For Forster, then, this classicised yet de-classicising potential is something that exists beyond the rote learning of Latin and Greek and is instead in the very fabric of the world around us (and the bodies who inhabit it). This is aptly conveyed in a quotation given to Evelyn just prior to her escape from Harcourt and her union with her beloved woodland and the Great God Pan. She teases her husband-to-be by quoting the Virgil lines which opened the story, sung in English with a playful (and utterly incongruous) superimposition of pitch accents: 'Áh yoù sílly àss, góds lìve in woóds!'. In spite of Inksip's well-meaning ministrations, Evelyn is not taking her Classics seriously – she does not need to. Gods of classicisms past live on in the woods, even in an otherwise unremarkable beech-copse, and Evelyn does not require a schoolmaster to help her see them.

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[101] Forster (1971), 219. Taken from a 'terminal note' appended to the unpublished manuscript by Forster in 1960.

[102] Martin (1983), 35.

[103] Lago and Furbank eds. (1983), 219.

‘Not only Greece, but England and all the world and life’[104]

Can one, then, engage authentically with the world as a classical scholar, according to Forster? Yes, but seemingly only by either going against the grain or by maintaining an awareness of a text’s wider significance. *Other Kingdom*’s Inksip notes that Ford ‘has the makings of a scholar and – though for some reason he objects to the word – of a gentleman’.[105] Unlike Inksip, he is not defined by his consumption of classical texts, and his desire for authenticity is presented in contrast to Harcourt Worters’ bourgeois trappings:

> He cannot understand the footman and the solid silver kettle-stand. They make him cross. For he has dreams – not exactly spiritual dreams: Mr. Worters is the man for those – but dreams of the tangible and the actual. Robust dreams, which take him, not to heaven, but to another earth. There are no footmen in this other earth, and the kettle-stands, I suppose, will not be made of silver, and I know that everything is to be itself, and not practically something else.[106]

Far from being a limitation, Ford’s scholarship is almost a superpower: ‘He never did his dumb-bells or played in his school fifteen. But the muscles came. He thinks they came while he was reading Pindar’.[107] Ironically, Ford flourished in his public school, but in defiance of the manner intended. The emphasis on musculature is interesting, inviting comparison with the nineteenth-century phenomenon of ‘muscular Christianity’ in Public Schools,[108] aligning physical strength with conformity and moral virtue. But Ford also represents emotional sensitivity: when an ugly scene

[104] Forster (1912), 82.

[105] Forster (1909), 52.

[106] Forster (1909), 52.

[107] Forster (1909), 55.

[108] Hall (2010).

erupts between him and Harcourt over, amongst other things, Evelyn's affections, Harcourt cuts off his ward – effectively ruining his prospects of a career. Evelyn initially dismisses Ford as a 'cry baby' but then understands that 'He was not crying like a baby. He was crying like a grown-up person, and now I have grown up too'.[109] It is Ford and Evelyn alone who undergo emotional development over the course of the story.

When Harcourt and Inksip burst in on Ford in his 'squalid suburb', expecting to catch him 'red-handed with Evelyn',[110] he is instead seated calmly at a table and reading *Oedipus at Colonus*. Ford alone understands the meaning behind Evelyn's departure, and the text Forster has placed into his hands is surely no coincidence. His short story *The Road from Colonus* was published in 1912 but written following his visit to Greece in 1903, and it employs motifs from Sophocles to depict the culture-shock experienced by the British philhellenist visiting Greece for the first time. The protagonist, ageing Mr Lucas, joins a tourist party with his daughter and tries to 'settle down to the role of Oedipus, which seemed the only one public opinion allowed him'.[111] Lucas 'caught the fever of Hellenism' in his youth and is realising a lifelong dream with this visit, only to have his illusions shattered by the reality of a contemporary Athenian district. In spite of his travel companions' touristic gushing about it being 'all very Greek', Lucas is afforded a startling moment of connection when he makes an offering in a hollow tree next to an otherwise insalubrious inn. This authentic moment is Lucas' own arrival at the sacred grove.[112] This rupture in his otherwise curmudgeonly existence becomes for Lucas a 'supreme event […] which would transfigure the face of the world'.[113]

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[109] Forster (1909), 66.

[110] Forster (1909), 70.

[111] Forster (1912), 80.

[112] Scourfield (2019) notes that the grove is comprised of plane trees, which are rich with Theocritean significance and again suggest a 'metamorphosis' between Tragedy and Pastoral.

[113] Forster (1912) 83.

The reality of contemporary Greece is directly implicated in the authenticity of Lucas' epiphanic moment, with the materiality of the landscape and its inhabitants proving imaginatively powerful even if not in the manner intended by the hopeful philhellenist tourist. The group's guide is a 'dragoman' and the inn is described as a 'khan', both serving as reminders of strong Ottoman influences in the region. Outside the khan is a plane tree whose inside is hollowed out for entirely unpoetic reasons: 'it had been burnt out for charcoal'.[114] There is a little shrine carved into the tree; its prayers for a Greek Orthodox god rather than the pagan deities, but the two are deliberately elided in description: 'in the rind of the tree a shrine was cut, holding a lamp and a little picture of the Virgin, inheritor of the Naiad's and Dryad's joint abode'.[115]

The elements of Greece that Lucas had hoped to find on his trip have left him cold, 'Athens had been dusty, Delphi wet, Thermopylae flat',[116] yet it is in this unassuming slice of everyday Greek life that he finds his moment of epiphany and is suddenly left 'breathless with excitement'.[117] The moment of authentic connection occurs as he approaches the humble little shrine alone, and experiences three key authenticating devices that are recurrent in the moments of Forsterian connection. First, Lucas' experience is a deeply embodied one: he steps into the water springing from the base of the shrine and feels it 'gurgling over his ankle';[118] then he bends down to taste the water, and rests his body against the tree in a manner which mimics the posture of the votive offerings suspended within it. Secondly, there is a primitivism ascribed to the inhabitants of the khan: children are squatting in 'wet earth […] playing some primaeval game with their fingers' while an elderly woman spins thread in 'a frail mud building'.[119] Finally, though the landscape itself

[114] Forster (1912), 81.

[115] Forster (1912), 81.

[116] Forster (1912), 80.

[117] Forster (1912), 83.

[118] Forster (1912), 81.

[119] Forster (1912), 79.

is understood to be unassuming (and certainly no tourist destination; the khan is rather intended as a comfort stop en route), Forster's language elevates it to the classical pastoral: anemones and asphodels bloom, trees are 'clothed in quivering green',[120] and Lucas declares that 'I never saw anything so marvellous before'.[121]

Güthenke, commenting on travel writing and the Greek landscape, notes that 'as landscape, [Greece] introduces an aesthetic element that shows up the artistic process and a related process of emancipation […] as locality, Greece offers specific, historic, material sites, whose survival is a mark of continuity and authenticity'.[122] Here, however, the 'powerful material symbol'[123] of Greece is understood not through artistic relics of the ancient past but very deliberately through a portion of the country that does *not* have an obvious aura of classicism attached to it. Lionel Trilling, in his 1944 study of Forster's life and work, writes that the inherent appeal of Greece for Forster was that of 'some vaguely ancient pagan time'.[124]

The experience in the grove briefly ignites a sense of passion and of determination in the old man. Lucas becomes obsessed with spending the night – perhaps even several nights – at the inn, much to the annoyance of his daughter and the rest of the party. There is a moment of confrontation when Lucas stands his ground and refuses to leave the place; like Oedipus at Colonus, there is a sense perhaps that a divine force has guided him here. The group eventually manage to move him, narrowly escaping a robbery in the process, and feel very justified in having removed the foolish old man from so unsanitary a location. His moment of passion extinguished, Lucas returns to his former self and the story's epilogue finds him back in his suburban home, grousing about the plumbing. His daughter is horrified to read in a newspaper that the very inn he had so wished to stay

[120] Forster (1912), 79.

[121] Forster (1912), 81.

[122] Güthenke (2008), 40.

[123] Güthenke (2008), 40.

[124] Trilling (1944), 33.

at had collapsed that same evening, with all the inhabitants killed. She declares their 'marvellous deliverance'.[125] But Lucas neither pays her any attention nor recalls wanting to stay at the inn at all. Forster's implication is stark: better to answer the call of that defining authentic event, even it if is one's last, than to live out one's existence without having known it.

There is a fatalism implied in Lucas' experience along the lines of Oedipus's own. Danger may have been narrowly averted, but for a moment, in that hollow tree, ordinary Mr Lucas experienced an extraordinary moment of pure authentic connection:

> The sun made no accidental patterns upon the spreading roots of the trees, and there was intention in the nodding clumps of asphodel, and in the music of the water. To Mr Lucas, who, in a brief space of time, had discovered not only Greece, but England and all the world and life, there seemed nothing ludicrous in the desire to hang within the tree another votive offering – a little model of an entire man.[126]

'It looks so smooth till you begin to dig'[127]

Forster's motifs of authenticating epiphany, that occur through sensual union with nature and the 'primitive', may well find their counterparts in similar presentations in the works of D.H. Lawrence. Lawrence himself, however, vigorously rebuffed any association with Forster. In a 1915 letter to Forster himself, Lawrence acknowledged that while both authors were concerned with 'the flower into which we strive to burst', he considered Forster's use of the classical pastoral – and specifically his reliance on the trope of Pan – to be thoroughly ineffective:

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[125] Forster (1912), 90.

[126] Forster (1912), 82.

[127] Autograph manuscript fragment of a short story, King's College Cambridge Archive, E.M. Forster Papers, call mark 3/3/C.

> I have just read the Story of a Panic. You with your 'Only Connect' motto, I must say that you reach the limit of splitness here. You are bumping your nose on the end of the cul de sac. My angels & devils are nothing compared with your Pan. Don't you see Pan is the undifferentiated root & stem drawing out of unfathomable darkness […] You see I know all about your Pan. He is not dead, he is the same forever. But you should not confuse him with universal love, as you tend to do. You are very confused.[128]

The accusation of 'bumping your nose on the end of the cul de sac' is reminiscent of other uncharitable depictions of Forster's 'flitting and discontinuous' personality, notably that of Lytton Strachey's which refers to him as 'the taupe'.[129] Trilling similarly critiques the Forsterian 'only connect', arguing that the behaviour of many of his characters in fact demonstrates how 'almost hopelessly difficult it is to make this connection'.[130] Yet I would argue that it is this very 'splitness', as Lawrence describes it, which enables these presentations of momentary connection and demonstrates a yearning for authentic union. It is also extremely telling that the places where genuine connection *is* achieved are in the posthumously published works, notably *Maurice*, where Forster allows a connection which would not have been even legally permitted in his lifetime: 'a happy ending was imperative. […] I was determined that in fiction anyway two men should fall in love and remain in it for the ever and ever that fiction allows, and in this sense Maurice and Alec

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[128] Radford (2007), 184. In a 1939 journal entry Forster mentions the 'void I feel in the modern world, which no reputable religion can kill. It is the Dark Force which DH Lawrence routinely is letting himself go about'. 'The Locked Journal' page 94, Kings College Cambridge Archive, E.M. Forster Papers, call mark vol. 4/4.

[129] Douglas-Fairhurst (2020).

[130] Trilling (1944), 102.

still roam the greenwood'.[131] The impetus immediately following 'Only connect' is to 'live in fragments no longer'.[132]

This idea of 'fragmentation' is helpful, not least because of its archaeological and psychoanalytical symbolism in early twentieth-century thought (see Chapter 3). Forster certainly visited archaeological sites during his travels to Greece and Italy;[133] and among his papers in the King's College Cambridge Archive is a portion of what may have been intended as a short story on the subject dated to 1904. The document itself is fittingly a fragment, with the lower portion of the page having been torn away (*fig. 1*). The surviving text introduces two characters: Arthur, an archaeologist (either representing Arthur Evans or a version of Evans himself), and his aunt. Arthur is excavating at Ampelos, in Crete, and leaves his aunt bewildered when he rejects a fragment of Attic vase and tosses it to the floor because it is 'third century B.C. – pretty I grant but absolutely worthless historically. […] Attic vases are well enough in their way but one does not want them here'. Arthur, instead, sifts through a 'mess' of classical artefacts as 'Classical Greece – even Homeric Greece – was to him uninteresting and commonplace'. The reader is given to believe that Arthur has been struck with the 'Creteomania';[134] his pursuit of authentic ancientness has gone beyond mere philhellenism and now 'his interest began with the prehistoric civilisation of Crete […] not merely discovering its offshoots, but also its origins'.[135]

Arthur is portrayed as single minded, and dismissive of his aunt when she comments on the artistic merit of the Attic fragment he has just tossed aside ('I'm not here to dig for prettiness').

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[131] Forster (1971), 218.

[132] Forster (1910), 159.

[133] Forster visited Italy with his mother shortly after graduating from Cambridge in 1901-1902. In 1903 he made a combined tour of both Italy and Greece. These early visits have clear influence on the early short stories under discussion. His travel writing on the topic of the ancient Mediterranean also features in the 1936 essay collection *Abinger Harvest*, notably 'Cnidus'.

[134] See further Chapter 3. Lending credence to this being a characterisation of Arthur Evans himself.

[135] Autograph manuscript fragment described as 'Arthur at Ampelos', King's College Cambridge Archive, E.M. Forster Papers, call mark 3/3/C.

There is perhaps a wryness implied here, with Arthur as a somewhat caricatured representation of the unthinking urge for yet older, more ancient, more arcane relics through which to divine some form of authentic connection. The artefact which does spark Arthur's interest is 'an ill baked object which looked like a stunted flower pot', which he immediately venerates for its superior pedigree of age and its capacity to 'carry us back to genuine [authentic?] antiquity'. It is difficult to intuit with whom sympathy might have been invited to lie if the story had continued. But the aunt's opinion that 'origins bored her, and antiquity was no excuse for ugliness', combined with her appreciation of a beautiful field of marigolds and poppies just beyond the site, perhaps suggest that she is another 'unlettered' visitor who nonetheless manages to derive far greater pleasure from her environment than the classical expert. Arthur also seems to have unrealistic expectations of his ancient site, complaining: 'I had no idea that the place was in such a mess […] it looks so smooth till you begin

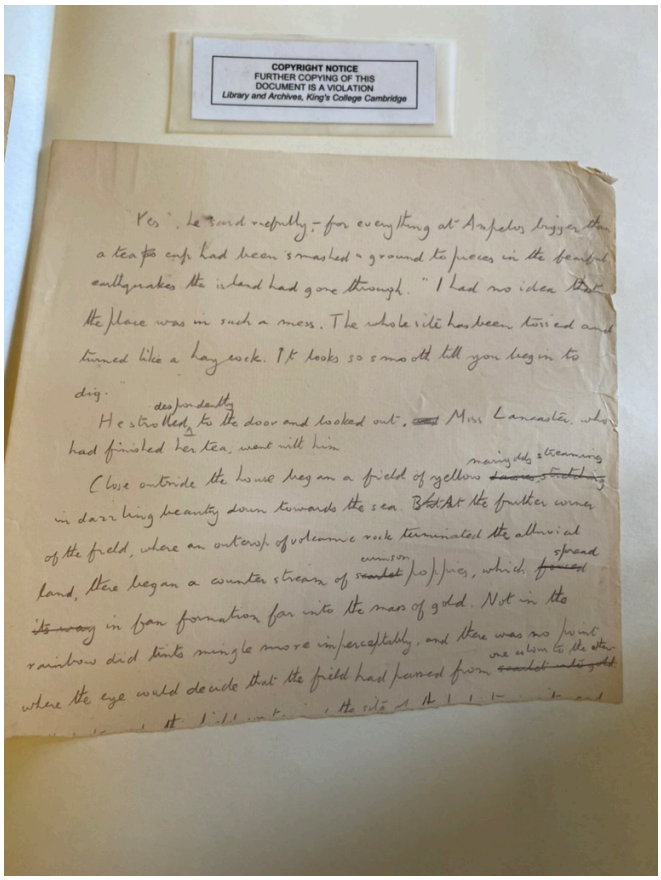

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fig. 1

to dig'.[136] In a Forsterian sense, there is perhaps greater poignancy and interest to be had in the fragmentary, and the emotive potential for union.

This Forsterian 'splitness' and its attendant longing for unity may also be understood with reference to his prolonged experiences of creative disconnect. Interestingly, one of Forster's recorded coping mechanisms was a process which in itself gathers the fragmentary into a place of coherence and connection. Many of his notebooks include lengthy sections where he has copied out texts from other authors, or summarised classic works of literature. In a journal entry from 1961, he notes that 'copy[ing] out a piece of someone else's prose […] is the best device known to me for taking one out of oneself. Plunge into another's minutiae'.[137] There is a sense here of literary 'connection' and communion with literary forebears, as well as a wider tendency to gather portions of writing as the fancy takes him and to consider the workings of literature as a whole, and the self as experienced through it. Forster began keeping a 'commonplace book' shortly after the publication of *A Passage to India* in 1924.[138] Unlike his notebooks, the commonplace book very much captures the spirit of its Renaissance origins, gathering together a wide variety of entries, musings on topics, sketches for projects, and portions of prose (both that which has been copied out and Forster's own). The book was originally owned by the Bishop of Limerick, who began it as a commonplace book in 1804, with Forster collaging his own literary fragments into the mix. Herz refers to these fragments as 'clusterings', which endearingly might find their parallel with the manner in which Forster's biographer Furbank presents him 'always on his way somewhere, hands and pockets full of oddly shaped parcels, books, papers, gifts'.[139]

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[136] Autograph manuscript fragment described as 'Arthur at Ampelos', King's College Cambridge Archive, E.M. Forster Papers, call mark 3/3/C.

[137] Commonplace Book page 245, King's College Cambridge Archive, E.M. Forster Papers, call mark vol. 6/12.

[138] Herz (1986), 443.

[139] Herz (1986), 443.

Forster's interest in connection, in genuine understanding and intimacy, can therefore perhaps also be detected in his relationship to literature itself, and the manner in which stories are created and shared. As with the motley collection of figures accessed through the Celestial Omnibus – Dickens, Dante, and Achilles all co-existing – there is a sense for Forster that one's imaginative inner world acquires its own sense of value, irrespective of external canon formation or the insistence of a schoolmaster. It is this inner, authentic processing of literary material that finds a striking parallel in the following chapter, where Christopher Logue's manner of textual engagement similarly invokes a sense of 'clustering', albeit in markedly different ways, which in turn reflect the 'authenticities' of his very different times.

Chapter 5: Christopher Logue: 1959-2015

Music…

An arch of bells,

A tree of china bells,

Two trees of jellyfish and cowslip bells,

All shaken soft, all shaken slow,

Backed by Egyptian clarinets.

And they pass by.[1]

In a recording from Logue's performance at the Cheltenham Literature Festival in 1985, the first few minutes are taken up with mutterings and shufflings as the Festival host re-seats members of the audience, asking individuals to shift along so that more people can be accommodated. There has been a last minute change of location, and host Alan Hancox – a local antiquarian bookseller – explains that there was no way the performers could 'project in the town hall the way they want to...the immediacy of the whole thing...So we thought, it's better to have 450 people in here, who

[1] Logue (2015), 104.

could hear, but some of them may not be able to see. But at least you'll hear, and *this is primarily a performance for hearing*'.[2]

The performers in question are actor Alan Howard and poet Christopher Logue – both reading from *Patrocleia*, Logue's dramatic poem based on Book 16 of the *Iliad*. Here, as is so often the case when considering Logue's 'Homer poems',[3] the interplay between text, musicality, and sensory experience is foremost. Now collected under the title *War Music*, Logue's poetic response to the *Iliad* began in 1959 – he was already 26 years into the project at the time of this particular recording – and continued, still unfinished, until his death in 2011. The poems were published iteratively across eight instalments,[4] with the ninth (*The Collected War Music*) published posthumously in 2015 and bringing together all previous versions along with unpublished drafts. The Cheltenham recording is one among many which form part of the rich performance history of the poems with Logue as narrator and Howard – known to many as a leading actor of the RSC – voicing the characters.

War Music defined Logue's career and yet, by his own admission, this was not at all as he had intended.[5] His first response to Homer was an ambivalent one: in 1959 he was approached by Donald Carne-Ross, both a classicist and also a producer for BBC Radio's Third Programme, to join other contemporary British poets in contributing to a 'radio *Iliad*'. In his memoir, and elsewhere in interviews, Logue recalls his initial reluctance to participate, citing both his lack of

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[2] Recording of performance at Cheltenham Literature Festival Tape 6th Oct 1985, held at the British Library Sound and Moving Image Archive, Shelfmark C169/38. *Emphases mine.*

[3] The term most frequently employed by Logue himself.

[4] A brief timeline of the printed collections and their corresponding portions of the *Iliad*: *Patrocleia,* 1962 (book 19); *GBH*, 1980 (books 17-18); *War Music*, 1981 (books 16-19); *Kings*, 1991 (books 1-2); *The Husbands*, 1994 (books 3-4); *War Music*, 2001 (all the above); *All Day Permanent Red*, 2002 (mostly elements of books 5 and 6, but taken from all over); *Cold Calls*, 2005 (elements of books 5, 8, and 9). A 2015 edition, also entitled *War Music*, combines all of these together along with an appendix comprised of Logue's notes for his projected final volume, *Big Men Falling a Long Way*. Unless otherwise specified, I will be quoting from all poems as they appear in the 2015 edition of *War Music*.

[5] Indeed, in his memoir he acknowledges that after writing *Achilles Fights the River* in 1959 he considered it 'irrelevant' and of lesser worth than his anti-nuclear poem 'To My Fellow Artists', but 'those who gave my Homer poem critical support knew better than I what was best for me'. Logue (1999), 224.

ancient Greek and his sense that the *Iliad* was 'boring'.[6] Carne-Ross proved persuasive, and was subsequently highly influential across Logue's long poetic career. Early on, he advised Logue simply to read as many translations as possible in order to 'follow the story. A translator must know one language well. Preferably his own'.[7]

The real turning point at this early stage, however, appears to have been a conversation that Logue had with Xanthe Wakefield, a 'gawky young woman, a classical scholar with an enchanting, musical voice', whom Logue credits with having 'influenced the course of his life'.[8] She also worked at the BBC and was at that time Carne-Ross's romantic partner; it was on her recommendation that Carne-Ross approached Logue for the radio *Iliad* project. Wakefield's physical presence in Logue's life is all too fleeting – she took her own life before the age of 30 – and yet a particular conversation between them is repeated by Logue very consistently in his writing and in interviews. She impressed upon him that 'the Greeks are not humanistic, not Christian, not sentimental.[9] Please try to understand that. They are musical. Such music. And Homer … Homer is close to your ear, and at the same time – so distant'.[10] This emphasis on the 'musicality' of the Greek, of something that might be tapped into even without knowledge of the language, a quality both foreign and familiar, pervades Logue's engagements with Homer. This chapter calls attention to the 'musicality' of Greek for Logue, leading directly to an exploration of ideas of the classical-as-authentic. Similarly, the theme of proximity and distance is again apparent in the poet's navigation of the 'gulf' between the self and the idealised authentic or classical encounter.

Logue's previous relationship with Classics is markedly different from Forster's: he did not study it at school, he did not go to university; and, as his comments to Carne-Ross reveal, he did not

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[6] Logue (1999), 221. Logue recalls a conversation with Doris Lessing, who interestingly persuades him by saying that the *Iliad* would suit him 'not as a reader, but as a poet'.

[7] Logue (1999), 221.

[8] Logue (1999), 209.

[9] This is reinforced by a comment from Carne-Ross to Logue that 'Homer is not sentimental'. Logue (1999), 223.

[10] Reid (2001).

have any particular emotional connections with classical material when the subject of the radio *Iliad* was proposed. Whilst Logue's clipped vowels heard on the archive recordings may seem incongruous to contemporary ears, by the standards of his time he did not consider himself part of an educationally privileged community.[11] Indeed, there is a sense through much of his work that he intentionally amplified this outsiderism as he self-consciously performed the role of subaltern. This is highly relevant when one considers what it is about the *Iliad,* in particular, which facilitated what might be understood as an epiphanic connection for Logue. His studied presentation of his own non-scholarly engagement, combined with an interest in the 'otherness' of the 'musical' Greeks, makes him a particularly interesting subject for an investigation into authenticity through the unfamiliar.

This chapter explores Logue's relationship with explicit musicality and orality and therefore contributes to ongoing conversations in Logue scholarship seeking to analyse these traits.[12] But my focus here is additionally on how Logue plays with the paradox of proximity and distance to which Wakefield draws his attention. Notions of embodiment and situatedness become extremely important to Logue's sense of an immediate Homer; and whilst Logue's intent and execution may be very different from Forster's, there are to a certain extent parallels between their work in authentic moments of embodied connection. Logue was writing in a context when the phenomenological response of the individual was gaining greater recognition (see further Chapter 1), as were sensory relationships with Classics (Chapter 2). As the *War Music* project progressed, these themes became more explicit, particularly Logue's personal relationship with the text, after his classical advisers began to fall by the wayside towards the end of the twentieth century.

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[11] Logue indeed acknowledged the irony of his 'la-di-da voice', the result of elocution lessons suggested by his class-conscious mother. J. Campbell (2001, 17 November), 'Classic Upstart'*, The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2001/nov/17/poetry.books [accessed 30/12/2025].

[12] Notably by Power (2018b); Greenwood (2009); and Reynolds (2011). See also Taplin (2007) on the Logueian simile.

Finally – and perhaps most pertinently – the primary focus in this chapter is on the embodied literary processes at work in *War Music,* which are attendant upon Logue's very notable use of collaging and collage-like methods. Even more pronounced than Forster's, Logue's extensive processes of gathering intertextual examples, scrapbooking, and (often literally) collaging in the formation of his poetry became increasingly more marked over the course of the *War Music* project, as is patently reflected in the published versions.[13] This chapter also considers how processes of collaging might be brought into dialogue with the mechanics of literary reception more widely, highlighting themes of materiality, replication, and a preoccupation with the 'authentic' as artisanal or consciously unfinished. Mediation is again brought to the fore, with Logue's work often intentionally foregrounding its reliance on processes of translation or intertext. In this reading, Logue's perceived 'lack' of Greek is no accident; he is in many ways (and somewhat controversially) prioritising an 'authentic feeling' of antiquity over the *Iliad* in its 'authentic' language.

That Logue did not have ancient Greek is well known, but what do we make of the fact that he did not appear to take any steps to learn it across sixty-plus years of working with the Homer? He is certainly taken by the notion of 'playing with the sound of ancient Greek',[14] though perhaps it is its very distance that provides him with space for exploration and creative interpolation. Is there perhaps something in that 'gulf', what Billings dubs the tantalising erotics of reception, a 'constant oscillation between lack and fulfilment',[15] that yields a quality best kept apart from the mundanities of rote-learning εἰμί εἶ ἐστί(ν)? Is there a deliberate emphasis here on Greek purely as sound, as music: 'close to the ear' as well as impossibly 'distant'?

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[13] I am indebted to Henry Power's 2018 article 'Christopher Logue, Alexander Pope, and the Making of *War Music*' for this section in particular and for my wider understanding of Logue's process as 'scrapbooking' or 'collaging'. Likewise his invaluable feedback on my paper on Logue and collage at 'Christopher Logue and the Classics' (a conference I co-hosted with Thomas Munro in 2024), which helped inform this chapter.

[14] Logue (2003), 121.

[15] Billings (2010), 4. See further Chapter 2.

War Music has frequently proved a fruitful case study in questioning and expanding the limits of translation, from Carne-Ross's inaugural issue of *Arion* on the topic,[16] to considerations of Logue's engagement with the Homeric simile,[17] and the interplay in his poetry between translation and contemporary visual media.[18] Logue himself, however, avoided categorising the poem as a translation, preferring instead terms such as 'recomposition', 'version', or 'account'. In interviews, he often appears keen to situate his 'long poem in English'[19] within a poetic lineage that does not necessarily privilege the literature of classical antiquity. Once again, however, a paradox of proximity vs. distance almost immediately begins to rise: while Homer's *Iliad* is being dethroned by Logue, the poet simultaneously devotes half a century of his career to a search for the 'authentic' musicality of an epic Ur-text.

On not knowing Greek

Logue's own self-positioning – often wryly self-conscious – operates outside the usual parameters for engagement with (let alone translation of) a piece of classical literature. In interviews he is all too keen to bring up his lack of Greek, seemingly under the guise of acknowledging his limitations, yet possibly also in such a way as to provoke his – often highly literary, university-educated – interviewer and audience. In contrast to the deliberate precision of his poetry, in interviews Logue regularly makes rather glib statements about classical literature, and Homer in particular. Declarations such as 'I don't care a great deal for the *Odyssey* […] I don't read Greek, by the way, I read it only in translation […] I don't find the people very interesting and to tell you the truth I

[16] Carne-Ross (1962).

[17] Taplin (2007).

[18] Reynolds (2011); Dyson (2022).

[19] Logue (2003), 136.

don't find the story very interesting' elicit nervous titters from a Radio 3 studio audience.[20] Similarly, in a further discussion of the *Odyssey*, he comments: 'I've read it twice, I think, right the way through'.[21] Logue adds that he first read Homer in the E.V. Rieu translation 'but I didn't read it thoroughly',[22] and that before that he had read Pope's version 'but not all the way through'.[23] Logue acknowledges in his memoir that he 'enjoys being an outsider of the kind who […] is inclined to anticipate rejection from those whom he associates with insiderism, the conventional paths to success, but is at the same time ambitious to succeed in that very world'.[24]

His relationship with university education displays the same duality: he rejects 'the conventional paths to success' represented by access to such institutions, but in moments of candour acknowledges that his own desires are more complicated. In his memoir he mentions that he had once nurtured hopes of studying at Oxford;[25] and he refers to his meetings with Carne-Ross as 'tutorials'[26] – an interesting word choice for one seemingly so intent on *rejecting* the insiderism of university-educated coteries. In a miscellaneous collection of Logue's archived correspondence are letters from Bonamy Dobrée, Professor of English Literature at the University of Leeds (1936-1955), appearing to commiserate with Logue for failing to gain admission to the University in 1949. Logue clearly replied on numerous occasions declaring his unhappiness at this fact, because Dobrée's letters back become increasingly impatient and eventually he responds with:

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[20] Christopher Logue interview and poetry reading, 21 March 1991, British Library Sound and Moving Image archive, shelfmark C15/456. Here is an interesting echo of the conversation with Doris Lessing noted at footnote 6, where they agree that it is specifically the *Iliad* rather than 'translating Homer' which suits him.

[21] Christopher Logue interview and poetry reading, 21 March 1991, British Library Sound and Moving Image archive, shelfmark C15/456.

[22] Christopher Logue interview and poetry reading, 21 March 1991, British Library Sound and Moving Image archive, shelfmark C15/456.

[23] Christopher Logue interview and poetry reading, 21 March 1991, British Library Sound and Moving Image archive, shelfmark C15/456.

[24] Logue (1999), 89.

[25] Logue (1999), 242.

[26] Logue (1999), 242.

> For Heaven's sake cheer up! The world hasn't come to an end, nor has your own life which you ought to be able to make extremely interesting, just because you can't get to Leeds or any other University. You know, it isn't essential to go to a University either to read or to write. So, as I say, cheer up. […] Get on to some work that interests you.[27]

Logue appears to have heeded Dobrée's advice, and indeed later in his career that very lack of institutional training is presented by him as an alternative mode of fruitful engagement. A useful assessment of his relationship with ancient Greek can be seen at moments when he simultaneously acknowledges that philological knowledge presents an advantage, but that there is also a kind of power inherent in his positionality as classical 'outsider'. Where Forster was intentionally decoupling himself from his classical education, Logue is emphasising his lack of it in the first place. Though far from presenting this lack as an impediment, for Logue the process of consciously uncovering elements of the text becomes both positive and central. In one interview he describes the obfuscating layers he must work through in order to access meaning: 'you have to sort of winkle it out of the translations, sort of dig it out, but Greek scholars know because they know'. He immediately cautions, however, against those who think linguistic access is necessarily the wholesale advantage it appears:

> …having cracked the code is one thing, but then you've got to be sensitive of the message is the other. Eliot makes this point on Dante, that some people because

[27] Paterno Special Collections Library at The Pennsylvania State University, Christopher Logue Papers, Box 1 Folder 6.

> they understand Italian think they've got a line to Dante. (chuckles) It doesn't follow, one to the other![28]

Those who have 'cracked the code', then, through their pre-existing familiarity with ancient languages, do not automatically have the requisite sensibility to uncover the deeper meaning of the text. There is, he insists, an emotive quality to the words too.

Another way in which Logue amplifies his outsider status while simultaneously 'winkling out' differing layers of meaning is by homing in on very specific elements of the *Iliad*, which evidently appealed to his poetic sensibility yet regularly go unnoticed in more canonical reception traditions. An example of this is his recurrent description of Apollo as 'Lord of Light and Mice',[29] presumably referencing the shrine of Apollo Σμινθεύς (*Il.*I.39: Apollo as 'destroyer of mice' in his capacity as god of plagues). What is only a glancing mention in the *Iliad* becomes central to *War Music*, with Apollo not only consistently rendered thus but his epithet also played with on numerous occasions: 'sacred vermin';[30] 'Dear Lord of Light, reclaim your mice';[31] 'The smiling Mousegod flicked him back'.[32]

I would also argue that Logue's use of anachronism (extensively discussed elsewhere)[33] is likewise part of this invitation to reconsider or redirect traditional lines of reception. If anachronism serves as a 'chronological rupture'[34] to facilitate dialogue, could it not also perhaps operate as a place in which to invite pause; to lay something bare in a moment of particular focus within an epic-

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[28] Christopher Logue interview and poetry reading, 21 March 1991, British Library Sound and Moving Image archive, shelfmark C15/456.

[29] In evidence right from the opening lines: 'The Lord of Light and Mice gives them their note', Logue (2015), 3.

[30] Logue (2015), 16.

[31] Logue (2015), 29.

[32] Logue (2015), 244.

[33] Taplin (2007); Reynolds (2011); see also Rood, Atack, & Phillips (2020).

[34] Rood, Atack, & Phillips (2020).

length poem that could otherwise prompt familiar patterns of listening or reading? These anachronisms can be political in tone and consequently reassert Logue-the-activist as narratorial voice (Logue was a well-known pacifist and committed political activist, notably one of Bertrand Russell's Committee of 100 for nuclear disarmament). Among his best known uses of anachronism is 'a gleam / (As when Bikini flashlit the Pacific)' in *The Husbands,* which is the most explicit reference to the acutely contemporary concern of nuclear armament that permeated much of his literary and personal concerns.[35] The Second World War understandably looms large, too: witness, for instance, Ajax 'grim underneath his tan as Rommell after 'Alamein'.[36] Logue notes in his memoir that he initially sought to portray the Greeks – particularly Achilles – as Nazis, but Carne-Ross advised him against looking for straight parallels between the ancient and the contemporary.[37] Anachronism here, for Logue, is operating as a means to highlight difference rather than imply analogy. It is partly due to this more complicated relationship between past and present that Oliver Taplin prefers the term 'time tension', highlighting a 'coexistence of similarity and difference', which not only pervades *War Music* but 'is at the core of the power of Homeric poetry as a whole'.[38]

There is a further anachronistic invitation to consider antiquity at a remove when the reader/ audience is discouraged from getting too comfortable with realistic presentation and is confronted instead with the very historicism of classical antiquity. Achilles 'speaks as if I found you on a vase'[39] and Hector is described as 'historical in his own time'.[40] In *Kings* we are told that 'all their

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[35] Logue (2015), 126. See also Logue (1999), 200 for his description of the moment he learned of the hydrogen bomb exploding on Bikini Atoll.

[36] Logue (2014), 13. See Nikolau (2007) for Logue's presentation of conflict and personal connections to WWII, including post-war experience in the Black Watch.

[37] Logue (1999), 223.

[38] Taplin (2007), 178.

[39] Logue (2015), 28. Indeed, the black and red figure vases of Greek antiquity are potentially invoked again a few pages later: 'Stentor to Agamemnon's tent. / Bright apricot rifts the far black', Logue (2015), 64.

[40] Logue (2015), 91.

world is bronze', which contextualises the accusation that Achilles holds 'stone-age values'.[41] Xanthe Wakefield's warning not to assume proximity with the so-called 'Greek mind' rings clear throughout the poem, and particularly in these jarring instances which deliberately undercut any sense of timeless romanticism.

The same can be said for Logue's use of character and place names – indeed an onomasticon of the proper nouns in *War Music* would be a project in itself. Some are transliterated from the Greek exactly as one would expect, and in keeping with English translations (Hera, Achilles, Thersites, Odysseus, etc.), whilst others are given an unexpected twist that nonetheless preserves their recognisability ('Aphrodité' is given an acute accent; Criseis becomes 'Crizia', Diomedes 'Diomed'). In many instances, however, names are introduced which are completely invented and bear no relation to recognisable features of the Homeric text. Some maintain a visual or aural quality which might be understood as Greek (e.g. Anaxapart, Opknockothon, Pyrop), whilst some sound more Biblical (Chylabborak, Rebek, Neomab) and others more at home in science fiction (Goo'io, Raphno, Soos). Bernard Knox, in his review of *The Husbands*, takes issue with 'the weird names that sprinkled the text of *War Music* [and] have now become a torrent […] we seem to have left the plains of Troy and soared into intergalactic space; at any moment the Klingons may come to fight at Hector's side'.[42] Simeon Underwood makes a more compelling argument that the effect here is to 'reduce familiarity and orientation', as it is unclear which side these characters are fighting on. The disorienting effect of such 'neologueisms' resists any typical understanding of the Trojan War as canonical conflict, instead suggesting that *War Music* is not a poem about 'sides' at all. The respective right to offence or defence by the Greeks or Trojans does not come into Logue's exploration of armed conflict and the entanglements of humanity and poetry with it: For Logue, this is not a typical 'war epic'.

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[41] Logue (2015), 28.

[42] Knox (1995).

Links between Logue and Pope have been well established, notably by Henry Power,[43] and there is certainly something of the mock-epic in some of the names chosen by Logue: Helen's maids, for instance, are named Cumin and Tu.[44] Within the scenes depicting the pathos of war in *War Music*, we see plenty of vignettes which revel in a weirdness and high burlesque reminiscent of *The Rape of the Lock*, particularly when describing the happenings on Olympus: Hera and Athene 'wobble their way down the dunes' while 'holding their scallop-edged parasol high';[45] Hephaestus fills a jug with 'peonies and trout' for Hera. These moments of bathos serve to undercut and surprise, as when the news of Achilles' defiance of Agamemnon is delivered and Paris reaches for 'a gel and pastry snail from a plate'.[46] Power suggests that to a certain extent Logue 'modelled his own working practices on those of Pope',[47] not only in terms of poetic patchworking but also in subverting the gravitas of the epic genre with his own ornamentation.[48] He was a clear admirer, referring to Pope as a 'precocious achiever'.[49]

There is perhaps also a degree of mischief here, with Logue enjoying the liberties offered by his status as newcomer in order to trouble the pedestal occupied by the 'classic' text. Carne-Ross applauds this, arguing that 'thanks to his [Logue's] irresponsible behaviour, Homer is on the move once more'.[50] Logue seems to take equal pleasure in ornamentation and in bathos, such as may be observed in the following conversation between Poseidon and Zeus in *The Husbands:*

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[43] Power (2018a).

[44] Logue (2015), 104.

[45] Logue (2015), 112.

[46] Logue (2015), 56.

[47] Power (2018a), 756.

[48] Power (2018a), 758ff. lists instances where Pope's approach to translation was criticised for its perceived frivolity and lack of reverence – upsetting the establishment in ways which would have greatly appealed to Logue himself. Similarly, Pope is presented as drawing upon a 'patchwork' of other poetic works for his own *Iliad*.

[49] Logue (1999), 38. Similarly quoted in Geoffrey Hill's Oxford Professor of Poetry Lecture 'A Deep Dynastic Wound', delivered on the 30 April 2013. A transcript of the lecture in full is available here: https://hillproject.substack.com/p/professor-of-poetry-lecture-9-a-deep [accessed 31/12/2025].

[50] Carne-Ross (1962), 38.

‘Could I have your opinion of the wall?’

‘The Wall?’

‘The new, Greek wall.’

‘You mean their palisade.’

‘I mean their wall.’

As Logue well knows, ‘palisade’ may well be the gloss employed by Liddell & Scott but sometimes a wall is just a wall.

This sense of poetic mischief is more than apparent in Logue’s play with canonical elements of the *Iliad*: οἶνοπα πόντον (‘wine-dark sea’), for example, becomes ‘sea-dark wine’.[51] There is a similar knowing disregard for Athene’s aegis: ‘The Daughter Prince, ash-eyed Athena, flew / Her father’s awning, called the Aegis, blue’.[52] Logue knows what he is doing, as seen in the clear moments of allusion: Homeric λευκώλενος (‘white armed’) Hera becomes ‘creamy-armed’[53] in *War Music*. These moments of assiduous fidelity also extend to the epic poets and to the Homeric receptions of previous centuries that Logue incorporates, notably those by Pope, Milton, and Dryden. There are also brief and precise allusions to the manner with which Homeric content is handled elsewhere: ‘Troy’s topless towers’[54] clearly echoes the description of Helen in Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* (‘was this the face that launch’d a thousand ships / and burnt the topless towers of Ilium’).[55]

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[51] Logue (2015), 81. Play on this well-worn phrase is of course not unusual in itself: cf. the ‘snotgreen […] scrotumtightening sea’ in *Ulysses.* Joyce (1922), 5.

[52] Logue (2015), 81.

[53] Logue (2015), 112.

[54] Logue (2015), 25.

[55] *Doctor Faustus* 12.81-2

The ‘preamble’ added to the 2001 and 2015 collected editions of *War Music* revels in all of these mechanisms for proximity and distance. The whole section runs as follows:

> Two limestone plates support the Aegean world.
> The greater Anatolian still lies flat,
> But half an aeon since, through silent eyes:
> *‘Ave!’*
> God watched the counterplate subside, until
> Only its top and mountain tops remained
> Above His brother, Lord Poseidon’s, sea:
> ‘And that, I shall call Greece. And those,
> Her Archipelago,’ said He. Then turned away
> To hear Apollo and the Nine perform
> *Of Creation*, from the stage at Table Bay.
>
> They enter. They attend. They bow.
> The Lord of Light and Mice gives them their note.
> And then they sing:
>
> *‘In the beginning there was no Beginning,*
> *And in the end, no End…’*[56]

[56] Logue (2015), 3.

Logue's use of anachronism is immediately noticeable, as is the 'arcane-ism' of 'Lord of Light and Mice'. Greek and Latin poetic traditions slide past each other a little more comfortably than might usually be found in adaptations of Homer (*'Ave!'*), and the interpolation of a Judeo-Christian idiom is established with 'God', 'He', and the recurrent invocation of Genesis throughout culminating in the collective intoning of 'In the beginning'.[57] Judaeo-Christian echoes operate throughout *War Music*, with 'Lord our God' and descriptions of Mount Olympus as 'Heaven' deliberately jarring with foreignising and destabilising descriptions of those squabbling at its base and of the very non-Abrahamic numinosity of the Iliadic divinities. Anachronism as an invitation to consider contemporary political conflicts is also present here: Table Bay in Cape Town overlooks Robben Island and would have operated metonymically at this point – only nine years after Mandela's release and five after the publication of *Long Walk to Freedom*.

Finally, and most significantly, the emphasis on musicality and performance which pervades *War Music* is immediately apparent in the passage. We see not an invocation to the Muse but a band of performers coming onto the stage. They are directed not by a bard figure but by Apollo himself, and we are presented with not only Calliope but all nine muses – 'Apollo and the Nine' sounds rather like a jazz group, an irresistible evocation of Logue's own early work with the Tony Kinsey Quintet.[58]

'Musical' Greeks

Whilst the idea of 'musicality' is used abstractly in Xanthe Wakefield's original prompt to Logue, it is clear that music, performance, and orality are central to the *War Music* project. As Emily Greenwood argues, Logue is 'the most musical and sound-conscious of Homer's contemporary

[57] Logue (2015), 3.

[58] A lifelong jazz fan, Logue recorded and released two jazz and poetry albums: *Red Bird Jazz & Poetry* in 1959 and *Loguerhythms: Songs From The Establishment* in 1963.

adaptors',[59] and 'sense follows sound throughout Logue's Homer'.[60] Greenwood identifies yet another paradoxical element to *War Music*, namely that it primarily circulates and presents as a printed book of poetry. At first glance a print publication is not the most obvious medium for something which is so intentionally oral and aural, resulting in 'a complex interdependence between the written and spoken word'.[61]

Performance has certainly been a key part of the *War Music* project, as in the Cheltenham recording which opened this chapter; and between the radio broadcasts of 1959 (as part of Carne-Ross's 'Radio *Iliad*') and 1995 (a dedicated broadcast of the *War Music* poems to date), there were two runs in London theatres, one at the Old Vic in 1977 and another at the Almeida in 1984. Greenwood argues, however, that these oral tellings of the poem could not operate without the written versions and vice versa; and she prefers to consider the whole project as 'a collaboration between text and voice […] Logue's Homer circulates as a written text and the written word is fundamental to the process of poetic creation. However, without sound the potential of his Homer is unvoiced'.[62] She cites John Miles Foley's work on oral poetic cultures which 'map [..] the oral event onto an augmented textual surface',[63] drawing parallels with *War Music*'s idiosyncratic and highly conscious use of typography. Indeed, in this example from *Kings*, the page resembles a song sheet, with italicisation and indentation used to invite a sense of polyphony:

Were they deceived - or did

The bull consent with a shake of its head,

And the sunlight brighten, as Cryzez prayed?

---

[59] Greenwood (2009), 3.

[60] Greenwood (2009), 4.

[61] Greenwood (2009), 1.

[62] Greenwood (2009), 5.

[63] Greenwood (2009), 5.

Either way, the women sang:

'Child

Child of Light

We beg,'

Then the men:

'Heed the thirst in our song!'

'Lord

Lord of Light

We beg,'

Then the men:

'Feel the need in our song!'

And then

'Lord

Lord of Mice

We pray,

'Let the plague die!

Let the plague die!'[64]

Also of note here is the use of blank space which, when coupled with the repetition of 'Then the men' seemingly without an intervening voice between the two phrases, is suggestive of musical

[64] Logue (2015), 38.

direction or further sonic texture happening away from the text. In *The Husbands* we see this more clearly indicated, along with another return to the consistent refrain of Apollo and his jazz muses:

> TRUMPETS!
>
> SUSTAINED!
>
> Sustained by sunlit chords:
>
> '*High King of Heaven, Whose temple is the sky,'*
>
> Now the Nine sing, as,
>
> Led by a flock of children through the dance,
>
> God comes, loftly and calm, and lifts His hand.
>
> Then in the hush, but far and clear, all Heaven heard:
>
> *'To You!'*
>
> *'To You!'*
>
> *'To You!'*
>
> *'To You!'*[65]

Again, the reader is led to imagine performance and can only do so while engaging with the text. The owlishness of 'To You!' has an unerring, otherwordly quality, which readily lends itself to the intermedial invitation described by Greenwood. Whilst Greenwood is clearly correct to claim that the aurality/orality of Logue is fully appreciated in dialogue with the text, a study of how these typographical choices are interpreted in performance is illuminating. This is especially the case in

[65] Logue (2015), 118.

relation to how *War Music* achieves the foreign-yet-familiar 'musicality' that is so central to Logue's interpretation of an authentic poetic resonance.

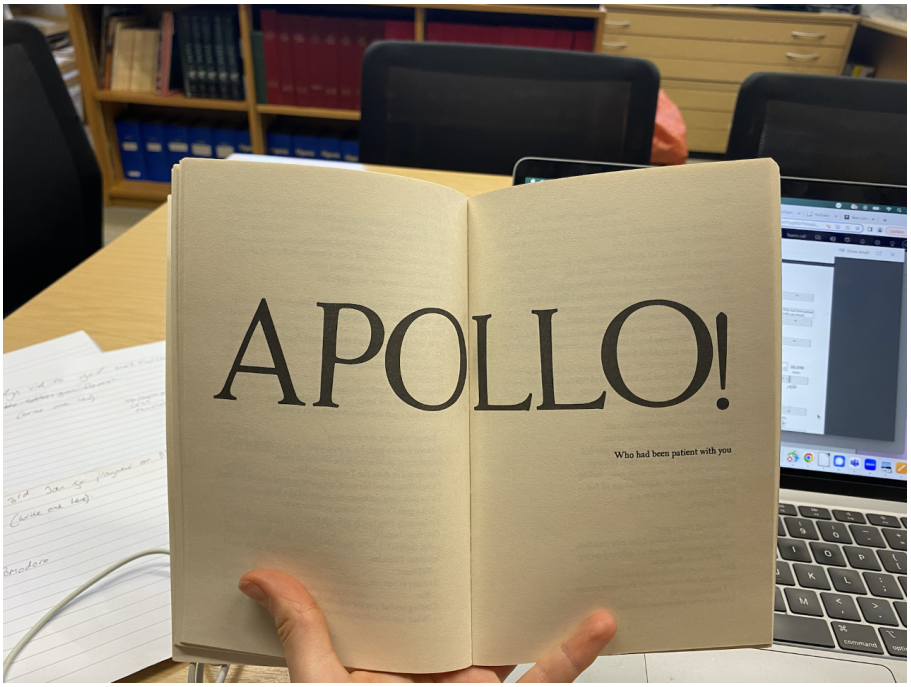


fig. 2

The most notable example of this interplay between the foreign and familiar is in the *Patrocleia* (*fig. 2*),[66] where a double-page spread is almost entirely taken up by the word 'Apollo' in inch-high lettering, followed by a much smaller 'who had been patient with you'. This marks the moment that Patroclus is struck, and killed. Daniel Piepenbring describes Logue's uses of typography in this way as moments of 'involuntary readership',[67] with Dyson noting that in the case of the 'Apollo' section the text 'is viewed as much as read, becoming a textual image not through the organisation of words or lines into shapes, but simply through the sheer, shocking size of the letters'.[68] This moment of suspension or (dis)connection is also apparent in recordings of this section in performance, where the word 'Apollo' is bellowed through a loudhailer, followed by

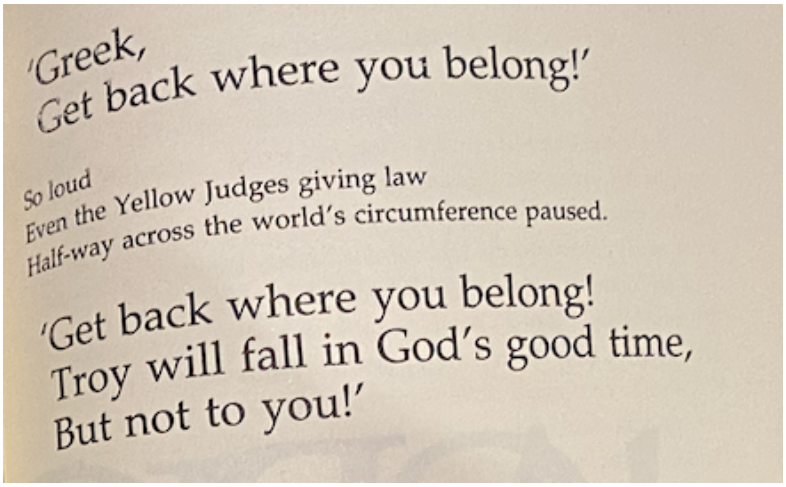
[66] Logue (2015), 246-7. Even page numbers are omitted in this spread for maximum effect.

[67] D. Piepenbring (2015, 12 October), 'Christopher Logue's Poster Poems*, The Paris Review*, https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2015/10/12/christopher-logues-poster-poems/ [accessed 1/1/2026].

[68] Dyson (2022), 8.

silence, then a soft delivery of the further line, and then more silence as the impact is allowed to settle. The loudhailer effect has been used in the lead-up to this section (*fig. 3*), to deliver the lines 'Greek, get back where you belong […] Troy will fall in God's good time/but not to you'.[69] In this sonic context, Patroclus is likened to a troublemaker at a protest, attempting to take it upon himself to enact change, which the voice of a disembodied establishment insists will happen in due course if he were only to fall in line. The broadcasting of a military command in this way also brings to mind the opening of the *Patrocleia*: 'now hear this',[70] a phrase used to preface a command broadcast across US navy vessels.

Musicality is never far behind either in the *language* of the text, with sound and


'Greek,
Get back where you belong!'

So loud
Even the Yellow Judges giving law
Half-way across the world's circumference paused.

'Get back where you belong!
Troy will fall in God's good time,
But not to you!'

fig. 3

instrumentation invoked regularly and at times in a kind of cacophony. We see plenty of literal mentions of music (note the epigraph to this chapter), but it is regularly used semi-metaphorically too, such as in Achilles' rejoinder to Agamemnon: 'I hate your voice, claw King. I hate its tune'.[71]

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[69] Logue (2015), 245. The use of loudhailers in protest contexts is firmly invited into the soundscape here. In the intervening years between the first publication of *Patrocleia* (1963) and subsequent recordings of the Homer poems, 'get back where you belong' would have further acquired an echo of the Beatles' *Get Back* (1969) – originally a parody of Enoch Powell's anti-immigration rhetoric and foregrounding the phrase 'get back to where you once belonged'. Sulpy & Schweighardt (1999).

[70] Logue (2015), 225.

[71] Logue (2015), 24.

Elsewhere Antenor, impatient with the war and keen to rid Troy of Helen as the source of their turmoil, suggests that they 'stand Helen on a transport floored with gold [and] Let trumpets from the terracing/bray charivari to her back's bad loveliness'.[72] Charivari, or 'rough music' as a mocking serenade, refers to the public humiliation intended to shame wrongdoers in a community – often those guilty of domestic abuse or, as in Helen's case, adultery. At various points we return to the refrain of 'Creation' as played by 'Apollo and the Nine' in *War Music*'s preamble: part-way through *The Husbands*, for instance, the external narrator steps in with 'What is that noise? / The fountains? / No, my friend – it is Creation, whistling…'[73]

Again, disorienting techniques that signify distance and perhaps invite an authenticating sense of Xanthe Wakefield's 'musical' Greeks can also be found in this interplay between the written and the oral/aural. Repeated monosyllables – self-consciously sonic – are found throughout, often in conjunction with grammatical or syntactical oddities. A well-known feature of Logue's Homer poems is the use of 'she(s)' as a noun to refer to women – efficiently conveying a world whose motivations and priorities do not comfortably tessellate with our own (*vide* Wakefield: 'the Greeks are not humanistic, not Christian, not sentimental'). When combined with more onomatopoeic passages, the whole is extremely effective at drawing discomfiting distance:

> High, mother, high - as he knows well - as he knew well -
>
> As he came lick-lick when the best
>
> Met to view the shes[74]

[72] Logue (2015), 49.

[73] Logue (2015), 105.

[74] Logue (2015), 11.

These alienating effects also feature in depictions of violence, which are always of particular interest given Logue's lifelong commitment to pacifism. There is perhaps a childishness, even a cartoonishness, in passages such as the below:

> Push push-push push, push Agamemnon's chest;
> The King lean back; Achilles grab
> And twist the mace off of him,
> And lift it…Oh…flash! flash![75]

This atypical presentation of warfare, so far from a Homeric ἀριστεία, reconfigures the *Iliad*'s heroes as desperate boys struggling bodily against each other for supremacy and survival. In recordings, these passages are particularly disquieting when delivered in the harsh, bristling register adopted by both Logue and Howard. There is a point of commonality here with fellow British poet Tony Harrison's approach to translation and transliteration in his poetic and theatrical works, combining to create a consciously foreignising response. Discussing his approach to translating Aeschylus for his *Oresteia,* Harrison describes experimenting with form to handle the 'weighted net' of Aeschylus's original text. He eventually took his cue from Robert Browning to produce a deliberate 'clogging', maintaining Aeschylean compounds as well as 'a highly Hellenized and un-English grammatical word order […] translating "in as Greek a fashion as the English will bear"'.[76] The result, as Hodkinson observes, is a 'strong element of foreignisation, which further emphasises a setting in the distant and apparently more "primitive" past for the National Theatre audience in 1981'.[77] These instances from both Logue and Harrison are clearly influenced by the imaginative

[75] Logue (2015), 23.

[76] Harrison (2002), 9.

[77] Hodkinson (2022), 404.

primitivising of Greece which sparked both scholarly and poetic interest earlier in the century. But they also need to be understood, primarily, as part and parcel of wider efforts, both scholarly and literary, to defamiliarise Greece to twentieth century audiences still in thrall to the Victorian hellenising ideal.[78]

Purely onomatopoeic insertions, when delivered, add to this sense of the otherworldly and the cartoonish in Logue's poem. See, for instance, 'in the dunes there, kih! – Troy has come'[79] or 'Then - four - five - six [arrows] / In the air at once … Wi'eeee!'.[80] To an anglophone eye or indeed ear, these are non-canonical sound effects, acting perhaps as a foreignising reminder of the underlying Greekness (or more accurately Logue's own conception of Greekness) throughout. We encounter 'Aoi!'[81] in *Kings* and in the *Patrocleia* there are listy, cataloguing moments such as 'javelins, keelspikes, boat-hooks, Kai!',[82] where the Greek word for 'and' is included as a kind of afterthought, or, quite simply, as another object to be itemised. Throughout *War Music*, not only sound but its means of delivery – with the page facilitating the stage – is always paramount. This is clearly a key tenet for Logue, as detailed in his autobiography:

> In verse, sound and sense are inextricable. Read silently, or aloud, poems perform. They do so whether the interpretation is your own, or another's. A

[78] A further point of observation concerning Logue, Harrison, and intentionally defamiliarising mechanisms used to convey Greek material: Peter Hall's 1983 production of Harrison's *Oresteia* was scored by composer Harrison Birtwistle, whose trademark 'devastatingly spare', 'unapproachable and difficult' use of sound contributes much to the distancing and disorientation. Logue, too, worked with Birtwistle on two occasions, when the latter set his poetry to music for *Ring a Dumb Carillon* (1964-5) and *Meridian* (1970-1). For more on the projects see Birtwistle & Logue (1989). For the quotations describing Birtwistle's style see A. Clements (2022, 18 April), 'Harrison Birtwistle: An Utterly Distinctive Composer Who Wrote Music of Delicate Beauty', *The Guardian* [accessed 10/1/2026].

[79] Logue (2015), 27.

[80] Logue (2015), 262.

[81] Logue (2015), 71.

[82] Logue (2015), 232.

> poem's life is as much a history of performances as a history of reprints. The invariant, replicable text is a myth, too.[83]

During Logue's 'tutorials' with Carne-Ross in the early days of the project, the latter would give him pointers on the Homer and also read aloud to him in Greek. Logue also worked with Jasper Griffin, who would similarly read the *Iliad* aloud.[84] Whilst seemingly uninterested in learning the language, Logue was clearly awed by the sound of it:

> The *Iliad* enjoys making wonderful sounds. Two hexameters just describing the movement of water. When you hear someone like Jasper [Griffin] recreate it for you - 'bbl, bbbl' - it's absolutely wonderful.[85]

In this early period, the 1960s - 1980s, there was a resurgent interest in sound and the value of recitation in classical scholarship. Stanford's *The Sound of Greek* was published in 1967, and released with an accompanying record that could be played to better understand 'the main features of spoken classical Greek […] speed of delivery, loudness, voice-melody, phonetic quality, and rhythm'.[86] John Herington, who co-founded *Arion* in 1962 along with UT Austin colleagues Carne-Ross and William Arrowsmith, was similarly interested in the oral, performed dimension of Greek and the re-establishment of those hitherto neglected qualities in Classics scholarship. His notable work *Poetry into Drama* (1985) argues for the pre-eminence of sound over written text for ancient Greek audiences, and that 'texts were not part of the performed poem as such' until much later.[87]

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[83] Logue (1999), 242.

[84] Logue (2003), 121.

[85] Logue (2003), 121.

[86] Stanford (1967), 175.

[87] Herington (1985), 45.

The Paterno Library archival materials, in particular, demonstrate that Logue acquired and incorporated into his work some scholarly articles by classicists of the day, and it is not inconceivable that he would have directly encountered either Stanford or Herrington's works. Indirectly, at least, he was exposed to these ideas through direct contact with Carne-Ross.

That *War Music* is, as this chapter began by noting, 'primarily a performance for hearing' is exemplified by a 2005 production at Battersea Arts Centre, which has been identified by Macintosh and McConnell as representative of a narrative turn in the theatrical performance of epic: the piece was performed in total darkness, relying wholly on the power of the text and its accompanying score by Dan Jones. Macintosh and McConnell note that 'epic distance' operates differently in a polyphonic performance context: 'If Bakhtin's conception of the monologic nature of epic has credence when applied to ancient epic, it is cast aside when those epics inspire retellings in other, especially performative, genres'.[88] This Logueian tension between the distant and the proximal was also apparent in the National Theatre Wales' 2015 *Iliad*, which used *War Music* as its script. A *Guardian* reviewer remarked that 'we in the audience are the raw material'[89].

'A complete rewrite man'

A further intermedial dimension of particular importance in Logue's (and his reader/audience's) quest for authenticity is his process of *making* poetry: his idiosyncratic process of collage. Dyson compellingly aligns collage with Logue's early experimentations in poster poetry, which result in 'collisions of word, image, and sound' which 'endure in Logue's Homeric translations'.[90] As we have heard, performativity is at the heart of Logue's work; and the physicality of his collaging

[88] Macintosh & McConnell (2020), 109.

[89] A. Dickson (2025, 28 September). 'Iliad review – Homer's epic is the theatrical event of the year, *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2015/sep/28/iliad-review-homer-ffwrnes-national-theatre-wales [accessed 1 July 2024].

[90] Dyson (2022), 394.

process is in many ways a form of performance itself. I would argue that this physical process is also intrinsic to Logue's preoccupation with 'authentic' connection to that elusive Greek 'musicality', and to the evident tensions in his work between proximity and distance, insiderism and exclusion.

Over the decades, Logue developed a specific method of producing his Homer poems: assembling what he referred to as 'flow charts' on large sheets of dot matrix printer paper. Examples of these are reproduced in Henry Power's article on Logue and Pope, which is the first serious analysis of the sheer volume of archival material comprising Logue's literary estate.[91] The 'flow charts' depict fragmented lines of the poem written on Post-it notes – presumably the better to rearrange – that are loosely structured on the page. Other, hand- and type-written fragments, which to the outsider's eye bear differing degrees of relevance to the poem itself, are glued, placed, or paperclipped to the pages. In some ways, these are a little reminiscent of a film director's storyboard – yet another example of intermediality – and indeed Logue acknowledges this in a 1991 interview when prompted by Adam Mars Jones:

> I *have* got a method, and you're right – it *is* a sort of storyboard. It isn't a storyboard in the sense that Disney would create a storyboard [...] but it is a sort of verbal storyboard, in that I have all the actions analysed and planned out…[92]

In the same interview, Logue describes the process of physically arranging and rearranging the chronology of the *Iliad* itself, too:

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[91] Power (2018a).

[92] Christopher Logue interview and poetry reading, 21 March 1991, British Library Sound and Moving Image archive, shelfmark C15/456.

> I make a list of the things that Homer does, and then I decide what I don't want in them. And then I decide what parts, what pieces, I'm going to take from further on in the poem and put *that* in *that* part of the poem.[93]

He does this heavy editing even before incorporating his own poetic elements: for instance, he pushes Achilles' rejection of Agamemnon's attempts at reconciliation out of Book 9 and into the opening lines of *Kings*; and he prioritises Achilles more generally: '[he] is not introduced in the *Iliad* until I think around 150 or something like that, but I just want to get him up front right away'.[94] Within these movable fragments of text and story are what he describes as 'wonderful incidents which I have got listed as "immovables"'. These are not to be lost, but their positioning within the overall poem is far from sacrosanct: 'you can actually move them around from one place to the other, because they all have something in common. So that is how I make up my verbal storyboard'.[95]

Early in his project, Logue purchased an antique tailor's workbench on which to work on these storyboards or flow charts. In his memoir, he describes the bench as so large that it was necessary to remove a wall of his house in order to accommodate it.[96] In many ways, this tailor's workbench can serve as rather a fitting metaphor for the dominating swell of the *War Music* project over his lifetime. Above and around the bench hung scissors, knives, tape, and portions of text – his own, and clippings from elsewhere.[97] Here he cut, pasted, and rearranged not only fragments from

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[93] Christopher Logue interview and poetry reading, 21 March 1991, British Library Sound and Moving Image archive, shelfmark C15/456. The Paterno Library archives contain numerous notebooks and pieces of scrap paper, where books or sections of the *Iliad* are distilled down to bullet-pointed actions; much like a 'beat sheet' for a stage play.

[94] Christopher Logue interview and poetry reading, 21 March 1991, British Library Sound and Moving Image archive, shelfmark C15/456.

[95] Christopher Logue interview and poetry reading, 21 March 1991, British Library Sound and Moving Image archive, shelfmark C15/456.

[96] Logue (1999), 221.

[97] The process is outlined in Campbell (2001), 'Classic Upstart'.

his cribs and translations of the *Iliad*, but from a multitude of sources from which he drew inspiration. Logue's voracious appetite for multi-genre, multi-brow snippets of language is apparent throughout the poem, where a reference to Dryden might sit alongside the strapline from a cosmetics advert (*All Day Permanent Red,* 2002*,* gets its name from a tube of lipstick owned by Logue's wife, the historian Rosemary Hill).[98] The first thing one is struck by on visiting the Logue collections – held in multiple archives in the UK and USA[99] – is the sheer volume of printed material collected by him over the course of his career, some meticulously scrapbooked while much remains gathered in uncategorised folders. His working process, as Power notes, 'generated paper on an extraordinary scale'.[100] Power understands Logue's 'tendency to bring extraneous material into his account of the *Iliad*' as an extension of his penchant for anachronism;[101] in this instance there is a materiality, a *physicality* to the anachronistic interpolations as they are clipped out and stuck in.

Scrapbooking was clearly an integral part of Logue's creative process far beyond *War Music* – his literary estate comprises dozens of them – and for decades he worked on *Private Eye* editing both 'True Stories' and 'Pseud's Corner', both of which involved scouring publications for choice snippets. The Paterno Collection contains numerous clippings received from friends and members of the public, many still in their envelopes. Full appraisal of the material would be a significant project, let alone mapping found fragments onto corresponding phrases in *War Music.*[102] One must also consider the clippings that never made it into scrapbooks or flow charts, but sat in folders and box files, organised by theme, waiting for the apposite moment in *War Music's* increasingly

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[98] Power (2018), 752.

[99] Notably the Paterno Special Collections Library at The Pennsylvania State University and the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

[100] Power (2018a), 755.

[101] Power (2018a), 749.

[102] See Power (2018a), 271 for one such example: a clipping from the *New Yorker* on the first Gulf War whose wording is picked up in *All Day Permanent Red.*

heaving, sprawling, intertextual collage. In one interview, Logue reaches behind his chair to pull out a folder labelled, simply, 'wounds', where references to which were collected and stored, awaiting deployment in the construction of the poem:

> I find [descriptions of] the wounds in the *Iliad* rather repetitious.[103] When you come to a place where you think it's proper to describe a wound, I don't want then to have to start thinking where I'm going to find the kind of wound that I want. I want to have references in my files to wounds.[104]

When asked where he gathered the contents of his files from, Logue predictably responds 'newspapers, magazines', although interestingly he adds that he also observed and collected bodily actions from film and TV, particularly sport. There is a magpie-ish tendency in evidence, as he collects particularly precious turns of phrase for the word-hoard. In one interview, he recalls words from childhood that he had cherished and saved up: it took sixty years, he admits, to work 'coruscating' into a poem, when it made its way into *War Music*.[105]

Power describes this as a 'collage technique'[106] or 'epic patchwork'[107] and suggests three reasons for its appeal to Logue: a pre-existing tendency to collect clippings through work on *Private Eye*; a Modernist impulse towards the fragmentary as seen in, say, Pound, whom Logue greatly admired;[108] and an interest in the iterative composition of Homeric epic. In creating this decades'

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[103] Earlier Logue had said that he found the Homeric simile 'repetitive', with knowing blasphemy. Logue (2003), 127.

[104] Logue (2003), 130.

[105] Logue (2003), 127.

[106] Power (2018a), 755.

[107] H. Power (2018c, 3 August), 'Epic Patchwork: Christopher Logue, Alexander Pope, and the Making of *War Music*', *Times Literary Supplement.*

[108] See Power (2018a), 755. See also Goldschmidt (2023) on ancient fragments and Modernism. Logue was also interested in Eliot, and indeed *The Waste Land* can similarly be understood as collage-like; consider its concluding lines, 'a heap of broken images'.

long game of word association with himself, there is a sense of voracity in Logue's creative process – of wanting to swallow epic poetry whole – whereby he is devouring every possible piece of poetic fodder available. There is, perhaps, 'a conviction that an account of Homer ought to draw on every possible resource' in honour of the significance of the ancient poet and the epic genre itself.[109] This is in keeping with Logue's furious and wide-ranging output: in a piece of 1981 correspondence, he states a formative desire to 'write a long, strong, new sort of poem. But I am facile, clever, lazy. (...) I wanted to do the lot: pop-song lyrics, love poems, satires, laments, narratives, magicals [sic]; providence be my guide'.[110]

According to Logue's memoir, this metaphorical scavenging has its inception in a concrete instance, when he acquired his first copy of the *Iliad.* Having agreed to contribute to Carne-Ross's radio programme and to consult translations of the text, his first step was to rescue his current copy:

> My copy of the *Iliad* was in a box marked 'Sell'. The translation – in prose – was by the poet E.V. Rieu. It was grangerised with maps of the ancient Aegean engraved in the eighteenth century. Looking at the maps, I recalled that in Bournemouth I had discovered a waste yard through whose gates I saw a council-house-high mound of sopping paper, not only of newsprint and magazines but from ruined books, their signatures thrown here and there prior to pulping.
>
> 'Take what you want and don't come back,' said the foreman.
>
> I hesitated between a work on heraldry, on vellum, with hand-coloured illustrations of escutcheons and crests, and two small octavos of a four-volume

[109] Power (2018a), 752.

[110] Paterno Collection Christopher Logue Papers, Box 4 Folder 72.

> Pope *Iliad*, 1793, with engraved illustrations. These included the maps I stuck into my copy of Rieu's *Iliad*.[111]

This anecdote emblematises Logue's poetic stances in multiple ways: the intensely personal moment of reception that is prompted by materiality; self-positioning within both the wider class struggle (a council house used as a unit of measurement), and a personal struggle with a humourless foreman; a mischievous desire to inject bathos into moments of great poetic import ('On first looking into Chapman's Homer' becomes 'on first looking into Bournemouth's scrapheap'). Most importantly, however, he is already scrapbooking, cutting and pasting, and making the texts his own. This typographical play and collaging motif can even be seen in his 1999 memoir, suggesting that by this point the process was completely integrated into Logue's creative practice.

Ancient and modern notions of allusion, intertextuality, *imitatio*, and even plagiarism come into play here.[112] In a 2006 *Guardian* interview, Logue provocatively declares that 'without plagiarism there would be no literature. I'm a rewrite man […] a complete rewrite man, like our Willy Shakespeare'.[113] Logue seems to endorse the image of the poet as thieving magpie: 'if I want something, I take it'.[114] His 1966 anthology *Christopher Logue's ABC* has Yeats remarking of poets that 'those who never steal are never stolen from'.[115] However, playfulness is superseded by adherence to the poet's code as Logue quickly claims:

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[111] Logue (1999), 221.

[112] Cf. contemporary mashup theory, where the convergence of intertextuality and intellectual property are being reconsidered: Bourriaud (2002); Sonvilla-Rice (2010); Cook (2013).

[113] Hoggard (2006).

[114] Logue (2003), 117.

[115] Logue (1966), unpag.

> I do not think I have ever printed another poet's lines as my own without acknowledgement - unless it is (they are) so famous as to make the label redundant. […] By steal I mean use, quote, turn, copy, change slightly, take an attitude from. Yeats, Pound, Brecht, Milton, Eliot, it's all over 'my' work.[116]

For Logue, this is a poetic practice 'that is well known, you expect to see it. […] There are precedents. Even Milton will stick in a couple of lines of Ovid, or something. Mark you, he's actually translating from Latin. I'm not. I'm just translating from English into English' (a return to the self-consciously subaltern). Logue's editor Christopher Reid refers to a 'range of allusion' in the Homer poems.[117]

An early conversation with Carne-Ross may have influenced or concretised this attitude. In his memoir he recalls the importance of being told that 'we have developed the notion of "originality" and "originals" as a natural part of modern – I mean post-ancient – thinking'.[118] An undated, seemingly unpublished poem in the Paterno Collection titled 'My Credentials' suggests he has not always had so easy a relationship with poetic 'stealing', or at the very least has been preoccupied by its implications:

> Verily I am
> Every inch a fraud
> Rounded by the sham
> World of the shifting word.
> […]

---

[116] Paterno Collection Christopher Logue Papers, Box 4 Folder 72.

[117] Logue (2015), xii.

[118] Logue (1999), 223.

Poaching is my trade

Poetry my stoat

I'm afraid to shave

My shop is in my throat

Images I link

Images I steal

When I'm well I think

And when I'm sick I feel.[119]

In a revision of the poem (*fig. 4*) he has crossed out 'rounded' and replaced it with 'hidden'; the allusive world of poetic tradition is either represented as formative or as a space in which to conceal one's insecurities. The phrase 'my shop is in my throat' is very similar to the wording used in Logue's 1969 poster poem *Manifesto*, which declares that 'the ancient way is the new way / the poet's shop is in his throat' and concludes 'Long live Fidel and Homer!'.[120]

It is possible that, in this early period at least, there is an impetus for Logue to interrogate the mechanisms at work in poetic allusion and what they might say about him. Emily Wilson, in her review of the 2015 collected *War Music*, compares the 'petty theft' of Logue's childhood with his 'biggest and most extraordinary heist […] his haunting, capricious patchwork of poetic narratives based on Homer's *Iliad* – a grand larceny made all the more extraordinary by the fact that the thief knew no Greek at all'.[121] The most relevant 'theft', for our purposes, is a childhood moment where Logue copied out Kipling's *Gunga Din* in full, only to then 'secretly […] put my name, not

[119] Paterno Collection Christopher Logue Papers, Box 6 Folder 137.

[120] For more on Logue's poster poems, including a reproduction of *Manifesto* in full, see Piepenbring (2015), 'Christopher Logue's Poster Poems'. For deeper analysis of the poster poems and their significance see Dyson (2022).

[121] Wilson (2016), 380.

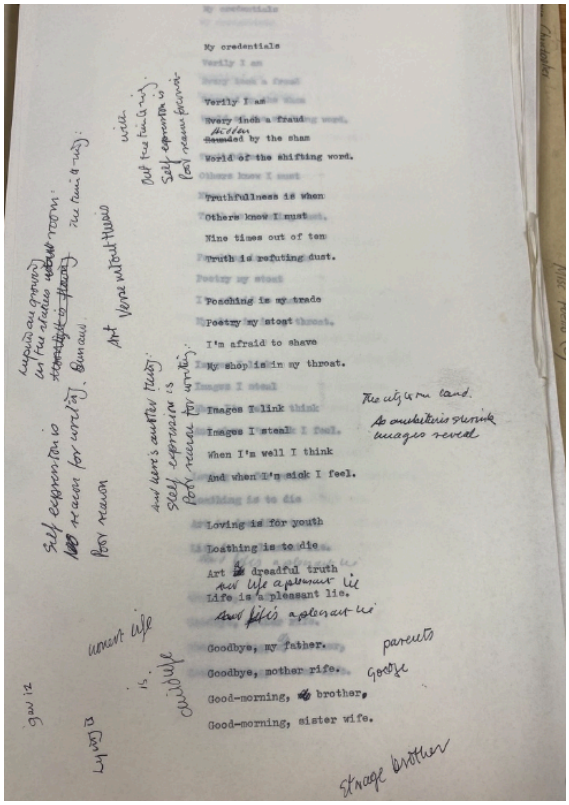


fig. 4 Paterno Collection Box 6 Folder 137

Kipling's at the end of my fair copy'.[122] This is reminiscent of Forster's adult habit of copying out passages of others' texts, gathering and internalising them. Here, however, we have an additional interest in the notion of ownership and originality (indeed, another kind of 'authenticity'), clearly from a young age. Wilson also references the legend that Virgil was accused of stealing from Homer with his *Aeneid*, an ancient story which thus problematises our contemporary notions of 'originality' in a manner similar to Carne-Ross above. It could, perhaps, be argued that part of the inherent appeal in the *War Music* project for Logue was its capacity to explore and exorcise his pre-existing anxieties around the mechanisms at work in the production of poetry. He was clearly seized by the idea of the Homer figure himself having accrued material across multiple sources, and the *Iliad*

[122] Logue (1999), 18. See also Campbell (2001), 'Classic Upstart', where Logue is quoted as having memorised Gunga Din as part of his elocution lessons; 'I learned the text and the performance of the text at the same time. Poetry and the spoken performance of it were never separated in my mind'.

operating as a form of literary collage in its own right. In his memoir, Homer is a 'master poet who inherited centuries of material'.[123]

In this sense, the figure of the poet becomes part of the machinery: gathering, processing, and reconfiguring any and all literary material within his purview. In the later poems especially, Logue's collection and curation of material becomes so personal to his own readings that a reader could not necessarily be expected to spot every link – even if the poetic references are well signposted. Power notes that 'Logue's patchwork of sources is the product of a particular consciousness which could never be replicated in any reader'.[124]

Translating through the body?

When confronting something as culturally monolithic as the *Iliad*, what does it mean to break one's own version into ever more diffuse, fragmented parts – the *objets trouvés* of Logue's daily reading? Logue writes in 1981:

> I sometimes imagine Homer's *Iliad* (if that is what the scholars have got) as a big, radioactive lump of something at the bottom of a mine shaft. The best way for me to study it is to concentrate on the light its beam throws on the clouds above the shaft's mouth. You have to use his characters in your own way. Never fear. The 'lump' will outlast anything you can do.[125]

This sentiment perhaps acts as licence for the intensely personal moments of reception throughout the poem. Here we see that tension between the distant and the proximal need not alienate a reader,

[123] Logue (1999), 223.

[124] Power (2018).

[125] Correspondence between Logue and English Literature students from the University of Melbourne, held at the Paterno Collection Christopher Logue Papers, Box 4 Folder 72.

as they are invited to navigate three points of engagement with the Homeric 'lump': Logue's, their own, and all the canonical poets that have come before.

Canonicity, allusion and Logue's positioning are important here: what if this process of collation, scrapbooking, and grangerising were both physically and performatively replicating the very building blocks behind the canon – the cultural monolith radiating power beneath the soil? Whilst the classical insider – the master of Greek who has easy access to the cultural cachet – may well produce an ideal, intellectual synthesis of antiquity, the vociferous Logueian 'outsider' constructs his work as a kind of bricolage – literally layering and juxtaposing, consciously making the working parts bare and letting them jar. His emphasis on bodily labour – cutting and pasting behind his workbench – is relevant here. Logue is returning to and re-turning old stories, synthesising them corporeally, aiming to engage with and through the whole text, with and through the whole body (as the jazz musician does in performance). There is, perhaps, a sense of re-performance happening across the whole process here. And just as Logue is using every scrap of poetic fodder available to him, the mind is considered only one of many interpretative tools as Logue invites sensory engagement in the broadest sense. This invitation to his reader/audience to engage bodily is echoed in his understanding of what a poem of such intractable antiquity might represent to contemporary ears – its authentic 'musicality'.

Logue makes it impossible for us to overlook his own situatedness in producing *War Music*, his cutting, pasting, and gluing process constituting the very fabric of the poem. Terence Cave's work on Situated Cognition feels highly relevant with such an intensely personal instance of reception:

> It is not difficult to agree that literary utterances […] tend to be highly situated in more than one sense. […] They carry powerful markers of their cultural and historical provenance, that is to say, of their "external" communicative context

> […] They readily associate themselves with a named and remembered individual. They are often consumed in specific kinds of environments: an armchair, a reading group, [...] the audience of storytellers in court circles, a pub, or (according to the time-honored but not implausible myth) in the evening round a fire. It appears equally self-evident that literature is a distinctive product of human cognition, although distinctive on a spectrum, not as a thing apart. Literary utterances reflect in especially rich ways the situatedness of cognition itself.[126]

Cave is primarily talking about the reading of novels here, but this situatedness, this embodiment, is even more significant in relation to a long-term poetic composition. In Logue's case, his own situatedness, embodied as well as mental, becomes a conduit for the text as well as the audience. Not that the specificity of Logue's reception is limited to what he has read: at one notable point in *War Music*, the external narratorial voice inserts itself to recount a highly personal anecdote that reminds a reader that this is a simile that Logue and only Logue could provide:

> As once, as tourists, my friends and I
> Smoked as we watched
> The people of the town of Skopje
> Stroll back and forth across their fountained square,
> Safe in their murmur on our balcony
> At dusk, not long before an earthquake tipped
> Themselves and their society aside.[127]

[126] Cave (2017), 236.

[127] Logue (2015), 52.

In this sense, Logue's embodied presence becomes inseparable from the text, and indeed physicality is a theme throughout as the bodies of the citizens of Skopje are 'tipped' aside by the earthquake and upturned by the line-break in the text itself. Bodies are important in *War Music*, not only those of the characters but also of Logue and his readers. At the beginning of *Patrocleia* we are told to kneel among the dunes of the Aegean coast and embody Achilles in his angst.[128] This is an imperative repeated across the other poems as the readers are regularly invited to consider the sensory affect of environment (e.g. 'Low ceiling. Sticky air. Many draw breath').[129] The human body is also used as a measure of relationality, as in: 'Waist-deep in dusk […] thigh-deep, chest deep',[130] whilst characters and their words are often reduced to bodily orifices (Achilles shouts to Agamemnon 'Mouth! King mouth!').[131]



fig. 5 Paterno Collection Box 9 Folder 194

[128] Logue (2015), 7.

[129] Logue (2015), 29.

[130] Logue (2015), 29.

[131] Logue (2015), 20.

The bodies of *War Music*'s Greek and Trojan protagonists assume even greater proportions than the larger-than-life Homeric heroes: Priam is '8 foot 6; indigo skinned'[132] and Hector even taller at 8 foot 9,[133] whilst Ajax has a 'five-acre voice' to match his height.[134] There is again a cartoonishness to these figures, which is reminiscent of some of Logue's poster poems, which similarly consider the hypermasculinisation and political ramifications of comic book heroes (e.g. *fig. 5*).

Bodily imagery is used throughout to concretise images, eliciting repulsion and fascination in yet another example of the push/pull between familiarity and discomfort throughout *War Music*. Agamemnon, as well as King Mouth, is addressed as 'O cheesy Lung',[135] while Priam is 'the Dribbler'[136] and Thersites speaks in 'eczema words'.[137] Women are 'leaky',[138] and 'biglipped wounds'[139] are inflicted in battle, in a grotesque layering of body parts.

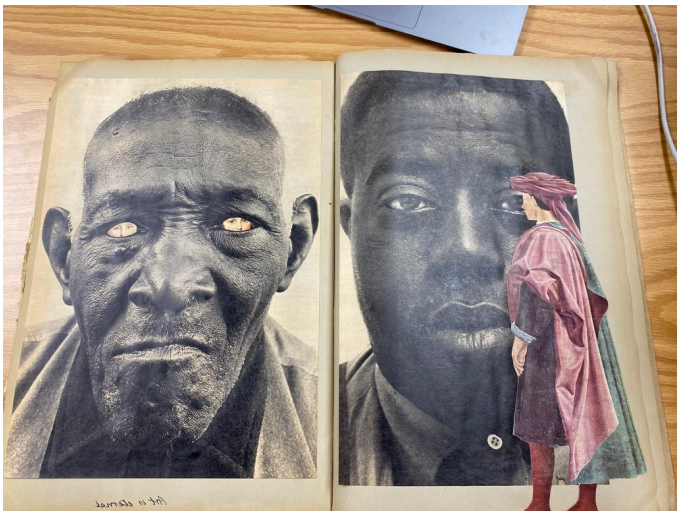


fig. 6 Paterno Collection Scrapbook A

[132] Logue (2015), 47.

[133] Logue (2015), 96.

[134] Logue (2015), 15.

[135] Logue (2015), 24.

[136] Logue (2015), 41.

[137] Logue (2015), 31.

[138] Logue (2015), 66.

[139] Logue (2015), 108.

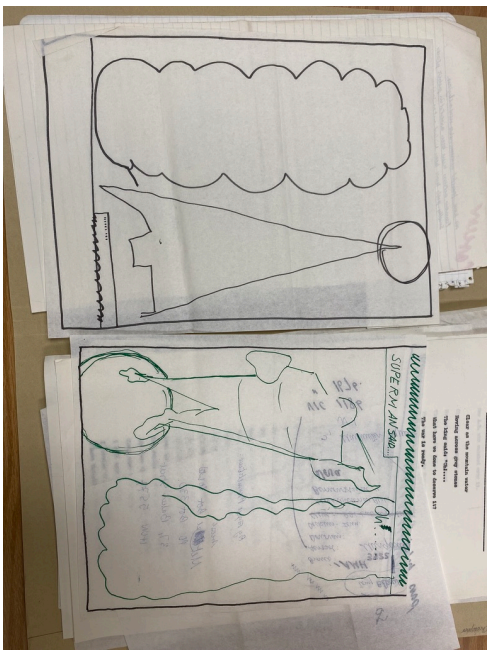


fig. 7 Paterno Collection Box 9
Folder 193

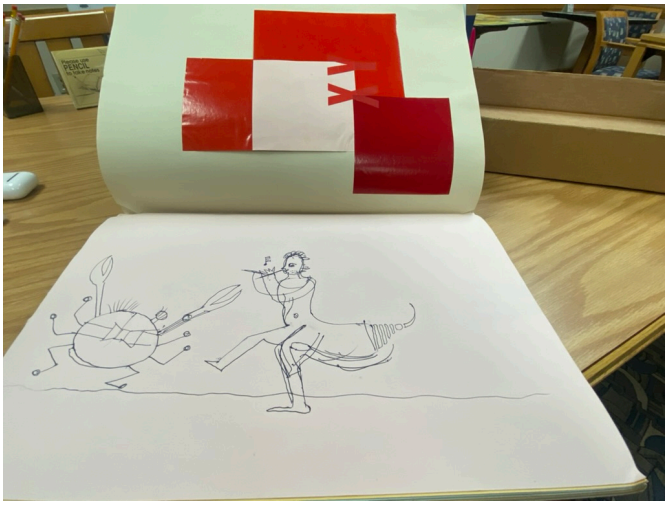


fig. 8 Paterno Collection Box 11

The scrapbooks and notepads in the Paterno collection, in particular, demonstrate a preoccupation with not only bodies but also bodies at their extremes or as themselves turned into collages *(*e.g. *fig. 6)*. Logue was clearly involved in early sketches for his poster poems, although the final execution would have been done by one of the graphic designers with whom he

collaborated (most notably Derek Boshier).[140] The abstract depictions of superhero figures depicted in posters such as 'Superman' *(fig. 7)* invite comparison with Cy Twombly's *The Vengeance of Achilles* (1962).[141] Logue's doodles often depict classically-inflected hybrid creatures (e.g. *fig. 8*), and the darkly humorous, cartoonish possibilities of the human body are a recurrent theme in the scrapbooks of clippings that he collated for *Private Eye* (for instance, *fig. 9*, where a newspaper photograph of a hirsute strongman has been juxtaposed with the headline 'Beauty queen is battered to death'). *Fig. 6* illustrates a playfulness with bodies and collage more generally, often displaying more than a touch of what we might describe as Terry Gilliam-esque whimsy.[142]



fig. 9 Paterno Collection Scrapbook B

There is a particularly interesting detailed annotation of Picasso's *Guernica* (*fig. 10*), glued into a notebook alongside draft letters to Carne-Ross and other research notes on topics of recurrent interest (the nature of poetry, politics, and – of course – war). As an iconic representation of the

[140] Piepenbring (2015), 'Christopher Logue's Poster Poems'.

[141] For Twombly's influence on Logue more generally, see Greenwood (2018), 71 and Dyson (2022), 404.

[142] The two clearly had some interaction, with Logue credited for his bit-part of 'Spaghetti-eating Fanatic' in Gilliam's *Jabberwocky* (1977).

fragmentation and disintegration of body and community through conflict, the 1937 painting would have been of interest to Logue, as would the analytical fragmentation of the Cubist movement more broadly. The annotations are familiar in tone to the way bodies are presented in *War Music,* and are again suggestive of the themed 'wounds' folder mentioned above. From Picasso's painting Logue intuits, amongst other things: 'the hands of the fate between her hard spiky nipples?'; 'hair in arm-pits'; 'folds and genitals'; 'spikes in the throats of 3'; 'split veins'.



fig. 10 Paterno Collection Box 4 Folder 80

The Body Poetic

There is a strong sense of Logue's *own* body and of his bodily labour in his production process. Logue writes of 'sweat running out of him' as he sat at his bench with 'Achilles and the River': 'I forgot myself entirely for hours on end'.[143] Interestingly, this marks a point of early divergence from working solely with translations: this is when he asked Carne-Ross to produce his 'crib', a consciously unpoetic construction, syntactically stilted, with the Greek word order untouched. Logue 'wanted to know exactly what it was Homer said in the first instance'[144] – a notion Carne-

[143] Logue (1999), 223.

[144] Logue (1999), 223.

Ross sought to disabuse him of, and yet this sense of shunning translations in favour of an abstruse, foreignising document persists. Again, there is a tension between proximity and distance – Logue is deliberately seeking out the obduracy of the Greek, the better to butt heads with it.

Some years later, it is his intensely physical gathering, cutting, curating, rearranging that perhaps holds greater relevance to Logue's not knowing Greek. He is very consciously and laboriously replicating the cognitive processes of the Xanthe Wakefield and Donald Carne-Ross figures. As a self-conscious outsider to a cerebral classical community,[145] Logue is seeking to create his own, or to understand through tangible means a different kind of shared community – one of unity between objects and bodies. Matthew Reynolds discusses 'imagining-in' as vital to any translation – in Logue's case this 'imagining-in' is virtually wholesale and bodily. As Reynolds explains:

> He is very obviously not just 'reading' the source but having to conjure it up. This drive to make the absent present results in an 'idea' of Homer that is intensely visual, auditory, and energetic.[146]

One should add that this 'idea' of Homer is also a 'physical' one. Depictions of dismemberment on the battlefield are to be expected, but Logue still manages to shock: 'a face split off / Sent skimming lidlike through the crunch / Still smiling, but its pupils dots on dice'.[147]

The physicality of the reading process, and its toll on Logue's audience, is clearly a motif too; there appears to be a preoccupation with pushing the reader to their limit along with the text. Logue refers often to 'long poems' and the demands they place on a composer, a performer, and an

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[145] Power (2018a), 755 invokes the Samuel Johnson phrase 'community of mind'.

[146] Reynolds (2011).

[147] Logue (2015), 265-266.

audience. Logue's poem certainly warrants the appellation 'long' and in some ways it is still growing posthumously, still performing with its swelling allusive tide sixty years after its inception. Part of the appeal of epic for Logue seems to be this sense of maximalism, and of labour: 'in poetry, what is the point of asking if you don't ask for too much? Therefore, verse is *bound* to exhaust the reader'.[148] It is designed to exhaust the performer, too:

> …giving my text to other people and reading it aloud back to myself – this is an important critical activity. […] To have your text performed in rehearsal, by an accomplished actor [Alan Howard] is a very considerable advantage. Soft passages start to show up; repetitions start to show up; obscurities start to show up; aesthetic liberties – twiddly bits you are much too fond of – start to show up. And you can get to work on the text. It's a critical activity.[149]

Throughout, Logue makes much of critical 'tests' and 'imperatives', often sensory ones, through which the poem must pass. But a 'long poem' for him is by no means a baggy one; with so much material filed away in the boxes (one is reminded of the 'wounds' folder), there is a sense that no single word should be a wasted one. Logue notes a difference between tiredness felt through rigorous textual engagement and tiredness that comes through boredom. The way to circumvent boredom with a poem is, again, expressed in embodied terms: an audience must be 'picked up and carried along'; the poem itself must be 'kept on the move', lest the audience have to 'keep it on the move for you'.

To return to the limits of translation, adaptation, and recomposition: what is happening here in Logue's works is an enactment of a process of 'translating' *through* the body, utilising what is

[148] Logue (2003), 124.

[149] Logue (2003), 118.

stored within it and every possible scrap of material available to it. It is utilising a sense of knowledge operating within the self as the mechanism through which any and all material can be passed – however foreign it may seem to be. Here again is this same tension between the distant and the proximal: the *Iliad* is an immutable radioactive 'lump' even as one conjures the man Homer breathing in one's ear. The act of finding, interpreting, and responding to antiquity and its stories is consequently intensely personal, yet familiar enough to be communicated.

Logue aligns this blurring between self, other, and text with the feeling of being in the middle of a political demonstration 'when people start to push each other'.[150] In that moment of mad jostling, 'how do you change from something that is very clear – so clear that you forget it – and go into something deliberately obscure?' Here obscurity serves to 'recreate that feeling of *lostness* and violent movement when you're in the middle of it' – to (re)create that tantalising, authenticating 'musicality' that is the end goal of his jostlings with the Homeric text.

[150] Logue (2003), 127.

Chapter 6: Kae Tempest: 2014-present day

Snakes. Two snakes!

Coiling, uncoiling

Boiling and cooling

Oil in a cauldron

Foil in a river

Soil on a mood ring.

He stares:

They spoil each other.

They do things

He has only dreamt of doing.[1]

To write about Kae Tempest in 2025 is to be acutely aware of the significant role he has played in the cultural backdrop of British performance poetry, culture wars discourse, reappropriation of classical storytelling, and trans liberation.[2] His performance from his latest album *Self Titled* at Glastonbury in the summer of 2025 was to a packed crowd, with critics applauding the vulnerability of his *a capella* finale, emphasising a new, deeper, vocal register, in which he showed the audience his top surgery scars – a performance described as representing 'raw emotional truth […] urgent, poetic, and deeply human'.[3] *Self Titled*, Tempest's first album since 2022, is 'a love letter to the

[1] Tempest (2014a), 3.

[2] Since June 2025, Tempest has been described in interviews as a trans man, with reviewers of his work increasingly using 'he/him' pronouns. Tempest officially came out as non-binary and requested the use of 'they/them' pronouns in 2020, and 'they/them' is still used on Tempest's official website. In response to the overwhelming use of 'he/him' in recent interviews, however, I will also be using these pronouns to refer to Tempest and his work. I employ the term 'trans liberation' as used by Shon Faye in *The Transgender Issue* (2021), arguing not only for legal rights and equality for trans individuals but a more fundamental reconfiguration of society along more expansive lines.

[3] E. Hunt (2025, 9 July). 'Kae Tempest: The Bold Future', *DIY Magazine,* https://diymag.com/in-deep/kae-tempest-self-titled [accessed 7/10/2025].

trans community',[4] variously hailed as 'a steadfast commitment to self-exploration and authenticity'[5] and his 'most authentic form yet'.[6]

This chapter explores the various ways in which authenticity resonates throughout not only responses to Tempest's work, but also how Tempest himself engages (directly or indirectly) with many of the twentieth- and twenty-first-century narratives around authenticity outlined in Part I. At the heart of Tempest's creative practice is inevitably a wider focus on performance and liveness, but there is a particular concern in his work with interpersonal connection, class identity, and collective mythology. Since coming out as trans in 2020, his work has had a direct focus on themes of embodiment and the excavation of the 'authentic self'.[7]

For Classical Reception scholars, Tempest has been of interest since he gained critical acclaim for his spoken-word Homeric-inflected epic *Brand New Ancients* in 2013, with his subsequent works often continuing to engage with classical material. Most frequently discussed in addition to *Brand New Ancients* are *Hold Your Own*, a 2014 poetry anthology structured around the figure of Tiresias, and *Paradise*, Tempest's version of Sophocles' *Philoctetes* performed at the National Theatre in 2021. Much like Logue, Tempest positions his relationship to Classics – particularly in his early work – as self-consciously subaltern. This chapter argues that the perceived freshness (and, initially at least, the greater 'authenticity') of Tempest's voice in this arena has been in part due to his presentation as not simply another classically educated poet drawing upon an established pool of literary intertexts; his work instead utilises the literary ubiquity of classical myth in order to probe deeper, existential questions. There is a clear Logueian influence in his early work

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[4] R. Aroesti (2025, 4 July). 'Kae Tempest: *Self Titled* Review', *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2025/jul/04/kae-tempest-self-titled-review [accessed 7/10/2025].

[5] *GNI* Magazine (n.d.). 'Discovering Kae Tempest', https://www.gnimag.com/single-post/discovering-kae-tempest-a-soulful-journey-of-an-inspiring-lgbtq-icon-with-self-titled [accessed 7/10/2025].

[6] S. Butchard (2025, 7 August). 'The Unshackling of Kae Tempest', *The Line of Best Fit*, https://bestfitmusic.substack.com/p/the-unshackling-of-kae-tempest [accessed 1/1/2026].

[7] Throughout I will be using 'trans' as an inclusive, umbrella term, incorporating non-binary identities. See Goetz (2023) for uses and understandings of 'authentic(ity)' in the trans community.

– explicitly in the titling of his 2014 poem 'War Music (After Logue)'[8] – and his concern with the embodied situatedness of the writer/performer and audience/reader has a distinctive Logueian imprint.

Even pre-2020, Tempest's work consistently demonstrated a preoccupation with connection and the self, and how storytelling might be used to navigate these questions. Whilst he does not explicitly foreground the term 'authentic(ity)' in his work, there is a readily detectable thread throughout much of his creative output considering themes of 'reality' vs. artifice and the quest for the 'true' self. He is explicit regarding the influence of Jung's collective unconscious on his perception of collective mythmaking and individual identity. His clearly articulated choice to pick up classical *and* Jungian motifs in his explorations of the contemporary condition is striking; and his classical and Jungian selection is generally illuminating about the link between Classical Reception and authenticity narratives today. In *Brand New Ancients,* in particular, the terms 'ancient' and 'myth' are afforded significance and used almost interchangeably to imply a deeper, more 'authentic' mode of living. The poem's inhabitants are a 'plighted' people 'who have forgotten their myths',[9] and a recourse to classically inflected 'ancientness' is presented as necessary for each of them to reconnect with their worth. *Brand New Ancients* is also illustrative of the comparatively recent 'epic turn' in performance, with 'the Graeco-Roman epics […] providing an especially rich storehouse of themes for creative artists working in divergent traditions'.[10] For Tempest, these traditions are divergent indeed, ranging from the underground London rap scene to national cultural institutions, and encompassing poetry, music, theatre, and prose.

Tempest's 2020 book-length essay *On Connection* operates almost as a manifesto for

[8] A recording of Tempest performing the poem is available to view here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dH797RUNJIY [accessed 30/12/2025]. It was then published in *Hold Your Own* with the new title 'Ballad of a Hero', and juxtaposes the violence and PTSD experienced by service personnel with jingoistic expectations of heroism. Whilst the poem, like Logue's, is pacifist in tone and protests contemporary conflicts (it is implied that the soldier is stationed in Iraq or Afghanistan), literary connections between the two poets are more obvious in Tempest's other works.

[9] Tempest (2013), 3.

[10] Macintosh (2018), 8.

Tempestian preoccupations that will be delineated more precisely below. Whilst not a publication where he engages solely or explicitly with classical material, *On Connection* is extremely helpful for understanding Tempest's relationship with storytelling (particularly with what he terms 'old stories'), and how mythmaking fits into his appraisal of how the tensions between the illusory and the authentic, the solipsistic and the outward-looking, are being navigated in the contemporary world. As with *Brand New Ancients*, a recourse to one's inherent 'myth' or 'ancientness' is presented in response to these concerns. *On Connection* also marks a useful turning point in Tempest's own self-positioning and public perception, further problematising the 'authenticity' that his early work was understood to represent.

Tellingly, the 'authentic' descriptor – never far away in responses to Tempest[11] – featured prominently in publicity for *On Connection*, which was written during the COVID-19 lockdown and considers what it means to experience connection in a time of increased social fragmentation (here he refers not solely to the pandemic but to growing political, social, and national divisions). Matt Haig terms it 'an authentically soothing, powerful, thought provoker',[12] and the publisher's blurb characterises it as 'a sonorous humane polemic, advocating the values of sharing, authenticity and creativity over the heightened individualism, competitiveness and consumerism that dominate our society today'.[13] Writing in a climate where 'authenticity' and the personal were being amplified more sharply (see further Introduction), Tempest also notes that 'there is something infuriating about writing this in the COVID-19 lockdown […] "connection" has become even more of a buzzword than it already was'.[14]

Tempest acknowledges in his opening to *On Connection* that 'when I was asked to write this

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[11] See e.g. 'fearless authenticity' (*Gay Times* 2020); 'aggressive authenticity' (*Tom Tom* 2017); 'an authentic and incisive voice for our time' (*Now Then* 2022).

[12] Tempest (2020), cover endorsement.

[13] Tempest (2020), cover endorsement.

[14] Tempest (2020), 61.

[…] I had the feeling that the publisher was hoping for something Political. But I decided to write what I know. I know creativity'.[15] Similarly, he is keen to situate himself apart from 'the frothing crowds of woke vs unwoke, snowflake vs gammon, deep state conspiracy theorist vs mainstream news consumer or any other us-vs-themisms', arguing that 'the idea of a hostile band of "other"s just over that digital hill […] adversely affects our abilities to empathise'.[16] Self-consciously *not* a politicised call to arms, the tone of *On Connection* amplifies instead the importance of what Tempest seems to consider rapidly diminishing moments of authentic interpersonal engagement in the contemporary world – a Forsterian 'only connect'. These moments are largely expressed through anecdotal accounts of his own experience of reading, producing, and performing creative work.

His argument places significant emphasis on the role played by both late-state capitalism and the commodification of the self through social media in causing the dearth of, combined with the hunger for, genuine connection.[17] As will be seen below, the process of performance for Tempest is in part understood as central to authentic, embodied experience, but he also registers caution about the inauthenticity of performed identities, particularly in the context of social media. His comment that 'we turn on the phone in the morning and that's it. We're onstage. […] all moments are incomplete until they have been digitised'[18] is reminiscent of Telò's analogy of the social media archive as 'piling up data […] in the vain attempt to showcase an illusory authenticity'.[19] For Tempest, our online performances of curated selves form layer upon layer in a swelling archive, 'made browsable, and it all just sits there, on our various profiles, performing'.[20] A

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[15] Tempest (2020a), 31.

[16] Tempest (2020a), 63.

[17] Holly Williams (2020), *The Guardian*, presents this somewhat less generously as 'familiar shades of mysticism and mindfulness, of anti-capitalist theorising and the hippies' tune-in, drop-out arguments'.

[18] Tempest (2020a), 84.

[19] Telò (2020), 16. See further Chapter 2.

[20] Tempest (2020a), 84.

pervasive argument throughout his work is that 'we have grown far from ourselves',[21] expressed in terms very similar to European Existentialism: 'the charades we are expected to perform have become real and swallowed us into the act. How else would we cope with the parameters of our lives?'.[22] He further extrapolates that as a result of this internal disconnect we have also 'grown far from each other',[23] rescuing the statement from solipsism and instead considering the value of knowing oneself the better to know others. It is noteworthy that his coming out message (as non-binary) in the same year as the publication of *On Connection* similarly presents the importance of self-recognition in dialogue with wider social concerns:

> This is a time of great reckoning. Privately, locally, globally. For me, the question is no longer 'when will this change' but 'how far am I willing to go to meet the changes and bring them about in myself.' I want to live with integrity. And this is a step towards that.[24]

'Old stories'

In order to understand how Tempest's preoccupation with authentic connection is articulated, both in *On Connection* and elsewhere, it is important to acknowledge the persistent role that notions of both 'ancientness' and 'myth' played in his pre-2020 work. Just as Logue's *War Music* project interweaved any and all intertexts deemed canonical rather than adhering exclusively to Homeric, or even Graeco-Roman antiquity more broadly, Tempest's work embraces and incorporates a far more

[21] Tempest (2020a), 15.

[22] Tempest (2020a), 15.

[23] Tempest (2020a), 15.

[24] B. Beaumont-Thomas (2020, 6 August). 'Kate Tempest Announces they are Non-Binary, Changes Name to Kae', *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/music/2020/aug/06/kate-tempest-announces-they-are-non-binary-changes-name-to-kae [accessed 28/8/2025].

expansive understanding of 'ancientness' than a classical scholar might expect. Whilst it is his engagement with recognisable plots and characters from the classical canon that classicists have tended to gravitate towards, he will often just as readily invoke 'old stories'[25] or 'the ancient' when referring to the Bible, Shakespeare, or William Blake. Though it is tempting as classicists to interpret *Brand New Ancients* solely as an example of Homeric reception, it is essential here – as with Logue, and others – to recognise in his work the multiple other intertexts from beyond the classical canon. Stephe Harrop has argued:

> Such confident alignments of a contemporary artist with 'Homeric' performances can be problematic, since there is no direct lineage of surviving practices for the modern reperformer of ancient Greek epic to inherit [...] It is the current genres of rap and spoken-word poetry, and not a revived or recovered 'Homeric' orality, which 'enable' the emergence of *Brand New Ancients*'.[26]

One might similarly invoke the role of the jazz tradition (and indeed jazz 'classics' or 'standards') in Logue's own epic responses.

On Connection contains numerous illustrative examples of classical allusion serving as just one point of reference within a wider thematic exploration. In considering his recurrent theme of self-knowledge and self-actualisation, Tempest cites Delphi's *Γνῶθι σεαυτόν* but also adds:

> Shakespeare tells us, 'To thine own self be true', the disciples of the Egyptian

[25] Mentioned throughout his work and in interviews. See, for instance, the dedication page of *Paradise*: 'for my dad, who always loved the old stories'. Similarly, 'these very, very old stories have got so much to teach us about where we're at' at 39:08 in an interview recorded as part of the *Collective Trauma and Contemporary Crisis in Performances of Ancient Tragedies* conference hosted by the APGRD, with Tempest and director Ian Rickson in conversation with Ezra Baudou and Silke Felber. The recording is available on the APGRD's YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BL4DRtmeBPQ&t=1s [accessed 30/12/2025].

[26] Harrop (2018), 266.

> goddess Isis believed they could contact the divine through self-realisation and that the kingdom of heaven was accessible through self-knowledge. Celebrated Golden-Era hip hop artists, from the Wu-Tang Clan to Brand Nubian, from Rakin to Gangstarr, all make constant references to the importance of knowledge-of-self, drawing heavily from the tenets of the Five Percenters…[27]

In comments such as these, we still see notions of canonisation and poetic lineage but crucially in ways that go beyond a simple classical tradition or Homeric anxiety of influence. Harrop argues that this extends to performance, too:

> Tempest's fusion of contemporary techniques with mythic archetypes is profoundly informed by an underlying sense of ancient epic as a genre of performance […] [I]n this way, Tempest positions [his] own modern practices within a quasi-mythic heritage of performed poetry stretching back to ancient epic.[28]

In the 2023 BBC *Arena* documentary *Being Kae Tempest*, Tempest refers to *Brand New Ancients* as 'a long poem',[29] which recalls Logue's description of *War Music* as 'the shortest long poem ever written'.[30] For both poets, their 'epics' can and do exist as part of something not limited to Classics and its accompanying preoccupations.

Understanding what terms such as 'ancient' or 'myth' might mean in a Tempestian context is

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[27] Tempest (2020a), 66.

[28] Harrop (2018), 263.

[29] *Being Kae Tempest* 13:30. At time of writing, the documentary can be viewed on BBC iPlayer: https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m001sxfm/arena-being-kae-tempest [accessed 23/12/2025].

[30] See further Chapter 5.

vital to considering the equations he makes between canonical works, storytelling, and a collective sense of unpacking poetic truths. Sometimes these links *are* explicitly classical: *Brand New Ancients* is sufficiently tied to Homeric epic (the *Odyssey* in particular) that it may be inferred that his refrains – such as 'we are the brand new ancients',[31] 'in the old days they would have been warriors',[32] and 'look again and you will see the gods rise in the most human and unassuming of eyes'[33] – are taking their cue from classical myth, and the 'old days' referred to are the classical past. Elsewhere in Tempest's poetry and rap, however, we might encounter the same sentiment expressed through different canonical points of reference and understandings of what constitutes ancientness: for example, he writes of 'scratching out legends in cave walls […] we're all written in the holiest scripture […] go ahead, take the road with the pilgrims';[34] 'wherever you come from is a holy place'.[35] That Tempest has a clear interest in classical stories, particularly in his early work, is not debatable. It is, however, crucial to understand his interest in 'old stories' more widely when considering *why* his invocations to antiquity serve the role they do: namely, that they prompt a much more fruitful conversation around his preoccupation with the authentic self, which is even more baldly stated in his recent work.

When referring to his early interactions with classical stories in the context of a voracious appetite for poetic fodder and a curiosity about poetic lineage, Tempest is acutely aware of the class-laden baggage attendant on much of this material, and the potential disconnect for some when hearing a strong Lewisham accent giving voice to such stories. Much like Logue, he makes a point of amplifying his marginality, and is aware of the legitimising (even authenticating) mantle of classical allusion:

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[31] Tempest (2013), 6.

[32] Tempest (2013), 20.

[33] Tempest (2013), 6.

[34] 'Holy Elixir' (2019). The track may be viewed on Tempest's official YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cOo8m8GaL-U [accessed 23/12/2025].

[35] Tempest (2014a), 70.

> In my earlier interviews the journalists always referred to my 'angelic' looks, my 'golden' hair, my baby face and my preoccupation with Greek mythology, constant references to which must have served to solidify my 'acceptability.'[36]

Though he now enjoys considerable success and critical acclaim, Tempest has spoken out on the issue of intellectual snobbery,[37] and grounds his work in a desire to reach the kinds of audiences who 'don't want to listen'.[38] He reminds us about his unexceptional upbringing in 'a shitty part of town',[39] and is quick to puncture any sense of academic entitlement, commenting wryly in 2014 that he was somewhat horrified to think of his work being the subject of academic research.[40]

In a visit to Oxford, hosted by the Archive of Performances of Greek & Roman Drama, Justine McConnell interviewed Tempest about his relationship with Classics and *Brand New Ancients.* Tempest confessed to being amused that the University still performs a Greek play in ancient Greek. When asked by Professor Stephen Harrison whether he had made a conscious allusion to Book 22 of the *Odyssey* in the concluding passage of *Brand New Ancients*,[41] Tempest's response was either extremely frank or extremely facetious:

> No, it wasn't in my mind […] I didn't think there was any parallel between Book 22 of the *Odyssey*...I mean I should have … That's so interesting! Because, I tell

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[36] Tempest (2020a), 34.

[37] M. MacLeod (2015, 19 August). 'Kate Tempest Slams Conventional Poets' Disdain for Performance', *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2015/aug/19/kate-tempest-slams-conventional-poets-disdain-for-performance [accessed 15/12/2025].

[38] S. Parker (2012, 12 September). 'I Want to Talk to the People Who Don't Want to Listen', *HuffPost Culture*, http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2012/09/11/kate-tempest-poet-interview_n_1874317.html [accessed 28/8/2025].

[39] Parker (2012), 'I Want to Talk to the People Who Don't Want to Listen'.

[40] In conversation with me following the 2014 APGRD event discussed below.

[41] Where a Penelope-like character might be understood as inverting the roles of Odysseus' battle with the suitors.

you, I never got as far as Book 22! But I will read it again![42]

Whilst it is certainly plausible that he never got as far as Book 22, this also does not necessarily square with the rich engagement with classical source material across Tempest's work. It is, perhaps, more akin to one of Logue's provocative statements, notably the one that he had never bothered reading the *Odyssey* because 'to tell you the truth I don't find it very interesting'.[43] To a certain extent there is an element of performative marginalisation here in both writers' comments, where they are deliberately resisting entry to a perceived coterie of poetic elites who deal comfortably in classical allusion as a signifier of their status – what Larkin disparagingly terms the 'myth kitty'.[44] For our purposes, comments such as these are a useful reminder that allusion-hunting is not the primary objective of classical reception, and to do so risks overlooking wider conversations around the role classical antiquity plays in creative work.

Justine McConnell comments that there is a 'Walcottian' air to Tempest's relationship with Classics, with Tempest provocatively claiming 'an easy insouciance' towards the whole thing whilst simultaneously deploying learned references.[45] Whether Tempest had read Book 22 or not, his simple declaration of ignorance pulls an audience up short. McConnell's comparison to Derek Walcott in this instance is highly apt: in *Omeros*, the bardic narrator facetiously comments that he has never read the *Iliad* 'all the way through', which is an explicitly intentional provocation in marked contrast to Tempest's conversational response to an unexpected question. One might also compare Suzan-Lori Parks' recent resistance to pigeonholing her *Father Comes Home from the*

[42] McConnell (2014), 201.

[43] See further Chapter 5.

[44] Larkin (1983), 80.

[45] McConnell (2014), 200.

Wars as a retelling of the *Odyssey.*[46] In each case, those with backgrounds in Classics in particular are invited to remember that classical stories can and should be understood as part of a wider repertoire, and that the set of associations one individual brings to such material need not be representative for all. The interesting tension between the particular and the universal is a notable feature in both Forster's and Logue's work, and it is even more prominent in Tempest's. Indeed, Tempest seems particularly keen to emphasise that his engagement with classical material is not a bid for 'acceptability' and should be understood on its own terms.

Sound and musicality

A further point of commonality between Tempest and Logue is an interest in the sonic quality of ancient Greek and what they might intuit about its underlying qualities. Whilst the 'musicality' of Greek is of course a far more sustained priority for Logue, we can see echoes of this Logueian manner of engagement in aspects of Tempest's own work. When writing his script for *Paradise*, Tempest consulted classicists both regarding the Sophoclean text and on ancient Greek drama more generally. In a 2021 interview, he describes the process with a particular emphasis on sound:

> There was all this talk about the sound. I spoke to people that actually could speak ancient Greek and there was just this sound of like 'kakakakaka' in my ears. I'm like, well, am I going to phonetically match the ancient Greek to try and create the right kind of motor…[47]

Tempest also used a deliberately literal translation of the Sophocles produced for him by classicist

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[46] E.g. https://www.kqed.org/forum/2010101864966/suzan-lori-parks-reimagines-the-odyssey-in-father-comes-home-from-the-wars-at-a-c-t [accessed 1/12/2025] where she insists it is 'neither a riff nor an adaptation'.

[47] *Collective Trauma and Contemporary Crisis* 38:09.

and theatre practitioner Helen Eastman, fulfilling a purpose similar to Carne-Ross's 'cribs' for Logue. Tempest recalls being powerfully affected by this,[48] particularly the impact of the foreignising, 'translationese' passages, such as 'sea-surrounded land' in place of 'island'.[49] A deliberate drawing out of the foreignising potential of antiquity through language, similar to Logue or Harrison,[50] is apparent elsewhere in Tempest's classically-inspired work, for instance his description of the boy Tiresias as 'godkid'[51] and 'godcub'[52] in *Hold Your Own.*

As would be expected with a background in the rap scene, Tempest is acutely aware of the power of sound and music working in partnership with the text. He has had a long-term creative partnership with drummer and musical director Kwake Bass and performances of *Brand New Ancients* were notable for their use of musical motifs to distinguish characters – perhaps fulfilling the role of epithet.[53] Much like Logue, Tempest in his early work also emphasises the primacy of the spoken word, prefacing the printed edition of *Brand New Ancients* with the statement that 'this poem was written to be read aloud';[54] and writing in *Hold Your Own* that 'language lives when you speak it. Let it be heard'.[55] For Tempest, this is taken further into a desire for authentic connection *through* the live performance of spoken word, an emphasis on orality that we first see with *Brand New Ancients* but that is stated explicitly in *On Connection*.

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[48] *Collective Trauma and Contemporary Crisis* 37:38. 'It just blew my mind'.

[49] *Collective Trauma and Contemporary Crisis* 37:38.

[50] See further Chapter 5.

[51] Tempest (2014a), 81.

[52] Tempest (2014a), 40.

[53] Butchard (2025), 'The Unshackling of Kae Tempest'.

[54] Tempest (2013), preface.

[55] Tempest (2014a), 70. Cf. Logue's statement quoted in Chapter 5 that 'in verse, sound and sense are inextricable […] poems perform'.

Situatedness, liveness, and the epiphanic moment

The central themes of *On Connection* are threefold: the state of the world; Tempest's own experiences of deriving what he considers genuine emotional proximity from performance; and how the two might work reciprocally. *On Connection* marks a shift into more explicit, first-person writing for Tempest, and he clearly delineates his own positionality as a mediator of stories and texts, and how his performances can provide a quasi-epiphanic, non-repeatable moment that is comparable to the moments of 'authentic rupture' detectable in Forster's short stories. Tempest gives an account of an individual's response to a text (a moment of reception, whether classical or not); the affective resonance they experience across temporary and temporal boundaries (what one might term a moment of 'authentic connection'); and then the sharing of this affective resonance in front of an audience in a performance context. Tempest presents a case here for blurring the boundaries between text, performer, and audience. I discussed Logue's *War Music* with reference to Terence Cave's presentation of 'situated cognition'; in the case of Tempest, particularly his approach to performance, there is an additional consideration: what happens when a performer's individual situatedness is presented as a conduit for their audience?

Whilst *On Connection* is light on direct calls to action and steers clear of didacticism, one area where imperatives do feature is in the guiding of the reader's body, their hearing, and their gaze. The concluding lines to this prose essay read very much like the spoken-word rhythms of Tempest's performance poetry: 'Put your phone down / listen to the birds / Build a fire in a quiet place […] When things go fuzzy, switch focus […] When you're going numb, switch focus'.[56] As he prepares to leave his audience he guides them through a rapidly-spooling series of vignettes, reminiscent of the opening lines of *Brand New Ancients* (which, itself, begins with an imperative to

[56] Tempest (2020a), 115-116.

'now, focus').[57]

Tempest understands individual connection with the text (broadly conceived) as fundamental to facilitating external, interpersonal connection – the latter presented as a vital liberator in a culture of socio-political division. Rather than presenting introspection as an end in itself, he argues that becoming a 'better or more engaged reader' encourages the individual to expand their focus outward and become 'a better reader of and a better listener to other people, the world, and [them]self'.[58] We see this in a meeting he describes in detail between himself and a homeless man in a park, who was carrying a book of Derek Walcott's poems which had accompanied him since his youth, and which serves as a point of connection between them:

> He talked about how it made him feel human to have this book of poetry in his pocket, made him feel close to his mother and the child he had been […] I was moved by the connection I made with that man. He was a very gentle person.[59]

Tempest goes on to remark on the arbitrariness of them both standing there in the same park, both experiencing a powerful connection to the same poetry, and yet one is unhoused and one is killing time ahead of a sell-out show he will be performing that evening. Indeed, in many of Tempest's meditations on connection we see a similar and understandable difficulty as he reckons with the status that his work has afforded him.

For Tempest, connection is something understood through the body: 'the feeling of landing in the present tense […] a feeling of being absolutely located'.[60] He opens *On Connection* by citing

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[57] Tempest (2014a), 6. This is a clear intertext with Logue, too: cf. 'picture the east Aegean sea […] look along that beach and see'. Tempest has confirmed that this line is a source of inspiration for his work elsewhere: https://www.theguardian.com/stage/live/2016/dec/12/kate-tempest-webchat-let-them-eat-chaos [accessed 6/10/2025].

[58] Tempest (2020a), 56-57.

[59] Tempest (2020a), 15.

[60] Tempest (2020a), 5.

research into the function of empathy through art, and later in the text discusses a 2017 study, which discovers that the heartbeats of a theatre audience synchronised over the course of a performance.[61] Tempest has a clear interest in the link between individual experiences and collective sensitivity, noting another study where participants' own body temperatures dropped when watching videos of actors placing their hands into icy water: 'in social interactions we physiologically respond to each other […] this response system facilitates "emotional understanding and group coherence"'.[62] Seemingly, for Tempest, this may be extrapolated further by the involvement of shared stories and creative experiences: 'when we are reading or listening to stories being told […] our brains release cortisol into our blood to help us focus and concentrate, and also oxytocin, the chemical related to care and empathy'.[63] Rather than acting as an intermediary, the text is crucial to establishing these connections.

Connection works across multiple lines and in multiple directions, linking individuals as well as texts. Tempest sketches out a triangular 'circuit', where full and effective connection is contingent on 'three stations that must be filled with equal power. These stations are writer, text, and reader'.[64] He argues that he values performance, in particular, because all three portions of the 'circuit' are present at once in the mediating, bardic figure of the writer-performer:

> I have been both the writer and the reader of my own work; and in committing my work to memory and going out each night to perform it, I have also in some ways been the text […] I saw first-hand that there were things Tempest-the-writer never knew about the writing that Tempest-the-reader discovered each night with

[61] Tempest (2020a), 48.

[62] Tempest (2020a), 47.

[63] K. Tempest (2020b, 3 October), 'What I Have Learned from 20 Years on the Mic', *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/oct/03/kae-tempest-what-i-have-learned-from-20-years-on-the-mic [accessed 28/12/2025].

[64] Tempest (2020a), 50.

> increasing clarity.[65]

He centres his own experience as having 'felt the connection fire and misfire at all stages of the circuit';[66] and the intensity of the performed moment is afforded great significance – the point at which the circuit begins to spark. *On Connection* is even structured to mirror the final moments before a performance, with each section title representing a step closer to going onstage. We are met not with a chapter list but with a 'running order', consisting of Set Up, Sound Check, Doors, Support Act, Preparation, Going Out There, and the climactic Feeling It Happen.

For Tempest, the connection felt in performance is unique, unfeigned, and irreplicable. Again, this is strikingly reminiscent of Benjamin's theorisation of the 'aura' and its inherent authenticity as 'the unrepeatable encounter between the actor and spectator' in performance.[67] In a 2020 interview with Simon Armitage, Tempest talks about the intensity of 'go[ing] into this place together, which is almost unbearable, and then when the light comes, it's such a relief'.[68] This connection with the audience is repeated in *On Connection* in a description of the embodied, epiphanic moment on stage:

> I play music and I am granted access to a freedom so resolute it leaves me shining head to toe. I emerge from the performance covered in a gluey light. Looking out at the crowd, I see reality at last. People really feeling things.[69]

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[65] Tempest (2020a), 52.

[66] Tempest (2020a), 51.

[67] Ioannidou (2023), 135.

[68] *The Poet Laureate Has Gone To His Shed* 46:40. Available on the BBC website: https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0868w77 [accessed 22/12/2025].

[69] Tempest (2020a), 108.

The authentic self, connecting authentically, is experienced in that moment of sublimation to the text, with his body both profoundly his own and presented as vessel for something more collective. He describes his process as that of 'commit[ing] the text to my body and delivering it to rooms of people',[70] noting that, for him, the significance and profundity of the performance experience comes from 'the connection with these strangers in the audience […] be[ing] part of this huge feeling of connection and feel[ing] in service to creativity'.[71]

Whilst at the beginning of Tempest's career the connection was smaller and more relational, initially only 'connecting with friends',[72] it has now grown into a more global understanding of intimacy:

> I couldn't wait to speak to people, it was all about this connection […] and now, 10, 15, 20 years later, when I go out on stage, what I gain from this almost sacred mode of performance which is so powerful…it's bizarre what happens. It does this thing to my entire body.[73]

Armitage describes Tempest's performance style in these moments as 'almost speaking in tongues',[74] adding to a sense that he is a kind of priestly bard in service to something beyond the self. The authenticating appeal of the bardic voice in oral folk traditions (see further Chapter 1) becomes relevant, too. Tempest himself notes that, in performance, 'that person up there that does that thing on stage doesn't feel like the same me'.[75] Tellingly, this preoccupation with 'ancientness'

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[70] Tempest (2020b, 3 October), 'What I Have Learned'.

[71] *The Poet Laureate Has Gone To His Shed* 49:18.

[72] *The Poet Laureate Has Gone To His Shed* 49:20.

[73] *The Poet Laureate Has Gone To His Shed* 49:18.

[74] *The Poet Laureate Has Gone To His Shed* 49:25.

[75] *Being Kae Tempest* 41:10.

returns to the fore in his description of this sublime experience: 'What's exciting about performance is it takes it back to an ancient time when it wasn't about how clever, important or educated you were. It was about how well you could communicate'.[76]

Central to Tempest's thinking is the idea of the ancient as something primal that may be tapped into, something that goes beyond the individual and into an interconnected cultural consciousness. Tempest considers himself 'a performer of something that already exists' and that 'these stories are in us, they're in everybody'.[77] There is something here of the Nietzschean sense of musicality as primordial artistic force, with language serving as an external expression of this underlying universality: 'the poetry of the lyricist can express nothing which was not already present at the highest level of universality and validity'.[78] For Tempest, this sense of latent truth is explicitly associated with Jung's theory of the collective unconscious, something which he returns to frequently in his work and in interviews. Considering Tempest's relationship with the collective, particularly through a Jungian lens, is crucial to any attempt to tie together his understandings of ancientness, authenticity, and their interconnection.

'Unknown, not unperceived'

In *On Connection* Tempest describes first encountering Jung's *Red Book*, while visiting a bookshop before a show, in quasi-epiphanic terms:

> On a plinth in the centre of a glass display case, in between large photographic journals and leather-bound antiques, I saw Jung's *Red Book*. It was about a foot high, lit from beneath, and open at the first pages. I read those pages and felt my

[76] MacLeod (2015), 'Kate Tempest Slams Conventional Poets…'.

[77] McConnell (2014), 201.

[78] Nietzsche (1882), 41.

> breathing change; something in the language was calling to me.[79]

He describes how Jung's theories of the unconscious became 'a crucial part of my understanding of the human condition'.[80] He is particularly interested in the Jungian idea of a self that is governed by both the 'spirit of the times', which renders one's existence compatible with contemporary *mores*, and the 'spirit of the depths', comprising a more primal, collective unconscious. Tempest is struck by the way poetry 'speaks to the psychic facts which are hidden',[81] and he understands these 'hidden facts' as products of the 'depths'.

Tempest opens *Brand New Ancients* with two quotations, one from Jung which sets up a parallel between connection to the collective unconscious and connection to ancient myth:

> Among the so-called neurotics of our day there are a good many who in other ages would not have been neurotic […] if they lived in a period […] in which man was still linked by myth with the world of the ancestors […] I am speaking of those who cannot tolerate the loss of myth and who cannot find a way to a merely exterior world.[82]

This links very clearly with the 'plight of the people who have forgotten their myths'[83] around

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[79] This is again highly reminiscent of Cave's embodied cognition, and my exploration of it in the previous chapter regarding Logue's description of his first encountering a copy of the *Iliad*. In each case, the materiality of the textual encounter is being foregrounded.

[80] Tempest (2020a), 16.

[81] Tempest (2020a), 17.

[82] Tempest (2014a), paratextual material. Ironically, perhaps, Tempest seems to identify with the Jungian neurotic in his comment that 'why would anybody well-adjusted decide they need to be on a platform, under lights, speaking for 70 minutes? Only neuroses would send a person up there'. https://observer.co.uk/culture/interviews/article/this-much-i-know-kae-tempest) [accessed 15/12/2025].

[83] Tempest (2014a), 3.

which *Brand New Ancients* turns: the contemporary condition of *dis*connection needs to be understood through a narrative of mythic loss and absence. The opening lines of the poem substantiate this: 'In the old days, the myths were the stories we used to explain ourselves / but how can we explain the way we hate ourselves? […] But we are still mythical […] We are still Godly / that's what's made us so monstrous'.[84] In performed versions of the poem, this section is accompanied by uncanny, competing notes and harmonics, like a radio being tuned, as if to access the spirit of the depths one must first tap into a different frequency.[85]

When he formally introduces Jung in *On Connection*, Tempest defines the spirit of the depths as 'the ancient part of you'.[86] When he experiences his epiphanic moments of creative connection it is as 'my older self', which for Tempest is associated with qualities that lie on the brink of sanity and social acceptability.[87] This 'ancient' part of the self, as understood by both Jung and Tempest, is 'the part that responds to the invisible world. The part that makes no sense and speaks in heavy symbols. Your madness, your dreams, your visions'.[88] It is very clearly through Tempest's consistent and profound engagement with Jung that his presentation of 'ancientness' can be inextricably linked with the authentic, the buried, and the underexplored, as well as the interconnected.

The second of *Brand New Ancients*'s opening quotes is from William Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*: 'Unknown, not unperceived'.[89] The excerpt forms part of a speech from the character Bromion. One of Blake's 'Prophetic Books', *Daughters of Albion* alludes to Platonic notions of illusion and reality as its protagonists struggle to understand the authentic nature of the

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[84] Tempest (2013), 1.

[85] Cf. Charles Martindale's use of radio imagery – e.g. 'are you receiving me?' – when illustrating the process of cross-temporal reception across thousands of years. Martindale (1993).

[86] Tempest (2020a), 17.

[87] Giving credence to Armitage's description of Tempest in performance as 'speaking in tongues'.

[88] Tempest (2020a), 17.

[89] Tempest (2020a), paratext.

world they inhabit in order to escape the shackles of societal convention – a sentiment similar to Jung's presentation of the 'so-called neurotic'. Indeed, Blake's work has been understood to prefigure Jung;[90] in Jungian terms the 'unknown, not unperceived' can be read as foregrounding the collective unconscious, and in the context of *Brand New Ancients* this is clearly Tempest's own intention. Blake features even more prominently in *On Connection*, with a different quotation as epigraph to each chapter. In her review of the book, Holly Williams notes that 'it's no wonder [Blake's] writing appeals to Tempest: both artists' work is concerned with tapping into something ancient and mythic. Tempest's call to reconnect with what Blake terms the 'infinite' within ourselves proves persuasive and profound'.[91]

'Be the true you, I can see straight through you'

This notion of the true self which must be uncovered in order to facilitate further connection can be traced back to Tempest's very early work, as can his equation of the (often but not always classically) ancient with this deeper authenticity. His 2011 rap song 'Rumba' with his band Sound of Rum, for instance, looks at what it means to be 'bare faced in the masquerade', recognising connection through authenticity to oneself: 'I'll be me, but you be you / but be the true you, believe me I can see straight through you'. The speaker describes himself as both 'London born, bred, raised' and 'successor to Antigone's tradition'.

We might understand this allusion to Antigone as the poetic 'ancient', with all the associated weight discussed above. Other formative influences are also recognisable in 'Rumba', as in his intermixing of 'old stories':

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[90] Singer (2004).

[91] H. Williams (2020, 25 October). '*On Connection* by Kae Tempest Review', *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/oct/25/on-connection-by-kae-tempest-review-persuasive-and-profound [accessed 7/10/2025].

I heard that if you wanna rap, OK, you've got to read

I read Shakespeare, Beckett, Blake, Sophocles

Ancient mythology, eastern philosophy

Got stained glass panels for eyes where the apostles breathe

Ancient drama, modern drama, modern poetry, ancient philosophy, and the Bible are all invoked here. This meta-reflection on rap as a form, too, is not unusual, with Tempest often presenting it as a more intimate or more authentic form of expression than others: 'Rap is telling your truth. It's an old word. […] It means just talking, you know?'[92] In 'Rumba' the speaker even 'looked Prose dead in the eye / She had thick brows and a hooked nose […] I asked her why the shittest of scribes / are getting published, why the farcical flourish at the expense of / the artful who nourish the artform'.

Several years prior to Tempest's coming out as non-binary in 2020, much of his preoccupation with 'unmasking' the authentic self, whether in the more obviously classically inflected work or elsewhere in the corpus, operated at a generalised, impersonal level. *Brand New Ancients*, for example, does not focus on an individual experience: instead, it makes a point of roving omnisciently across 'millions of characters, each with their own epic narratives'.[93] *Hold Your Own* begins to mark a shift towards the personal and the bodily, providing the subject to *Brand New Ancients*' object, though the new subjectivity is still filtered very clearly through the Tiresias myth and its receptions. Speaking in May 2020, three months before his coming out announcement, Tempest vividly described encountering the Tiresias figure and easily identifying with his bardic, prophetic qualities, the way he would 'come on and just say all this beautiful stuff that was just damning and true, and then would leave'[94] – similar, perhaps, to the *vates*-like figure of Tempest in

[92] *The Poet Laureate Has Gone To His Shed* 16:57.

[93] Tempest (2013), 2.

[94] *The Poet Laureate Has Gone To His Shed* 34:27.

performance. It was not until much later, Tempest says, that he learned of Tiresias' lived experience across genders: 'it felt like one of those moments when all of the connections just connect, you know, and it just became a story that I felt, I really felt it inside my body. Sometimes with these Greek myths, they're so…I don't know. They're so bodily'.[95]

At the time, Tempest was struggling with 'all of the maleness in me and not having any way of really talking about that, especially in my poetry', noting that he had 'never really published any poetry from the first person really'.[96] *Hold Your Own*'s presentation of Tiresias becomes especially poignant in this context. When he sees the snakes 'coiling, uncoiling / boiling and cooling' together he experiences a pang of envy: 'they do things / he has only dreamt of doing' and it is this repressed desire which makes him bring a stick down upon them. The snakes 'flee for their love' and the boy Tiresias, confronted by his own desires, is left 'swaying and nauseous […] more raw than before, / more tortured'.[97] His subsequent transformation might be understood more as a transition, becoming 'more than the sum of his parts'.[98]

As I have suggested, *Hold Your Own* might be understood as an intermediary point where Tempest is beginning to talk more explicitly about the self, but has not yet begun the gradual move away from explicit engagement with ancient material that is characteristic of his later work. This later work increasingly concentrates its focus on the trans body and its place in the world today. In the earlier period, there is a sense of Tempest using Greek mythology as a conduit for this exploration (he was not out as trans in 2014), and it is perhaps this that he is thinking about when referring to the 'acceptability' afforded to him by sticking to classical themes. He describes the Tiresias myth as a 'kind of vehicle for me to write about my own experience, but in a way that made it universal'. He goes on to offer an interesting insight into not only his use of mythological

[95] *The Poet Laureate Has Gone To His Shed* 34:27.

[96] *The Poet Laureate Has Gone To His Shed* 34:27.

[97] Tempest (2014a), 3.

[98] Tempest (2014a), 4.

frameworks but also his valorisation of 'old stories':

> I think [this] is what mythological constructs are so useful for, because you can pour yourself into them and know that they are strong enough to hold that and everybody else's experience as well, because they're thousands of years old.[99]

In many ways, this logic is reminiscent of Logue's presentation of the *Iliad* as a 'radioactive lump' that will outlast whatever a poet might choose to do with it.[100]

Tempest's description of *Hold Your Own* as having 'the arms of the myth' around it, 'which just made it feel more secure for me'[101] presents the legitimising device of classical mythology as something of a safety blanket, which may also go some way to explain his recent shift away from recognisably classical material in tandem with a move towards less veiled explorations of identity. By 2020, with *On Connection*, selfhood and its capacity for both inward reflection and outward kinship are placed front and centre.

Paradise, initially due to be staged in 2020 but postponed to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, marks Tempest's most recent direct engagement with a classical story. It is interesting, however, that here too we see an aligning with the self that was not present in *Brand New Ancients* and is more marked than in *Hold Your Own*. Reflecting on the character of Philoctetes, Tempest identifies:

> …the thing that makes [him] exceptional is also the thing that wounds him the most. He's got all this fear, pride. But he's also got this wound, he's isolated in his pain. It really reminds me of a lot of people that I've been very, very close to

[99] A *The Poet Laureate Has Gone To His Shed* 35:47.

[100] See further Chapter 5.

[101] *The Poet Laureate Has Gone To His Shed* 41:36.

in my life, and also he's me. This thing of 'stay here in this cave' or go out into the world and let people know what I truly am'.[102]

The role of the individual in society goes beyond the character of Philoctetes, too, with Tempest notably choosing to separate out the Chorus into named individuals, who deliver their own separate lines and represent identifiably different personalities – even arguing amongst themselves and increasingly disentangling their voices from each other as the play progresses. In a 2021 interview, Tempest notes that he was keen to move away from the Sophoclean Chorus of Neoptolemus' sailors and instead have his Chorus be the refugee inhabitants of the island, living 'in an encampment that they've built themselves, the survivors to Philoctetes' victim'.[103] The women are directly inspired by a crew of local women Tempest met in Sri Lanka, subsistence fishing in a challenging post-tsunami environment, with some of their lines carried through verbatim from conversations Tempest shared with them – again, we see Tempest's preoccupation with the immediacy of the interpersonal moment of connection and of contemporary bodies in favour of adherence to ancient tradition. Lucy Jackson, commenting on the production, notes that the encampment might also be understood as a reference to 'Cardboard City',[104] a large settlement of homeless people who lived on London's South Bank (directly outside the National theatre itself) from the late 1970s-1990s. Jackson similarly foregrounds the individuality of the Chorus members: 'the production gives space to the individuals in this type of community to tell their stories, show their dignity, and share in their

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[102] *Being Kae Tempest* 25:53.

[103] *Collective Trauma and Contemporary Crisis* 18:38.

[104] From Episode 9 of the National Theatre's *In Search of Greek Theatre* series in 2024, where Jackson discusses *Philoctetes* and *Paradise* with Erin Lee, Head of Archive. Cardboard City is introduced at 5:15. The video is available through the National Theatre's YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fuTOQucPb78. For more on Cardboard City and its cultural impact more generally, see S. Jeraj (2020, 18 February), 'The Legacy of Cardboard City and Britain's Grim Renaissance of Homeless Encampments', *The New Statesman*, https://www.newstatesman.com/long-reads/2020/02/legacy-cardboard-city-bullring-britain-grim-renaissance-homeless-encampments-tent-cities [accessed 30/12/2025].

sorrow and joy'.[105]

Discussing *Paradise* in the 2023 *Arena* documentary, Tempest emphasises that this was a period of great personal significance for him: it was during production that he met his now partner (actor Amie Francis, who plays Chorus member Zuleika) and received a formal diagnosis of gender dysphoria. A theme throughout the documentary is the intense anxiety Tempest was feeling prior to coming out, and the burdensome sense of trying to exist outside external perceptions of him. His comments on the epiphanic potential of the performed moment make a lot of sense in this context, with the stage offering, paradoxically, a rare opportunity 'to transform into my inner self. The energy inside me became accessible to others […] I found it, I found myself; found everything I'd ever wanted'.[106] In a 2022 *Guardian* interview he describes this in Jungian terms: 'When I perform I go to the depths; beyond gender, beyond body. I leave everything behind. That's why it was addictive'.[107]

Reliance on those performance moments, and those moments only, to embody his 'inner self' came at a significant cost, and he describes the *Brand New Ancients* days as 'coming off every night feeling like I was battling a demon'.[108] Audiences, however, met these explosions of energy with rapturous applause, and this was the moment when Tempest's career began to take off. He concluded that 'when I feel like I'm going to die, they really like it'[109] – a policy which continued until it became no longer sustainable. There is a sad irony to Tempest both exploring authenticity and failing to align with the version of authenticity projected onto him. His unique vocal delivery, strongly linked to his early popularity and representing an 'earnestness [which] persuades against

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[105] *In Search of Greek Theatre* 6:12.

[106] *Being Kae Tempest* 7:11.

[107] M. Segalov (2022, 12 March). 'Kate Tempest: I Was Living With This Boiling Hot Secret In My Heart', *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2022/mar/12/kae-tempest-i-was-living-with-this-boiling-hot-secret-in-my-heart [accessed 10/12/2025].

[108] *Being Kae Tempest* 17:26.

[109] *Being Kae Tempest* 17:26.

any artifice',[110] was for Tempest himself at odds with how he understood himself. In the *Arena* documentary he talks about being in the studio and asking producer Dan Carey to 'pitch it down a bit' because 'I want a lower voice, but when I speak…it breaks the beautiful bubble'.[111]

The way in which Tempest characterises his experience since coming out is very different. After years of performing and living 'with this boiling hot secret in my heart',[112] he now describes himself as freer and living more in line with his own perception of self. His voice cracks as he says that 'I've been on this journey towards myself ever since I was a child. I should have been this person. I should have always been this person'.[113] 'These Are the Days', from his 2022 album *The Line is a Curve*, echoes this sentiment: 'these are the days / I told me I would receive'. The album garnered critical attention for its introspective turn, marking a shift from Tempest's preference for 'narrating and exploring the lives of other people' towards casting himself as 'the central narrator, voice, and figure'.[114] *The Line is a Curve* was also the first time Tempest's face was depicted prominently on the album artwork. Tempest's focus thus moved more towards explorations of belonging, connection, and authenticity as understood through the queer experience.

His 2023 page-poetry collection *Divisible By Itself and One* makes this new focus even more explicit. It concludes with a poem titled 'Love song for queens, studs, butches, daddies, fags and all the other angels' and it sends a message of gratitude to 'My beautiful trans people, natural as life'.[115] The focus, here, is on an authenticity where lived experience is permitted to find union with internal desire, as the anthology moves from 'Body' ('the way she saw it, it was hers to hate […]

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[110] McConnell (2014), 196.

[111] *Being Kae Tempest* 25:53.

[112] Segalov (2022), 'I Was Living With This Boiling Hot Secret…'.

[113] *Being Kae Tempest* 38:25.

[114] E. Hunt (2025, 9 July). 'Kae Tempest: The Bold Future', *DIY Magazine*, https://diymag.com/in-deep/kae-tempest-self-titled [accessed 7/10/2025].

[115] Tempest (2023), 35.

she wishes she could cut away her hips'),[116] and 'Be careful that you don't become a parody of yourself' ('I just want to make art good / fucking luck I just want to connect with other human beings'),[117] through a narrative of self-discovery, culminating in:

> I love you. I am here.
>
> It might feel like I'm far away, not with you right
>
> up close because the stage the screen the page.
>
> I am.
>
> I'm right beside you.[118]

Now, too, the focus on the self is presented not as identity fixation but as a means of connection, whether or not 'the stage the screen the page' are able to be circumvented.

Self-Titled

Tempest's 2025 album, *Self-Titled*, was released just after the Glastonbury set with which this chapter began. This Glastonbury performance was the first time many had encountered the tracks and Tempest's delivery of them. Tempest notes that usually, self-titled albums are the first or second that an artist releases, but in his case this has come years later: 'I thought it would be quite bold in that sense, to be like: "this is a beginning, as well as a continuation"'.[119] There is a play on words inherent here too, with many trans individuals literally 'self-titling', opting for names and/or labels which feel more 'authentic' to their sense of self.

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[116] Tempest (2023), 5.

[117] Tempest (2023), 8.

[118] Tempest (2023), 35.

[119] Hunt (2025), 'The Bold Future'.

The second track of this 'beefy, self assured celebration of newfound identity'[120] is 'Statue in the Square', which clearly articulates the areas on which Tempest's output now seems to be focusing. He condemns the weaponisation of trans lives as a political tool ('It's not a disorder or a dysfunction / Disgusting the way they discuss us') and reminds his audience that what critics understand as unnatural bodily changes can in fact provide a release from the pain of dysphoria ('tape it up, tuck it, and love it beyond condition'). Of particular interest is the message of the chorus:

> They never wanted people like me round here
>
> But when I'm dead, they'll put my statue in the square
>
> They used to tell their children not to stare
>
> But when I'm dead, they'll put my statue in the square
>
> Yeah, they're ten a penny, we're rare
>
> And when we're dead, they'll put our statues in the square
>
> They can shake their heads in despair
>
> But we been here from the start and we ain't going nowhere[121]

As might be expected from Tempest's more recent work, the personal opens up into the collective (moving from 'my statue' to 'our statues'). The statements made are clear, and clearly delivered – one is reminded of Tempest's friend and director Ian Rickson's mantra that Tempest should 'shock them [the audience] into focus with clarity of intent'.[122] There is no mention of

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[120] F. Garratt-Stanley (2025, 3 July). 'Kae Tempest - *Self Titled* Review', *The NME,* https://www.nme.com/reviews/album/kae-tempest-self-titled-review-3875519 [accessed 22/12/2025].

[121] The track and music video may be viewed on Tempest's official YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aTDOFaAcEyc [accessed 30/12/2025].

[122] *Being Kae Tempest* 17:26.

anything classical (either here or anywhere in the album), except perhaps the statue itself – representing a more generalised sense of canonicity and cultural approval. For Tempest, though, to ally posthumous recognition with statuary feels jarring, as if the past decade of statues being vandalised or pulled down for the outdated 'legacies' they sought to represent had not happened. Even when not depicting figures on the wrong side of history, the erection of statues itself might still be understood as representing a set of values antithetical to Tempest – strongly tied to the establishment which puts them up in the first place, intending whatever they represent to endure.[123]

Tempest himself has not yet commented on the perceived irony of these lyrics, but an alternative reading is equally plausible where the lyrics are highlighting the apparent pointlessness of this sort of posthumous veneration of queer people, when they experience hostility from that very same establishment in their own lifetime. In this reading, the statues become hollow markers of performative liberalism, whereas what matters here is the collaborative creation of art in (queer) community and in the present moment – rather than looking towards the monumentalisation (or indeed canonisation) of the future. The personal is a means to explore the collective, something which is reinforced by the music video accompanying the track: the narrative unfolds not within a 'square' or typical central London locations for statuary, but in the alleyways and back streets of Tempest's own Deptford and Lewisham (Hales Street is specifically signposted). At least thirty recognisable figures from the London queer scene are featured in the video, with the figures gathered around Tempest interestingly credited as comprising a 'nation'.[124] Throughout, Tempest moves through local streets (emphatically not squares) in union with his community, in a manner which feels not only empowering but also suggestive of a queer rights protest or march – this is further consolidated by the recurring sound of a police siren layered into the backing mix.

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[123] See Younge (2021) on the symbolism of statues in the contemporary mind, and why they might be understood as 'among the most fundamentally conservative expressions of public art possible'.

[124] For the full list of credits see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aTDOFaAcEyc [accessed 30/12/2025]. With thanks to Zoë Jennings for discussing this point with me and helping me to articulate it further.

Either way, Tempest's focus does seem to have moved away from the classical and yet remained with the authentic. There is a possible exception of an edited and re-released *Hold Your Own*, although interestingly he now refers to it as a 'poetry book' rather than foregrounding the Tiresias story. It is noteworthy now for its position in his creative trajectory, rather than its thematic emphasis.[125] There is a sense of this trajectory in the parallels between the Tiresias poems and Tempest's more recent work, with the explicit trans narrative of 'Body' (2023 – 'she wishes she could cut away her hips')[126] and this depiction of Tiresias's moment of bodily transition in 2014:

> His body's responding to something beyond him.
>
> Swells where before there were dips.
>
> A crunching of muscle, the hips
>
> Opening up, bones roaring,
>
> Beneath them, boyhood shrinking
>
> […] Thinking nothing.
>
> Feeling new blood rushing.[127]

In many ways it almost seems as though, for now at least, Tempest has set the legitimising device of Classics to one side in order to express himself more baldly; he also appears to have constructed a polarity between Classics and personal identity, where he had previously been utilising the one to inform the other. Broadly, the trajectory has gone from the epic collectivism of *Brand New Ancients*, to the personal/embodied reality of *Hold Your Own*, and finally into a creative period apparently 'freed' from its classicising framework. However, classical allusion, given Tempest's

[125] Hunt (2025), 'The Bold Future'.

[126] Tempest (2023), 5.

[127] Tempest (2014a), 4.

historical use of it, now problematises ‘clarity of intent’ for him.

Given Tempest’s popularity as it is, this apparent turn away from – or indeed ‘unshackling’[128] from – Classics is in many ways revealing when one considers authenticity in the contemporary moment, and the role of Classics in its articulation going forward. Whether Tempest’s sense of ‘ancientness’ returns to recognisably classical material or not, his presentation of the individual response as a potential for connection rather than fragmentation remains. The increasingly critical discourse around notions of canonicity and the ‘classic’, in general, have destabilised the hegemony of established (and establishment) modes of reading and circulating texts.[129] Now that the minutiae of individual responses to, and understandings of, what constitutes classic(al) works are becoming legitimate, there is a more expansive understanding Graeco-Roman antiquity – one which is underpinned by differing affective responses and critical approaches. Tempest, in this sense, is very much part of this new critical, self-conscious wave of understanding classic texts as he negotiates the canon. Expressing his own situated relationship with a classic – if not classical – author, he writes:

> James Joyce told me once: ‘In the particular is contained the universal.’ I appreciated the advice. It taught me that the closer attention I pay to my ‘particular’, the better chance I have of reaching you in yours.[130]

[128] Butchard (2025), ‘The Unshackling of Kae Tempest’.

[129] See further Chapter 2.

[130] Tempest (2020a), 7.

Conclusion

Connection, repair, and reconciliation

This thesis has sought to provide new perspectives on the reception of antiquity in twentieth- and twenty-first-century British contexts by situating it in dialogue with how 'authentic(ity)' is understood in the same period. Today, with both 'the classic' and 'the authentic' the subjects of increasingly polarised debate, I suggest that considering the mechanisms at play behind both – and their similarities – is a profitable locus for opening up more connected readings.

Part I discussed the increased preoccupation with the 'authentic self' as a means of navigating a modern paradox whereby fragmentation and technological developments are experienced simultaneously in a world that has paradoxically never previously been so connected. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Existentialist, phenomenological, and affective turns have amplified the value of the western subject, with an attendant commodification in the capitalist world of the elusive 'authentic' experience. In Classics scholarship, too, we have seen a recentering of individual experience which has resulted in, on the one hand, a more expansive understanding of what it might mean to 'receive' antiquity and, on the other, a confrontation of the hegemonic assumptions underlying narratives of canonical ubiquity or collective imaginaries. Classics is now perhaps not so much everybody's as nobody's. Or, perhaps more generously: the discipline and its objects of study belong to no one group or individual any more than they do to any other.[1]

Part II explored three flashpoints where authenticating devices operate in relationships between the 'classical' and the 'authentic self': first, in the distancing from Victorian philhellenism

[1] A useful interpolation here is Stanford Humanities Center's 'The Classics Which Is (Not) Ours', a collection of writing co-curated by Emily Greenwood and Boris Shoshitaishvili, bringing together scholarship which engages in counter-ideological dialogue. The project's website may be viewed here: https://shc.stanford.edu/arcade/colloquies/classics-which-not-ours [accessed 2/1/2026].

and the wrestling with marginalised identities still not legally recognised at the beginning of the twentieth century; secondly, in responses to class and global conflict in the mid-to-late twentieth century; and thirdly, in highly politicised acts of 'self-titling' in the present world. This section furthers scholarly engagement with my three authors by offering a more detailed exploration of the authenticating devices present in their receptions of antiquity.

In the case of Forster, the intention has been to challenge certain assumptions about this canonical figure: looking beyond the novels to his more personal writings and 'backstage' work uncovers a far more subversive engagement with Classics and authentic identity than might have been expected. I hope to have shown in my discussion of Logue that there is a significant body of archival material (much of it still to be considered) that needs to be brought into conversations about the value of *War Music* for Classical Reception and its wider relevance. I have also demonstrated that it is the role of materiality in Logue's work and the metaphorical implications of his collaging process that need to be considered central to his receptions of Homer. Clearly the significant changes in Tempest's navigation of classical material over the ten or so years since he first came to public prominence need to be central to future discussion of his work. Whilst it may be tempting to focus on the more familiar territory of classical allusion in his early work, Tempest's refusal to continue inhabiting this realm of cultural 'acceptability' is extremely pertinent to ongoing conversations about authenticity in his work and to the discipline of Classics more broadly.

In Forster, Logue, and Tempest there is a shared trajectory from embracing the classical as a conduit to personal authenticity to a 'shaking off' of the canonical readings of the classical text in favour of more personal, more embodied engagement. Forsterian characters who fail to look beyond their philological focus inevitably lose sight of the authenticating potential of the land under their very feet. Logue, initially working from close translations and cribs, soon moves towards a model of poetic synthesis, where the classical is decentred in favour of a 'long, strong, new sort of poem'

of his own.[2] For Tempest, 'the arms of the myth'[3] were a useful way to explore the 'boiling hot secret in [his] heart'[4] without addressing it directly, all the while 'solidifying [his] acceptability'.[5] His recent work, at least, seems to suggest that he is moving away from this particular support structure. In today's climate of recognising the colonialising and hegemonic structures underpinning 'the classical', it can often be difficult to justify its continued use. Justine McConnell has recently wrestled with this very difficulty in her discussion of Derek Walcott: knowing what we now know, what does it mean to 'seek out the Graeco-Roman allusions' in our objects of study?[6] This is all the more pertinent when, as in the case of Walcott's Caribbean, the work is set in a context where 'a classical education' was not merely bought into but explicitly imposed as a tool of cultural imperialism.

My three authors experience the cultural capital of Classics in different ways: Forster is a direct product of the educational establishment that placed the discipline at its centre; Logue struggles with his liminal identity as a middle-class, grammar-school boy who did not attend university and had no formal classical education beyond secondary school; finally, Tempest intentionally positions himself in direct opposition to cultural elitism. All three are white and British, however, and it would undoubtedly be illuminating to follow this study in the future with a wider range of lived experiences and to explore the attendant subtleties of what 'authentic classical feelings' might mean in wider, more diverse contexts.

As this thesis has argued, both 'authenticity' and 'Classics/the classical' are constructs, and both speak to deep – often overlapping – desires. These desires are for heightened experience, for

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[2] Paterno Collection Christopher Logue Papers, Box 4 Folder 72. See further Chapter 5.

[3] *The Poet Laureate Has Gone To His Shed* 41:36.

[4] M. Segalov (2022, 12 March). 'Kate Tempest: I Was Living With This Boiling Hot Secret In My Heart', *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2022/mar/12/kae-tempest-i-was-living-with-this-boiling-hot-secret-in-my-heart [accessed 10/12/2025].

[5] Tempest (2020a), 34.

[6] McConnell (2023), 1.

sentiment that endures, for belonging, and for cross-temporal union – above all, for connection. Recognising the constructed nature of both 'authentic feelings' and 'classical feelings' is essential, even though it troubles the idea that a text may be considered 'authentically classical'. We have seen the polarities that have arisen between a desire to tear down the discipline of Classics entirely and a vociferous defence of it at all costs. As with questions of authenticity, these arguments about Classics have often been conducted along political lines, especially concerning the politics of the individual. It is imperative, however, that we recognise and acknowledge these constructed devices, lest we too fall backwards into the mud, clinging onto the idealised image we see reflected in the Claude glass. It does not necessarily follow that the reflected vista cannot be enjoyed; only that the subjectivity of the mediating device must be borne in mind and not assumed as revealing an absolute truth. As McConnell notes, 'the discipline of "Classics" embeds its historical assessment of itself in its very name, announcing itself as exceptional'.[7] This thesis has discussed modes of reception which explore relationships with the past whilst guarding against this assumed exceptionalism.

Relationships with 'authenticity' and the 'authentic self' bear striking similarities with attitudes to Classics. As discussed in Chapter 1, Heideggerean understandings of authenticity similarly lend themselves to harmful narratives of exceptionalism, and a valuing of individualism over the collective. For this reason, 'authenticity' is rightly identified as a 'jargon' by Adorno (or, more colloquially, a 'con' by the contemporary journalistic pieces discussed in my Introduction); and the issues of replication and massification (raised by both Adorno and Benjamin)[8] render the authenticating 'aura' of the original object (Outka's 'originary authentic')[9] a construction too. It is no coincidence that the leveraging of the 'authentic self' *and* the 'classical' on the alt right follows

[7] McConnell (2023), 2.

[8] See further Chapter 3.

[9] Outka (2012), 8.

such similar patterns: both derive from an understanding of these concepts that emphasises exceptionalism and fails to acknowledge plurality.

This thesis has demonstrated that classical material – or classicising impulses – are important, despite their historical and contemporary baggage. Classics, and the set of properties we term 'classics', are unlikely to disappear simply because we wish them away.[10] The same is true of a desire for authentic connection, and of the interplay between the two. Modes of reading which acknowledge difference without yielding to solipsism, and which foster connection without imposing hegemony, are clearly desirable and necessary. Tempest has proposed a useful starting point for considering both Classical Reception and the quest for the 'authentic' self when he states that: 'the closer attention I pay to my "particular", the better chance I have of reaching you in yours'.[11] Elsewhere in *On Connection*, Tempest writes:

> Creativity encourages connection. And connection to true, uncomfortable self allows us to take responsibility for our impact on other people, rather than going blindly through life in a disconnected buzz of one day into the next, taking what we can from every encounter with no further thought possible.[12]

To know oneself, he suggests, is to participate in the collective more fully and more subtly. Likewise, to recognise one's own affective response to a text, and its potential limitations, is a first step to participating more fully in wider discourse – about a source text, and about its modes of reception. Momigliano, in her introduction to *Cretomania*, notes that each individual reception can

[10] Although its nomenclature and focus may well change – see the case for Critical Ancient World Studies in Chapter 2.

[11] Tempest (2020a), 7.

[12] Tempest (2020), 4.

not only inform us further about the object of reception but also 'something about the subjective perception of the receiver'.[13]

All three of my literary examples foreground the body, and the thesis as a whole has emphasised the role of embodiment and situatedness in the navigation of 'authentic classical feelings' and that which 'feels right'. In a time of fragmentation and hunger for genuine connection, recognising the importance of the sensory is especially important; and to recognise the subjective authenticating devices that may also be at play is not to discount the significance of these feelings – rather, it is to understand their plurality. A return to Sedgwick's pioneering work on affect studies is invaluable here, particularly her theorisation of 'reparative reading'.[14] To read 'reparatively' is to pursue a model which is enhancing rather than destructive, gathering sources between texts with a view to 'assembl[ing] and confer[ing] plenitude',[15] sustenance, and – as the name suggests – repair. It is a strategy for survival,[16] and most significant of all it is invited to coexist with critique.[17] To read reparatively, then, is not to engage in blind optimism, far from it, but it does invite the reader to root their practice in a desire for care and connection. The multiplicity of the fragmented self is a starting point for this connection, where 'the multiplicity of differentials in embodiment and identity that distinguish any two people also paradoxically provide the ground for […] the equally multiplicitous attachments we develop with other bodies, objects, affects, experiences, ideas, textures…'.[18]

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[13] Momigliano (2018), 20.

[14] Presented in opposition to 'paranoid reading', where inquiry is driven by preconceived suspicion. She writes that 'paranoia tends to be contagious; more specifically, paranoia is drawn toward and tends to construct symmetrical relations, in particular, symmetrical epistemologies'. Sedgwick (2003), 126.

[15] Sedgwick (2003), 149

[16] Sedgwick (2003), 150. That reparative reading emerges from queer studies is no coincidence.

[17] Sedgwick (2003), 146.

[18] Fawaz (2019), 7.

This reparative mode of reading lends itself especially well to the study of Classics, where literal fragments are assembled and reconfigured as a means for survival. Notable examples of its use include Melissa Mueller's 2023 book *Sappho and Homer: A Reparative Reading* and Andrea Capra & Barbara Graziosi's 2024 chapter considering reparative reading 'as a way of living', which invites putting care back into a situation where 'we may end up feeling ashamed of our own curiosity and pleasure as classical scholars'.[19] For Mueller, this theorisation is appealing due to its focus on 'coherence and sustenance in literary forms and episodes typically characterised by their incompletion or failure' as well as its foregrounding of individual experience, irrespective of professionalism or scholarly background.

Recognising the plurality of affective resonance – asking oneself 'why does this *feel* (classically) authentic?' – can be a very helpful part of this reparative process. As Güthenke & Holmes have argued:

> In order to pursue the more radical implications of calls to open ourselves up to a more heterogeneous, pluralistic, unfamiliar, and perhaps unexpectedly generative ancient world, we need to think more about the implications of removing the canon as the limit for our understanding of what it means to work as a classicist.[20]

They advocate for an 'open field', where not only a wider range of texts but a wider range of readers can be invited in. Their suggestion that this inclusiveness may be 'unexpectedly generative' is reminiscent of Sedgwick's advocating – in the context of reparative reading – that texts should be

[19] Capra & Graziosi (2024), 146. Cf. also Güthenke (2020) for its foregrounding of affective, loving relationality in philological experience.

[20] Güthenke & Holmes (2018), 62-63.

allowed to 'surprise'.[21] This sense of defamiliarisation has been a recurrent strand in the thesis, and there is a genuine need to redeem the classics by 'making them strange again'.[22]

As we have seen, Forster invites his reader to reconsider the familiar canonical texts of the previous century by resituating them in their own, embodied contexts. Logue consciously deploys defamiliarising devices throughout *War Music* for similar reasons, whilst also reminding us of his own situatedness and patterns of reading. Tempest explicitly cautions against any naïve, universalising readings: one person's 'unexpected' is simply another's familiar, and the artist urges exploration of one's own specificity in order to understand theirs ('the closer attention I pay to my "particular" the better I chance I have of reaching you in yours').[23] This reclamatory engagement with classical material, presented not in spite of but *informed by* a nonstandard relationship with the subject, is apparent in all three of my case studies and invites modes of engagement that are pluralistic and reparative.

The invitation in reparative reading to 'assemble and confer plenitude' in turn invites not only consideration of what is in front of us but also asks, without preconception, 'what can be made from this?'. To read in a reparative way is actively to embrace the 'fragments and part-objects' that one encounters, both in lived experience and through the text, and from them to assemble a source of nourishment, comfort, surprise, and possibility.[24] This involves recognising the arbitrary, or even harmful origins of such 'fragments'; and the focus now is on assembling but not smoothing over into any assumed cohesion. 'Re-membering', yes, but not forgetting. The metaphor of the collage, expressed most explicitly in Logue's work, becomes powerful here. To collage is to take broken

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[21] Sedgwick (2003), 130.

[22] Domeneghini & Barnes (2025), 23.

[23] In the opening section to *On Connection* he states this explicitly: 'I do not believe that "our differences don't matter" or that we are all the same. I acknowledge the social, historical, economic and political context of our differences and how they impact upon our lives. I also think that beneath our direct lives experiences and our inherited or ancestral experiences […] there is commonality, and I believe that this is something we can all access through creativity'. Tempest (2020), 3-4.

[24] Sedgwick (2003), 146; Sedgwick (2003), 128.

fragments and assemble them together in a way that produces art, that may well nourish comfort, and surprise, but which also consciously recognises the joints and leaves them bare. If, in a Forsterian sense, we seek to 'connect […] live in fragments no longer', those points of joining – of authentic connection – become just as important as the whole.

The creative and scholarly potential of the fragmentary has continued to yield fruitful discussion.[25] Combining these fragments into a form of collage invites us to consider how these 'odds and ends' might be, and indeed have been, reassembled. What has historically been selected for inclusion, and why are there gaps? How might we critically fabulate between those gaps? There can be a sense of freedom in this playfulness, but also of doing the important critical work of recognising subjectivity. Samuel Agbamu, discussing the role of Classics in the work of William Kentridge, argues that 'history is a collage rather than a narrative […] the question is whether we choose to hide the joints and scars between fragments'.[26] Dan-El Padilla Peralta, in his recommendation that we 'overhaul the discipline from nuts to bolts' is inviting just that sort of recognition.[27] Foster, in his presentation of the related term 'bricolage' as a redemptive metaphor for reading, recommends 'a process of textual play, of loss and gain', and that 'whereas myth abstracts and pretends to the natural, bricolage cuts up, makes concrete, delights in the artificial […] it stands for no pretense of presence or universal guise for relative truths'.[28]

In one's own personal sense of authentic engagement with the text, too, it is helpful to consider the assembled 'collages' of experiences and prior readings that the reader brings along with them. As seen in Forster, Logue, and Tempest, these are rarely – if ever – exclusively classical. In this way, the constructed nature of 'authentic classical feelings' can be made apparent while their

[25] See further Chapter 2.

[26] Agbamu (2022), 266.

[27] See further Chapter 2.

[28] Foster (1985), 64.

potential is also engaged with. There is an appeal to the 'unfinishedness' of both texts and of our relationship with them.

Both 'the classic text' and 'the authentic' are constructs, collages, in themselves – a set of assembled properties. But 'the classics' can, and should, be open to being taken apart, rearranged, and interspersed among other textual sources of equal (authentic?) importance to the creator or the reader. Just as with the motley cast of characters aboard the Celestial Omnibus, those other textual sources might include the clippings and post-its on Logue's workbench, or Tempest's expansive appeal to any and all 'old stories', which afford a sense of personal affective resonance leading to wider collaboration.

As Tempest, reflecting on the first twenty years of his career, reminds the reader:

> Words on a page are incomplete. The poem, the novel or the non-fiction pamphlet are finished when they are taken up and engaged with. Connection is collaborative. For words to have meaning, they have to be read.
>
> […]
>
> The writer's intentions for their own work are as misguided as a parent's intentions for the life of their child. What can you really know about what their life will become? They must become who they are, and this will be transitory because they will be new to whoever encounters them.[29]

[29] K. Tempest (2020, 3 October). 'What I have Learned From 20 Years on the Mic', *The Guardian,* https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/oct/03/kae-tempest-what-i-have-learned-from-20-years-on-the-mic [accessed 3/1/2026]

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