

*From Gibbon to Auden: Essays on the Classical Tradition.* By G.W. BOWERSOCK. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. Pp. ix + 240. Cloth, \$45.00. ISBN 978-0-19-537667-8.

There must be very few classicists who do not know the name of Glen Bowersock (hereafter B.), who has, over a half century, become one of the preeminent figures of our profession. A product of Harvard and Oxford, his first books, benefiting from the influence of Sir Ronald Syme, were devoted to the relations of Rome and its Greek-speaking peoples. [[1]] From Harvard B. moved in 1980 to the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton as Professor of Ancient History, where he became emeritus a few years ago.

B.'s interests expanded widely over the years; I remember stories he told when he was preparing his book on Roman Arabia, which appeared in 1983. What is of interest in the present discussion is his concern for the classical tradition, the impact and survival of antiquity in later eras. This book contains seventeen essays, which originally appeared in a great variety of publications over a span of more than thirty years. They are presented in three parts. The first (with six essays) deals with the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the second (with four) the 19<sup>th</sup>, and the last (with seven) the 20<sup>th</sup>. There is thus something likely to appeal to every reader's taste.

The book has been elegantly, almost impeccably produced, although some may lament the rather small typeface. I noted only four typos. [[2]] None affects meaning, and there are very few places where one might wish to disagree with B. or expand his discussion.

The first part begins with four essays on Gibbon and *The Decline and Fall*. On p. 5, B. remarks that Theodor Mommsen "won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1902, just a few months before his death." One may debate "a few months," since Mommsen died on November 1, 1903; "about a year" would perhaps give a better sense. I wish that B. had included the lecture on Gibbon which he presented at Stanford University in 1987, on the occasion of the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Gibbon's birth (*Gibbon's Historical Imagination*). The remaining two essays deal with "Suetonius in the Eighteenth Century" and "The Rediscovery of Herculaneum and Pompeii."

Part II is extremely varied: "Sign Language," "Berlioz, Virgil, and Rome," "Edward Lear in Petra," and "Burckhardt on Late Antiquity from the *Constantin* to the *Griechische Kulturgeschichte*." I found the Berlioz paper, which was presented at a symposium at the Metropolitan Opera in February 2003, when *Les Troyens* were being

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performed, the most interesting. B. writes (p. 90) that "By the 1820s Rome had nearly disappeared as an operatic subject." The theme of Arminius, Thusnelda, and Varus, which had been extremely popular for far more than a century (including an opera by Händel in 1737), retained its popularity until well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with a roster over the years of more than seventy operas.

The discussion of Burckhardt is informative and sensitive. He was a great scholar, but prided himself on being unlike Mommsen and other German historians. He was also Swiss, and in this regard as well an outsider to the German historical scene.

Part III begins with a review of Caroline Winterer's *The Culture of Classicism: Ancient Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life*. B. basically argues that the impact of the classics remained steady throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although emphasis shifted from Rome to Greece. Not every scholar has been so sanguine; I think of Meyer Reinhold and his essay on "the silver age." [[3]] Polybius, a Greek historian, merits a place among the Latin authors, such as Cicero and Tacitus, who had great impact upon the Founding Fathers.

The next three essays deal with Cavafy, followed by an appreciation of Momigliano and a discussion of "A Modern Aesop," Ryszard Kapuscinski's description of himself in his *Travels with Herodotus*. Kapuscinski was a Polish international reporter who grew up under the Communist regime. The final contribution, "Auden on the Fall of Rome," offers an introduction to and text of an essay on Rome that Auden wrote for *Life* magazine in 1966, but which the editors rejected. B. presented it to the public for the first time in 1995. This is the longest essay in the book.

*Satis superque*. Bowersock has brought forth another splendid volume, which enlightens and informs in many different ways. We may all be grateful to him.

HERBERT W. BENARIO  
*Emory University*

[[1]] *Augustus and the Greek World* and *Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire*, both published by Oxford University Press (1965 and 1969).

[[2]] P. 80, line 2, "This" for "Thus"; p. 121, second line of the Biographical Note, "Gesamtausgabe"; p. 128, "Briggs'" for "Briggs's"; and p. 222, "Keeley" for "Keely."

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[[3]] "The Silver Age of Classical Studies in America, 1790-1830," in *Classica Americana* (Detroit 1984) 174-203.