BOOK REVIEW

Greek and Roman Classics in the British Struggle for Social Reform. Edited by HENRY STEAD and EDITH HALL. Bloomsbury Studies in Classical Reception. London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015. Pp. xiv + 368. Hardcover, £80 ISBN 978-1-47258-426-7.

The bulk of this volume derives from papers presented at "Classics and Class," a conference organized by Edith Hall and held at the British Academy 1–2 July 2010. It grew further with articles commissioned under the aegis of a British Arts and Humanities Research Council grant, and now in its full form presents to us sixteen essays concerning the impact of classical ideas and images upon British society and social reformers from the French revolutionary era to the mid-1960s. Using a wide range of newly gathered materials drawn from popular culture, education, fitness and bodybuilding, union politics, burlesque theater and higher-brow literary culture (John Keats, Charles Dickens and Samuel Taylor Coleridge), the writers offer the readers proof that the "exclusionist model" of classical studies which assumes that access to and knowledge of the classics was "restricted to a small minority" and used "primarily to maintain barriers between social classes" (2) is not our only model and that it does not explain the "far more colourful and varied picture of British classics" found by these researchers (4). Indeed "[w]hile the dominant classes may have had the master key to the Classics," this by no means meant that "others could not gain entrance to the classics" (4). And some of them in fact went on to make "it their life's work to cut and distribute new keys" [to others] that promoted "access to all areas" through teaching, translation, graphic arts and essay writing (4).

The essays, varying in length from nine to twenty-two pages and often illustrated, are filled with evidence taken from what at first glance might seem unlikely places (i.e. documents concerning the struggles of the British middle and working classes, the hopes and dreams of various educational and political reformers including Fabians, feminists, Communists, black colonial émigrés and the Workers' Educational Association as well as writers such as Robert Barnabas Brough (1828–1860) who as a satirist and poet also produced comic texts for the stage). The cumulative effect of their arguments is to move us away from the monocular

and "conservative tradition of institutionalized elitism" and shift us towards seeing "a history of broadly inclusive cultural practice and inspired creativity" (19) that forms an important pattern in the fabric of British culture.

As such the volume is both a template and an impetus for further study not only in the history of the United Kingdom, but in every place that Greek and Roman culture has reached. For an industrious scholar primary source materials can be found from architecture, city planning and even coinage (Europa's € epsilon and the euro) to ephemeral materials such as newspapers, magazines, posters and circulars, especially those involving the commercial designs used by advertisers and often drawn from Greek and Roman mythology. The strength of Stead and Hall's book lies in giving us "the crucial voices" (2) and additional hard evidence of what we sometimes take for granted, namely that "the very susceptibility of ancient Greek and Roman materials to reinterpretation from diverse political vantage points has been one of the most important guarantees of their cultural stamina and repeated rediscovery" (10). The "primary aim of the team of researchers" in this collaboration was "to explore several overlapping cultural arenas in which people struggling to promote reform with in British society engaged with the cultural property broadly defined as 'classical culture" (9). With these ideas in mind we can perhaps better determine whether Michael Gove is the Brexit Brutus that Boris Johnson's father says he is (http://thedailybanter.com/2016/07/borisjohnson-gets-the-julius-caesar-treatment/accessed 22 August 2016).

MICHELE VALERIE RONNICK

Wayne State University, aa3276@wayne.edu