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CLASSICISM IN SOUTH AFRICA*

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G. Parker, (ed.), *South Africa, Greece, Rome: Classical Confrontations*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 2017. Pp. 520. ISBN 978-1-107-10081-7. £110.00.

This exceptional volume edited by Grant Parker on the role of Classics and its heritage in South Africa has been in preparation for a number of years. Whatever time was necessary to produce *South Africa, Greece, Rome: Classical Confrontations* has shown to be well worth the wait for scholars of the classical reception and tradition.[1] Parker declares that the aims of his edited volume are to examine South Africa's past in relation to classical antiquity (p. xxi), to extract specifically South African contexts of this antiquity, and to examine the 'afterlives' of classical culture in the country (p. 6).

Theoretical backdrop: Classical tradition, reception or heritage?

While the first part of the title *South Africa, Greece, Rome: Classical Confrontations*, with 'South Africa' appearing first, implicitly suggests the classical reception model,[2] the latter part of the title significantly stresses, as Parker points out, 'the inequalities and tensions' involved in the 'cultural histories of both South Africa and the Classics' (p. xxi). In the volume as a whole, the issue of the classical tradition versus the classical reception is glossed over, with both terms being used broadly without a

* In memory of Tristan and Chantelle and five happy years in South Africa.

[1] In addition to an e-book format, Cambridge University Press has published a paperback version intended for its South Africa readership.

[2] A title such as *Greece, Rome, South Africa: Classical Influences* would have potentially suggested a relatively uncomplicated line of continuity in the classical tradition proceeding from Greece and (or through) Rome to South Africa.

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close distinction being made between their definition and application (cf. p. 10). This approach is similar to the one followed by Anthony Grafton, Glenn Most, and Salvatore Settis in their recent dictionary *The Classical Tradition*, whose first sentence (in the preface) makes obvious the title's synonymity with 'classical reception'.[3]

While Parker uses both 'classical tradition' (pp. xxi, 9, 50, 53) and 'classical reception' (pp. i, 10, 42), other contributors use 'classical tradition' a couple of dozen times[4] and the phrase 'classical reception' not at all. In his 'Prologue', Parker does include a note maintaining that some classicists have preferred the concept of reception to that of tradition on the basis that the latter 'implies uncritical celebration', but, as he observes, this is not entirely the case (p. 10 n. 10). Parker goes on to argue that 'it has become axiomatic, at least in the historical disciplines generally, that the notion of tradition deserves some measure of scepsis, and that the term has lost its supposed innocence.'

Indeed, one of the reasons that classicists began to favour the use of the term 'classical reception' is not just because the 'classical tradition' can imply 'uncritical celebration', but because it can also suggest other ideologically questionable positions and evoke various negative associations.[5] Parker himself observes that 'the classical tradition in South Africa has been associated with colonialism' (p. 9), while Federico Freschi mentions its association with British imperialism (p. 65). The perspective of the classical tradition does have the potential to emphasize the 'influence' of classical civilization and ideas upon later periods of western civilization in such a way as to suggest the idea of the passing on eternal ideals, truths, and forms to successive generations up to the time of the present age.[6] Even though the notion of a direct link between the classical and modern western worlds *may* be inherent in the approach, the classical tradition may also suggest an indirect link, that is, a connection to the ancient world through the intermediary of a previous engagement.[7] In general, the majority of recent critics consider the classical tradition model to be more rigid ideologically than the concept of classical reception in that greater

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[3] Grafton *et al.* 2010:vii: 'This book aims to provide a reliable and wide-ranging guide to the *reception* [my emphasis] of classical Graeco-Roman antiquity in all its dimensions in later cultures.'

[4] Pp. 57, 63, 65, 69, 79, 83, 151, 157, 162, 166, 190, 192–94, 204–5, 207, 317, 322–23, 335, 410.

[5] For a favourable perspective of the term 'classical tradition' and its subject matter, see Silk *et al.* 2014:3–14.

[6] Cf. Hardwick 2003:3.

[7] Cf. Silk *et al.* 2014:5.

emphasis is placed upon the past and what it has had to offer to a subsequent period or culture.[8]

The classical tradition model sometimes has been laden explicitly or implicitly with Eurocentric assumptions and values. The supposed civilizing aspect of the classical tradition and its 'influence' is a frequent theme, for example, of Gilbert Highet's study titled *The Classical Tradition: Greek and Roman Influences on Western Literature* (1949).[9] Recent edited volumes such as Craig Kallendorf's *A Companion to the Classical Tradition* (2007) and James Porter's *Classical Pasts: The Classical Traditions of Greece and Rome* (2005) avoid this overt association, as does Michael Silk, Ingo Gildenhard, and Rosemary Barrow's *The Classical Tradition: Art, Literature, Thought* (2014), though the authors of the latter tome view the 'classical tradition' as 'arguably' always having had 'strongly positive connotations', as being a wider concept than the 'classical reception', and as vying for essentially the same contested content, topics, and themes.[10]

Some scholars who criticize the concept of the 'classical tradition' do so while attempting to establish their own case for the use of the term 'classical reception'.[11] Silk, Gildenhard, and Barrow's expansive and multifarious concept of the 'classical tradition' presents a direct challenge to Lorna Hardwick's view of the 'classical tradition' as being based upon a 'narrow range of perspectives' and capable of assuming an 'unproblematic' signification that needs only to be comprehended and applied to situations remote from its Greek or Roman context.[12]

'Reception', which Charles Martindale and Richard Thomas note was preferred instead of 'tradition' or 'heritage' in order to emphasize the '*active* role played by receivers',[13] is not without its own conceptual issues and problematic associations. The term 'reception' itself has been criticized *inter alia* for suggesting a 'relatively weak or passive mode of acceptance or recognition'.[14] Martindale challenges this perception and responds in turn that '"tradition" . . . *might* [my emphasis] imply that the process of trans-

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[8] For recent discussions of and comparisons between the terms 'classical tradition' and 'classical reception', see Hardwick 2003:1–11; Budelmann and Haubold 2007; De Pourcq 2012; Broder 2013; Silk *et al.* 2014:3–14; Foster forthcoming.

[9] For a discussion of the interpretive consequences of using the model of the classical tradition as opposed to that of the classical reception, see Dominik forthcoming.

[10] Silk *et al.* 2014:3–14, esp. 4–7, 12–13.

[11] E.g., Hardwick 2003:1–4.

[12] Hardwick 2003:3.

[13] Martindale 2006:11.

[14] Baehr and O'Brien 1994:86–87; Silk *et al.* 2014:4–7, 12–13, esp. 12.

mission is comfortably uncontested',[15] but this need not be the case, as Silk, Gildenhard, and Barrow suggest through their broad and diverse conception of the 'classical tradition'.[16] Some scholars have attempted to use other terms (e.g., 'influence', *Nachleben*, 'afterlives'[17]) or to coin new ones (e.g., 'Deep Classics')[18] either to provide variety or to avoid the potentially pejorative or detracting associations of 'tradition', 'heritage', and 'reception'.

It is not until his concluding chapter of *South Africa*, *Greece*, *Rome* (hereafter *SAGR*) that Parker seems to express a preference for the phrase 'classical heritage', as suggested by the title of the discussion (Ch. 18. 'Classical Heritage? By Way of an Afterword', pp. 485–95). He notes that the term 'heritage' can function as an expression of 'a legacy, in the sense of an enriching survival or bequest, or as a burden, either on the lines of inheriting a debt or of traumatic collective memory' (p. 485). Among the contributors to Parker's volume, only Elizabeth Rankin, Rolf Michael Schneider (pp. 141, 152, 162), and Kathleen Coleman (pp. 410–12, 424) use 'classical heritage' in their discussions. The term 'classical heritage' is, of course, not a new one and, like the concept of the 'classical tradition', is invested with its own ideological baggage; for example, the title of R. R. Bolgar's *The Classical Heritage and Its Beneficiaries* (1954) suggests explicitly that those subject to classical ideas inherently must benefit from them.

Again, at least in the way the phrase 'classical heritage' has been used, the emphasis usually has been placed upon the enriching cultural 'legacy' of Classics rather than on its potential to function as a negative cultural burden or collective memory. But the concept of the 'classical heritage' is no less immune to the charge of cultural bias than that of the 'classical tradition'. The term 'legacy' itself (cf. Parker, p. 485) has also been used to refer to the 'influence' of classical ideas and works upon subsequent civilizations and their cultural, artistic, and intellectual achievements, as evident in Moses Finley's edited volume *The Legacy of Greece: A New Appraisal* (1981) and Richard Jenkyn's *The Legacy of Rome: A New Appraisal* (1992), and this term is used by Jonathan Allen (pp. 256, 258, 261) and Kathleen Coleman (p. 411) precisely in this way in their chapters. While the theoretical underpinnings of *SAGR* in respect of the use of the terms 'classical tradition', 'classical reception', and 'classical heritage' are never clarified, this does not detract from the solid contributions to scholarship that it makes to the general area.

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[15] Martindale 2007:300.
[16] Silk *et al.* 2014:1–14, esp. 4–6, 10, 12–14.
[17] Cf. Parker (this volume; hereafter 'Parker'), p. 6.
[18] Butler 2016:1–20.

Contributors

The contributors to *SAGR* are predominantly South African academics and independent scholars, though there are a half dozen foreign academics who help to provide an international perspective. Seventeen of the eighteen (or 95 per cent of) the contributors to the volume are white, while about 90 per cent of the population of South Africa is black African, Asian, or coloured.[19] Although the South African editor, who teaches at a prestigious American university, comes from a previously disadvantaged group, the collective voice and perspective represented is largely that of the race that has always set the agenda for the investigation of Classics in the country.

One South African academic who has attempted to address the imbalance inherent in a Eurocentric scholarly perspective is Michael Lambert, who in his own distinguished teaching career and ground-breaking comparative scholarship on ancient Greek and traditional Zulu cultures,[20] has illustrated that there are unique opportunities in teaching and research owing to close parallels between modern, indigenous, and classical civilizations in such areas as myth, religion, ritual, medicine, magic, and ethics.[21] While Elke Steinmeyer compares the Electra myth with Xhosa culture as it pertains to Yaël Farber's *Molora* (pp. 445–66),[22] *SAGR* would have benefitted enormously from a chapter that explored in a detailed manner the similarities between various aspects of indigenous black South African cultures and the classical world.

The aforementioned observation about the lack of discussion from a black African perspective, which reflects the fact that there are few black South African classicists, is not intended to constitute a criticism of the volume itself, whose contributions are of high quality throughout; moreover, the bias among the contributors is in favour of the 'subaltern' voice and previously disadvantaged groups. My point is that the perspective of *SAGR* is bound to be skewed at least somewhat by the perspective of its authorship in a way that may even be impossible to detect since there is

[19] Black Africans comprise 80 per cent of the South African population, while the coloured population make up 10 per cent; these figures are based upon the South African National Census of 2011: see *Census 2011: Census in Brief* (2012). The term 'coloured' is used in official documents in South Africa to refer to people of mixed parentage.

[20] See Lambert 2011:85–90 with accompanying bibliography, 154.

[21] Cf. Dominik 1992:167–70; 2010:20.

[22] See below, 'Literature'.

only the single non-white voice of the editor himself (in the first and last chapters) against which to compare the predominant white collective voice in the rest of the volume.

Organization of contents

With any edited volume, there is always the question of how to organize the disparate chapters. *SAGR* is no exception in this regard and there are at least a few ways in which its eighteen chapters could have been organized. Parker has chosen to organize the volume's contents both thematically and conceptually rather than by genre or subject matter. In addition to 'Part I. Prologue', which consists of a sole chapter (pp. 3–52), there are six other parts consisting of between two and four chapters. These are titled 'Part II. Conceiving Empire' (pp. 53–137), 'Part III. Conceiving the Nation' (pp. 139–231), 'Part IV. Law, Virtue and Truth-telling' (pp. 233–80), 'Part V. Cultures of Collecting' (pp. 281–350), 'Part VI. Boundary Crossers' (pp. 351–442), and 'Part VII. After Apartheid' (pp. 443–95), which includes an afterword (pp. 467–84).

While the titles of the seven parts of the volume generally seem appropriate, not all the figures in Part VI appear to qualify as 'boundary crossers' and only one of them, as Parker points out (p. 351), was born in South Africa. The black classicist D.D.T. Jabavu is obviously a boundary-crosser given that he is the first and only black to obtain a chair in Classics in South Africa, but the other figures discussed in Part VI (Benjamin Farrington, Mary Renault, and Douglas Livingstone) follow in the path of various South Africans and immigrants who have been involved or engaged with Classics in some form as academics, writers, and poets.

At the end of the 'Prologue', Parker categorizes the various chapters of *SAGR* according to the following subjects: 'material objects', 'styles and media', 'concepts', 'literary texts', 'mythology', and 'historical consciousness' (p. 51). An examination of the contents of the volume reveals a loosely conceived division of chapters into the following four general areas: 'Classics and ideas' (Chs. 3–4, 6–8, 11), 'Architecture and artefacts' (Chs. 2, 5, 9–10), 'Literature' (Chs. 14–17), and 'Academic biographies' (Chs. 12–13). Three of these four areas are close to Parker's own general categories of classical 'texts, ideas, styles and artefacts' he identifies toward the beginning of his prologue (p. 6) as those his volume aims to explore.

In general terms, a division of this book into the aforementioned or similar four areas would have enabled Parker to provide an overview in his 'Prologue' of how Classics was used in each of these areas based upon brief discussions of the contributing chapters before proceeding to an overall

analysis of the use of classical antiquity in South African 'histories' either toward the end of this first chapter or in his afterword (Ch. 18). More specifically, such a division would have enabled similar subjects to be grouped together and treated adjacently, for example, the two chapters dealing with the classically motivated imperialism of Cecil Rhodes (Ch. 3) and his commissioning of English translations of classical works cited in Edward Gibbon's influential *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (Ch. 11), which was published during the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

Despite only a brief discussion in the introduction that attempts to bring the various threads of the individual chapters together as part of a cohesive overview, there is still the sense that the various chapters of *SAGR* coalesce into a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. This is due not only to Parker's fascinating and wide-ranging treatment of classicism in South African society in the first part but also to his mini-introductions to the other six parts of the volume and the predominantly high quality of the individual chapters.

'Prologue' and mini-introductions

Normally any edited volume of scholarly quality should have an extensive introduction that places the volume in its historical and cultural context. Ideally such an introduction should include a cohesive discussion of its subject and situate the individual chapters within this general context. In the 'Prologue' (Ch. 1. 'The Azanian Muse: Classicism in Unexpected Places', pp. 3–52), Parker provides a brief overview of the focus and aim of *SAGR* (pp. 9–10, esp. 10) as well as a two-page synopsis (pp. 51–52) of its chapters as they relate to the intersection of Greece and Rome with South African 'histories', which he defines as politics, culture, and short narratives of specific individuals (cf. p. 10). Instead of providing in-depth examination of the individual chapters that would inevitably repeat many of their points, Parker chooses reasonably (given the size of the volume) to outline and contextualize the chapters in his mini-introductions (my phrase) to six of the seven parts of the volume.

The 'Prologue' and mini-introductions combined generally serve to provide the cultural and social contexts for the discussions that follow, to fill in some of the gaps that are bound to appear in any edited book of this type, and to link the various chapters thematically in such a way as to provide a coherent framework for the volume as a whole. More specifically, Parker chooses in his 'Prologue' to focus upon elements of classicism in South African culture as manifested in various contexts and forms. As

prelude to his discussion of this topic, Parker provides a fascinating anecdote about a meeting at Cape Town airport in February 1991 designed to open the path for negotiations to end apartheid and commence the transition to a full-fledged democracy. During an interval in talks, Chris Hani, Chief of Staff of the ANC's armed wing and a Latin and English graduate, and Gerrit Viljoen, a government minister and former Classics professor, commenced a discussion about Sophocles' *Philoctetes*. While this exchange between two political adversaries surprised witnesses, Hani impressed Viljoen with his knowledge and enthusiasm about the tragedy.

The aforementioned incident, though incidental, may have contributed even slightly to a thawing of the tense atmosphere at the historic meeting, but it is mainly recounted by Parker as a demonstration of his main thesis that classicism is found in unexpected and surprising places, which the contributions in the rest of the volume are intended to illustrate. Indeed, while elements of classicism are found in unsurprising places, especially among the educated and elite, it is frequently seen in everyday or 'popular' environments, which Parker refers to as 'vernacular classicism' (p. 47). At the same time, while it may not be so unexpected to see classical elements in public places, including architecture and monuments, given the colonial history of South Africa, it may be more surprising when found in modern poetry, for example, that of Douglas Livingstone (see Coleman, pp. 410–42), or in domestic architecture, such as the extravagant exterior of a home in the upper-class suburb of Hyde Park in Johannesburg (see Freschi, pp. 55–87).

In the rest of the 'Prologue', Parker includes sections titled 'The Muse in Azania' (pp. 7–10), which refers to the heritage of classicism in its various manifestations in modern South Africa, which is referred to by an ancient name originally intended to serve as an anti-colonial alternative; 'Authority' (pp. 10–21), which examines the authority of classical antiquity in southern Africa; 'The Struggle with Greek and Latin' (pp. 21–27), which discusses three events in the struggle against apartheid, including a performance on Robben Island of *Antigone* for which Nelson Mandela played the part of Creon, as corroboration for the Parker's thesis that some of the contexts in which aspects of classicism appears are surprising; and 'Practices of Classicism' (pp. 27–42), which examines how South Africans have utilized classical antiquity as a political symbol, as a source of authority, and as a means to create identities in the public and private domains; the various contexts include architecture, literature (drama and novels), politics, education, and popular culture.

The rest of the 'Prologue' features sections titled 'Towards a Balance Sheet' (pp. 42–47), which considers how classical antiquity in South Africa compares with other 'pasts' in Africa and is presented today, for

example, not only in museums but also in literature and public discourse – the latter often in an indirect way; 'Remember Dido' (pp. 48–51), which examines a few examples and the possibility of engagement between classical / European and African cultural forms and contexts in South Africa; and 'Classical Engagements' (pp. 51–52), which provides a brief summary of the volume's focus and contents.

A particularly useful feature of *SAGR* is the system of cross-referencing to various topics and figures of particular importance, particularly in the 'Prologue' (Part I) and mini-introductions to Parts II-VII. A couple of dozen cross-references appear in the aforementioned brief synopsis of the volume's chapters at the end of the 'Prologue' (pp. 51–52). Elsewhere in the 'Prologue' and in the mini-introductions, there are cross-references to specific figures that are treated in the individual chapters such as Roy Campbell, André Brink (p. 14), Douglas Livingstone (pp. 14, 351–52), Nelson Mandela, Chris Hani (p. 19), Cecil Rhodes (pp. 19, 53, 281), Gerard Moerdyk (pp. 29–30, 139), Mary Renault (pp. 31, 351–52, 443), J.H. Hofmeyr, T.J. Haarhoff, Martin Versfeld (pp. 30–31, 233), D.D.T. Jabavu, Benjamin Farrington (pp. 351–52), and Yaël Farber (p. 443).

Cross-references made in the 'Prologue' and mini-introductions to various topics discussed in the chapters include classically inspired private and public architecture in Johannesburg (pp. 19, 27, 53), Medea and Electra (p. 28), imperialism and nationalism (pp. 30–31), the 'Mediterranean' identity and ethos in Cape Town (pp. 31–32, 40, 53), the use of classical myth (p. 43), the Beit Collection in Cape Town (p. 44, 281), artefacts and books in private collections and/or museums (pp. 46, 281), the Afrikaner 'Kinderensiklopedie' or children's encyclopaedia (p. 139), the influence of classical values upon South African law and the new constitution (p. 233), and the concept of heritage (p. 443). The mini-introductions themselves include cross-references to material examined in the 'Prologue' (p. 139) and in earlier chapters (p. 443). This system of cross-referencing is also employed in some of the chapters (e.g., pp. 88, 90, 109, 285, 369). Without cross-referencing them, Parker does also mention other individuals (e.g., Herbert Baker) and themes (e.g., the connections between Classics and colonialism and between Classics and apartheid) that crop up in the various chapters.

Classics and ideas

One of the most pervasive themes of *SAGR* is the use of Classics in the history of ideas in South Africa. The chapters dealing with this theme are essential reading for anyone interested in the connection between Classics,

colonialism, and imperialism. Two of the discussions deal with Cecil Rhodes, a controversial colonial figure who has towered over the South African cultural and intellectual landscape. In Chapter 3 ('Cecil John Rhodes, the Classics and imperialism, pp. 88–113), John Hilton shows how Rhodes' classical background and interest in ancient history contributed to the development of his imperialist ideas, which in turn helped to inspire his followers to commemorate his life through a classical lens and ultimately left a legacy that influenced the cultural framework of South Africa.

In a complementary discussion to that of Hilton, David Wardle (Ch. 11. 'Cecil Rhodes as a Reader of the Classics: the Groote Schuur Collection', pp. 336–50) examines the part of Rhodes' library devoted to Classics, especially translations of classical texts into English commissioned by him, which, as noted by Parker (p. 488), reflects the nexus of Classics and colonialism. Rhodes' interest in Classics should be viewed within the broader context of his cultural role as a symbol of British and cultural imperialism. In the 'Preface' (p. 21; cf. p. 53) Parker notes how the controversial legacy of Rhodes as a symbol of British and classical imperialism inspired students at the University of Cape Town to protest against it and to demand the removal of his statue from campus as part of a student movement known as 'Rhodes Must Fall' in 2015–2016.

Two other chapters (7 and 4) in *SAGR* deal with notions of imperialism as they intersect with Classics. Jonathan Allen (Ch. 7. 'A Competing Discourse on Empire', pp. 235–61) explores the views of three classically educated Afrikaner intellectuals (J.H. Hofmeyr, T.J. Haarhoff and Martin Versfeld) on empire, nation, and race and explains how in various ways they used their knowledge of the classical world to challenge the 'ideologies of imperialism' (p. 259). Peter Merrington (Ch. 4. 'The "Mediterranean" Cape: Reconstructing an Ethos', pp. 114–37) examines the classical world as ethos in South Africa, specifically the idea of the Cape as a 'Mediterranean' (that is, European) construct in terms of its landscape and history.

Deon H. van Zyl (Ch. 8. 'After Cicero: Legal Thought from Antiquity to the New Constitution', pp. 262–80) examines the classical origins of legal thought in Europe and the use of Roman-Dutch law in South Africa before noting the general similarity in values and virtues mentioned in the new constitution with those of Cicero's *De Officiis*, *De Re Publica* **or** (my emphasis) *De Legibus* (pp. 277–78). The glaring problem with the latter discussion is that no attempt is made to cite the specific passages from Cicero that mention the qualities referred to in the new constitution. The chapter by Philip R. Bosman (Ch. 6. 'Greeks, Romans and Volks-

education in the *Afrikaanse Kinderensiklopedie*)[23] is a particularly valuable discussion since it focusses on a rarely examined topic concerning the classical entries and references in a children's encyclopaedia in Afrikaans, the ideological assumptions behind the encyclopaedia's treatment of the classical world, and the manner in which it served to promote the Afrikaner nationalist cause of the mid-twentieth century.

Architecture and artefacts

There are not only a large number of buildings that reveal classical influences in South Africa but also many classical artefacts in museums and collections. Two chapters (2 and 5) deal with classically inspired architecture. Federico Freschi (Ch. 2. '"Poetry in Pidgin": Notes on the Persistence of Classicism in the Architecture of Johannesburg', pp. 55–87) discusses what he refers to as 'poetry in a pidgin language' (pp. 62–63; cf. pp. 57–58) to describe the unbroken tradition of Johannesburg's classical structures, which range from the kitsch exterior of an extravagant home to grandiose public buildings and memorials.

One of the structures mentioned by Freschi is the well-known Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria (pp. 67–68), which is the subject of its own chapter by Elizabeth Rankin and Rolf Michael Schneider (Ch. 5. '"Copy Nothing": Classical Ideals and Afrikaner Ideologies at the Voortrekker Monument', pp. 141–212). Parker (pp. 29–30, 139), Freschi (p. 67), and Rankin and Schneider (pp. 151–53, 155) all mention how the architect Pieter Moerdyk publicly disavowed classical influences in his conception and design of the Voortrekker Monument, which was constructed to celebrate the Afrikaner nationalist cause. Despite Moerdyk's disclaimers of classicism, Rankin and Schneider illustrate how classical forms were essential to its architectural scheme and stylistic motifs.[24] The Romans themselves adapted Greek architectural and literary forms to create new ideological and other meanings. Rankin and Schneider similarly point out how Moerdyk adapted various forms, including classical models, 'in a new cause' (p. 212).

Two chapters (9 and 10) deal with classical artefacts. Samantha Masters (Ch. 9. 'Museum Space and Displacement: Collecting Classical Antiquities

[23] Albertyn 1953[2].

[24] Cf. Dominik 2013:103, who emphasizes the Voortrekker Monument's evocation of Roman architectural forms and motifs especially in its 'monumentality', marble relief panels, and interior cupola; Dominik 2007a:129–30. Cf. also Evans 2007:141–56 (cited by Rankin and Schneider, pp. 145 n. 17, 167 n. 85, 194 n. 135); Dominik forthcoming.

in South Africa', pp. 283–315) outlines the history and state of classical collections in the country, then treats in detail the Iziko Collection in Cape Town (pp. 290–310) and antiquities collection of the Museum of Classical Archaeology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban (pp. 310–14), the only collection still growing (albeit slowly) and still utilized for teaching purposes.

In the following chapter, Anna Tietze (Ch. 10. 'Antique Casts for a Colonial Gallery: the Beit Bequest of Classical Statuary to Cape Town', pp. 316–35) discusses a collection of copies of classical statues that was acquired by the Cape Town art gallery in the South African Museum in 1908 as a result of the terms of the will of Sir Alfred Beit. Although the donors of the forty-six statues (many of them 'nude') considered them to be valuable, over a period of a century the collection fell into neglect and has largely disappeared. The account by Tietze provides an intriguing, though unfortunate, story of what can happen when a number of factors combine, including cultural prudery, the undervaluation of copies in comparison with the original artefacts, and the devaluation of ancient art generally, to render such a collection so unappreciated in a particular cultural environment as to result in its loss. Tietze concludes, in fact, that the plaster casts of the original classical sculptures represent 'an art form particularly ill-suited to South Africa' (p. 335).

Literature

A significant part of *SAGR* is devoted to literature in the form of drama, fiction and poetry. While Parker's volume generally lacks comparative scholarship on classical and indigenous South African cultures, as discussed above,[25] Elke Steinmeyer (Ch. 17. 'The Reception of the Electra Myth in Yaël Farber's *Molora*', pp. 445–66) examines various facets of (mainly) Xhosa culture in relation to Greek tragedy. Farber's adaptation of Aeschylus' O*resteia* (with elements from the *Electra* tragedies by Sophocles and Euripides) occurs in a South African setting against the backdrop of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was established in 1995 with the aims of uncovering the truth about the abuses of apartheid and of achieving reconciliation between the black and white races.

In South African literary circles the popularity of the Electra myth, which 'can probably be considered as the epitome of a tale of pain, mourning, hatred, the desire for revenge and the impossibility of forgiveness' (p.

[25] See above, 'Contributors'.

467), according to Steinmeyer, can be attributed to the pervasiveness of these issues in public discourse after the abolition of apartheid, particularly within the context of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.[26] Steinmeyer focuses specifically on the similarities and differences between the Electra myth in Greek tragedy, Farber's *Molora*, and aspects of Xhosa (and Zulu) culture.

The play director Roy Sargeant (Ch. 16. 'Bacchus at Kirstenbosch: Reflections of a Play Director', pp. 445–66) reflects upon his directing ancient Greek dramas, specifically Euripides' *Bacchae*, Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, and Aristophanes' *The Birds*, at the annual Dionysos festival in Cape Town's Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden between 2002 and 2005. Of particular interest in this chapter is Sargeant's mention of his association in Cape Town with the English immigrant Mary Challans, who composed her novels set in ancient Greece under the name of Mary Renault. Sargeant explains how Renault, along with her novel *The Mask of Apollo*, inspired and influenced him in his own productions of these Greek dramas.

Renault is the focus of her own chapter by Nikolai Endres (Ch. 14. 'Athens and Apartheid: Mary Renault and Classics in South Africa', pp. 376–94), who examines classical elements of her fiction as well as her political posture, including her connection with the anti-apartheid movement. Renault wrote fourteen novels, eight of which had classical themes, and was a member of Black Sash, an anti-apartheid organisation, but she was a controversial figure owing to her refusal to use the past to address political issues, including apartheid, in her 'escapist' novels.

Classicism in the poetry of Douglas Livingstone (Ch. 15. 'Antiquity's Undertone: Classical Resonances in the Poetry of Douglas Livingstone', pp. 395–409) is the subject of Kathleen Coleman's sensitive and thought-provoking discussion that raises questions about the use of classical references in any literary genre, not just poetry. Livingstone, who was born in Malaysia in 1932 and came to South Africa a decade later, is one of the country's foremost writers of poetry written in English. Coleman observes that the 'classical heritage' assumes a small role in his poetry, which is imbued with a strongly African sensibility (p. 410).

Even when Livingstone's thematic and linguistic allusions to the classical world appear to be randomly placed and irrelevant in his poems, she argues that they still have the potential to affect profoundly our understanding and appreciation of his poems. Livingstone's poetry, according to Coleman, not only evinces the incompatibility of the western heritage

[26] A minor glitch occurs in the discussion of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's hearings when Steinmeyer refers to 'Cole's article' (p. 471) without actually having cited it previously.

with the African landscape (p. 412) but also suggests the clash between antiquity and modernity (pp. 417, 431, 439). Coleman's references to these conflicting elements evoke reminiscence of precisely the types of 'tensions' (cf. p. xxi) that Parker's subtitle *Classical Confrontations* is meant to convey.[27]

While *SAGR* features chapters on two immigrants who spent much of their lives in South Africa (Renault and Livingstone), the lack of discussion of the role of classical themes and figures in Afrikaans literature is surprising given the important role of Afrikaans writers in South African culture. A number of literary works in Afrikaans not only use classical figures and themes to explore issues of power and politics but also include allusions to apartheid South Africa.[28] The omission of a chapter on Afrikaans literature in this volume is even more striking given that a number of the contributors are Afrikaners or Afrikaans-speaking.

Academic biographies

Two chapters (12 and 13) in *SAGR* concern the academic careers of two prominent classicists. Jo-Marie Claassen (Ch. 12. '"You Are People Like These Romans Were!": D.D.T. Jabavu of Fort Hare', pp. 353–75) discusses the life and career of a trailblazing black classicist. Jabavu is a particularly important figure in that his career spanned the period during which Nelson Mandela, Chris Hani, and other political leaders pursued their studies at Fort Hare University. Claassen presents a fascinating portrayal of a black intellectual involved in the political tribulations of a segregated South Africa.

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[27] But can we really say that the tension between antiquity ('the grand, timeless past') and modernity ('the sordid and ephemeral present') inherent in the title of Livingstone's poem 'Aphrodite's Saturday night' is 'deliberate' (pp. 416–17, esp. 417), as Coleman suggests? Intentionality is a notoriously fraught subject since we can never really know an author's intention, even (or especially) when s/he tells us, but we can recognize, as Coleman astutely notes, the jarring effect of the juxtaposition of 'the goddess' name with the party-night of the modern week' (p. 417). (For other attributions of authorial intention in Parker's volume, see pp. 112, 427–29.)

[28] See Dominik 2007b:93–115; 2013:109–10; 2014:2.1118–20. Parker mentions the *Germanicus* of N.P. van Wyk Louw (pp. 28–29) and notes what he deems to be 'a cautious interpretation of the politics of the play' by Claassen 2013 in her introduction (p. 29 n. 47). Dominik 2007b:93–115, esp. 97–102 (uncited by Parker, p. 29 n. 47), notes a couple of the political parallels between the *Germanicus* and apartheid South Africa (pp. 110–11).

In the following chapter (Ch. 13. 'Benjamin Farrington and the Science of the Swerve', pp. 376–94), John Atkinson discusses another intellectual who, though not a South African, spent fourteen years as an academic in South Africa in the 1920s and 1930s. During and after the course of his career as a Classicist at the University of Cape Town, Farrington became involved in a number of different political causes, especially Irish nationalism and Communism. Much of the chapter concerns his life and career after he left Cape Town to take up academic posts in England and then Wales. Late in his career Farrington developed an interest in Epicurus, on whom he wrote a book titled *The Faith of Epicurus* (1967). The chapter's title, which includes the word 'swerve', refers to the concept of Epicurus' 'swerve', which Atkinson uses as a metaphor to discuss Farrington's life and career, including his shifting political allegiances and (switch to) research on Epicurus.

Research context

How does *SAGR* compare with other volumes that deal exclusively or partly with aspects of classical antiquity in South Africa? In the past decade numerous chapters and articles have been published that discuss the Classics and its heritage in South Africa, but there are only a few books that have been published during this time that include a number of chapters on this topic. *SAGR* probably will be compared most with the sole-authored *The Classics and South African Identities* (2011), which is both a history of the teaching of Classics in South Africa and an intellectually stimulating, if highly personal and controversial, account of how the discipline has been linked to the politics of the country as a whole.[29] Despite its collective white authorship, Parker's edited volume is comparatively neutral in ideological terms, whereas *The Classics and South African Identities* (2011) is an ideologically driven and in places a racially provocative history of the politics of Classics in South Africa.[30]

The co-edited volume *Alma Parens Originalis?* (2007) features four chapters on South Africa dealing with Afrikaans adaptations from classical drama, classical influence upon the modern poetry of Roy Campbell, and

[29] Lambert 2011. For an in-depth review of this volume, see Dominik 2013 (uncited by Parker, p. 35 n. 54), who expresses a number of concerns about Lambert's approach and account. Cf. Atkinson 2012; Claassen 2012; Matthews 2012.

[30] Racially provocative in the sense of attributing racism to various individuals and groups of the South African community; see Dominik 2013:105, 107–8.

the links between classical and contemporary magical practices.[31] The sole-edited C*lassics in Post-Colonial Worlds* (2007) includes two chapters on dramatic adaptations by South African playwrights and a third on the classical heritage of the Afrikaner Voortrekker Monument.[32] A significant difference between *SAGR* and the two aforementioned edited books is that all of the eighteen chapters deal with some aspect of Classics in South Africa. Elsewhere there are individual chapters or articles devoted to an overview of Classics and its heritage in South Africa[33] and Africa,[34] but *SAGR* is the first edited book that through its various contributions attempts to provide an in-depth and semi-comprehensive overview of Classics and its heritage in South Africa.

Conclusion

The real merit of *SAGR* is the high quality of each of the scholarly discussions, though the volume is also visually pleasing and impeccably presented as a publication. The 150 illustrations (including the cover), which consist predominantly of black-and-white photographs (but also twelve colour plates between pp. 298–99) that are carefully assembled and placed throughout fifteen of the eighteen chapters, add much not only to the aesthetic presentation but especially to the elucidation of the written contents. The text is meticulously edited, though passages separated from the main body of the text (in what in most volumes are printed as indented passages) are sometimes followed inappropriately by indented instead of unindented paragraphs (pp. 14, 26, 47, 72, 82, 112, etc.) or vice-versa (e.g., p. 120). Detracting (and grating) expressions are few and far between (e.g., hedging or redundant phrases such as 'this article would like to argue', p. 213; 'as I argue in this essay', p. 62; 'we will have to turn to', p. 401), though the use of some weasel words and phrases is commonplace (e.g., 'clearly', 'surely', *passim*; 'it could be argued', pp. 168, 314).

The overall impression of *SAGR* is of a publication of the highest professional standard that will serve in the years ahead as a landmark treatment of the role of classical antiquity in South Africa. Parker has performed an invaluable service for scholars and students interested in the

[31] Hilton and Gosling 2007.
[32] Hardwick and Gillespie 2007.
[33] Dominik 'Süd Afrika' in *DNP* Vol. 15.3 (*Sco–Z*) 342–46; 'South Africa' in *BNP* Vol. 5 (*Rus–Zor*) 163–68 (both uncited by Parker, p. 10 n. 16).
[34] Dominik 2007a:117–31 (cited by Parker, p. 10 n. 16). Uncited by Parker are Dominik 'Afrika' in *DNP* Vol. 13 (*A–Fo*) 22–26; 'Africa' in *BNP* Vol. 1 (*A–Del*) 64–68; Goff 2013. See also Dominik forthcoming.

role of classical antiquity in South African society in editing this high-quality, multi-faceted, and splendidly presented volume. As would be expected in the production of even the most polished volume, there are a very small number of printing errors.[35] In a novel development, *SAGR* has a digital partner titled 'South Africa, Greece, Rome: A Digital Museum' that collects suitable content related to the topic of the book.[36] The combined print-digital project provides an absorbing picture of the social history of South Africa through the lens of classicism.

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[35] A handful of minor errors concern the bibliography and citations in the notes; for example, Farber 2008 (p. 470 n. 5), Ferguson 2003 (p. 236 n. 5), Hilton 2006 (p. 102 n. 57), and Hilton 2007 (p. 10 n. 16, p. 88 n. 3) lack the letter a or b that appears in the bibliography.

[36] The website at https://exhibits.stanford.edu/SAGR, which is edited by Parker and Samantha Masters, consists of the following categories of material: maps, academic, individuals, public discourse, collections, creative arts, collectible objects, and monumental architecture.

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