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## "Rediscovering Hellenism: The Hellenic Inheritance and the English Imagination" by G. W. Clarke

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by surveying the nature of divorce reform proposals through the last three hundred and fifty years, subsequent divorce reform, and changes in divorce practice. A most impressive book. Not only is the book architecturally elegant, but even the smaller themes receive care and attention, as the sections entitled "Masters and Servants" and "Servants in Court" so well illustrate.

Despite the brilliance of Stone's use of servants' testimony, and the brief section on self-divorce, this is not really a book about the general populace. It is largely about the practices and mores of Britain's upper classes, though after 1857, of course, divorce became more widely accessible, at least in theory. It seeks to describe two major cultural changes; a change from a society of honor to one of market values, and from a cold patriarchialism to a hot sexual equality. This ambitious endeavor creates three difficulties. The first is that Stone seems to argue for transhistorical sexual male and female "natures," for example repeating the old-fashioned notion that men can enjoy sex for itself, while women crave commitment [p. 7]. Second, and more importantly, is the argument that, before the late seventeenth century, upper class men, constrained by a code of honour, fought duels with their wives' lovers, while by the eighteenth century, having absorbed market values, these same sorts of men were content with cash payments for the identical affront. Though he asserts that this was the case, and it sounds plausible enough, there is not a single piece of evidence presented that would indicate that English husbands *ever* fought duels with those their wives favored, or that English husbands *ceased* to do so in the eighteenth century. Finally, it is Stone's unwavering loyalty to affective individualism, a notion that he popularized in his earlier book on marriage, sex, and the family, which involves him in what seems to me to be a major dilemma in this book. If affective individualism was already powerful by the mid-eighteenth century, how can the passage of Harwicke's Act, which gave upper class parents more power to regulate and control the marriages of their minor children than they had ever had before, be explained? One can understand why parents might have wanted such power, but should they have desired it if they had been as imbued with affective individualism as Stone claims them to have been? A number of other points were also under-argued I thought. Though it is undoubtedly the case that some collusion existed in divorce attempts, and that many contemporaries believed such collusion to be endemic, there is little reason to assume that it, in fact, was. Similarly, though Lord Kenyon's role in creating and maintaining a "moral panic" in the 1790s was surely significant, was it really different in nature from that which led to attempted changes in the divorce law in the 1770s?

Readers will find Lawrence Stone's *The Road to Divorce* stimulating, instructive and filled with interesting and important questions. Though the answers provided are perhaps more problematic than Stone asserts, this is an important pioneering work in cultural and legal history.

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DONNA T. ANDREW

G. W. Clarke, editor. *Rediscovering Hellenism: The Hellenic Inheritance and the English Imagination*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 1989. Pp. xiv, 264. \$55.00.

Present controversies in higher education over Eurocentrism in the curriculum have made the issue of how a cultural inheritance is transmitted more than an academic question. The collection of essays offered in the work under review is, therefore, particularly timely, even

while it exists in an on-going scholarly discussion of the impact and use of Greek culture in nineteenth-century England (see, for example, books by two contributors to the present volume: Richard Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* [1980], and Frank M. Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* [1981]). Paradoxically, it is an essay that seems not to fit the British focus of the collection—Anthony Stephens on Nietzsche’s Hellenism—which raises this problematic of cultural transmission most clearly. The impact of Nietzsche’s Hellenism on a [German] culture that positively idolized Greece, Stephens argues, was meant to be revolutionary, and “took the form of creating a Hellenism such as there had never been before, against the Hellenism embraced by Germany’s educated classes and, by implication, against the kind of Hellenism congenial to contemporary English imagination” (p. 238). The legacy of Hellenism, the editor correctly observes in the introduction, was not only revitalization, but also subversion. It is not always clear that contemporary advocates of cultural diversity in the curriculum appreciate that the most devastating and effective critique of the dominant culture will always come from within the tradition.

There are other essays in the collection that can be used to point up the double-edged character of cultural transmission. Frank Turner’s “Why the Greeks and not the Romans in Victorian Britain?” explores what he considers the discontinuity of the shift at the end of the eighteenth century from a predominating concern in British intellectual life with Roman antiquity to Greek. Turner argues persuasively that this shift was in the first instance not so much a rejection of Latin culture as a rejection of the patrician culture of Georgian England, a culture that accepted the Roman Republic as a political model, the syncretistic and broadly tolerant pantheon as a model in religion, the shallow philosophizing of essayists like Cicero for a public philosophy. Correspondingly, preference for Greek thought and literature in the nineteenth century was less the influence of the Greek tradition than it was a choice of political forms, religious ideas, and public philosophy that Victorians attributed to the Greeks.

James Bowen, in “Education, Ideology and the Ruling Class: Hellenism and the English Public Schools in the Nineteenth Century,” offers a slight variation on the now fashionable theme that traditional learning reinforces the hegemony of ruling elites. Bowen argues that Hellenism found its place in the rearguard action of traditional elites to resist the challenge of new classes and, indeed, to coopt segments of those classes who desired upper class social legitimacy. Drawing on familiar literature on the role of the public schools in facilitating this cooptation, Bowen illustrates how, against pressure from Royal Commissions to introduce science into the curriculum, the public schools used the prestige of Greek studies not only to resist that pressure, but also to support an ethos of aristocratic right to rule among those who had not been born to it.

In “‘Hebrew’ versus ‘Helene’ as a Principle of Literary Criticism,” Stephen Prickett looks at some of the deeper sources of the Victorian conception of the Hellenic in the famous disjunction of Matthew Arnold. What is particularly striking in Prickett’s analysis is the constructed—one might almost say, in a phrase to gladden the heart of a deconstructionist, the arbitrary—character of the content with which Arnold has endowed this notion. In his effort to vindicate a post-Christian humanism, Arnold used the idea of the Hellenic as one pole in the creative tension between the moral and the aesthetic from which he expected this new humanism to emerge. But what a “Helene” in Arnold’s usage had to do with an ancient Greek is a very good question.

The remaining essays are of more narrow focus. They will be of interest to specialists in landscape, architecture, painting, and collecting. But these specialist studies also serve to illustrate the larger themes of the volume in relation to cultural transmission. Taken as a whole, *Rediscovering Hellenism* demonstrates that cultural transmission is a far more complex, much more ambivalent phenomenon than the terms of current debate over Eurocentrism, cultural dominance, and cultural diversity would allow.

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Paula Gillett. *Worlds of Art: Painters in Victorian Society*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press. 1990. Pp. xiv, 299. \$40.00.

The stated aim of Paula Gillett's *Worlds of Art* is to "provide a detailed picture of important aspects of the Victorian art world, drawn from a wide variety of contemporary sources, and to show how this knowledge enriches and deepens our understanding of social history" (p. 11). But the world encompassed in *Worlds of Art* is one where little seems to have changed since the earliest histories of Victorian art. Here, artists suffer the pangs of social isolation, lack of patronage, and conflicts between the achievement of popular success and the elevation of their audience's taste. *Worlds of Art* attempts the laudable task of placing the Victorian painter into the social structures of the Victorian age. The first chapter, "Gentlemen of the Brush," examines the social standing of a variety of artists through anecdotes, often from biographies and autobiographies, but often told from a chronological and social perspective removed from the original incident. Significantly, this disjuncture between occurrence and recounting is never acknowledged as an issue. The lives of Francis Grant, Edward Burne-Jones, William Morris, Charles Robert Leslie, William Mulready, and William Powell Frith, among others, are perused for examples.

The author then turns her attention to lengthier case studies of successful mid-Victorian painters. The first of these, Frith, is a superb choice, an artist whose success gave him visibility among many strata of society and whose iconography provides valuable clues as to his attitudes towards that complex social fabric. Unfortunately, Gillett does little more than recount the story of Frith's life in his own words. Forty-six of the ninety endnotes in the chapter are to his *My Autobiography and Reminiscences*. Complex issues concerning Frith's works and their reflection of his relationship to his audience are ignored. In particular, the dissemination of his compositions through prints raises fascinating questions about the role of the artist in Victorian society. Readers interested in pursuing this question might wish to consult a source Gillett overlooks in her discussion of the print *Derby Day*—Jeremy Maas's *Gambart: Prince of the Victorian Art World* (1975). The discussion of the role of patrons might also have benefited from reference to Dianne Sachko MacLeod, "Art Collecting and Victorian Middle-Class Taste," *Art History* 10 (September 1987).

Hubert Von Herkomer, Luke Fildes, and Frank Holl are the topic of Gillett's next chapter. Interestingly, the author discusses artists whose most famous pictures are of the poor and oppressed. One wonders about the reception of such works, particularly given the existence of versions in *The Graphic* that ensured them wider audience than the Royal Academy. Although it is difficult if not impossible to gauge the reception of these images among all classes, one wishes that Gillett had at least described the reaction of the most vocal of Victorian society, the critics. We read that "Holl was bitterly disappointed when [his