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CLASSICAL PRESENCES

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CLASSICAL PRESENCES

Attempts to receive the texts, images, and material culture of ancient Greece and Rome inevitably run the risk of appropriating the past in order to authenticate the present. Exploring the ways in which the classical past has been mapped over the centuries allows us to trace the avowal and disavowal of values and identities, old and new. Classical Presences brings the latest scholarship to bear on the contexts, theory, and practice of such use, and abuse, of the classical past.

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Marginality, Canonicity, Passion

EDITED BY
Marco Formisano and
Christina Shuttleworth Kraus

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Editors' Preface

This volume began life as a conference at Yale in the spring of 2012. The three-day event was a collaboration between Christina Kraus (Yale) and Marco Formisano (at that point Humboldt University, Berlin), generously funded by the Edward J. and Dorothy Clarke Kempf Fund of Yale University and by the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung Cologne. It brought together international scholars as speakers and responders, to reopen discussion about the inner processes of the discipline and to investigate the specificity of the study of Greek and Latin as opposed to other world literatures. Since that conference, questions of marginality and canonicity inside and outside the profession have continued to exert fascination in the field, which has seen the publication of volumes such as *Deep Classics* (ed. Shane Butler), *Classics, the Culture Wars, and Beyond* (Eric Adler), and *Liquid Antiquity* (ed. Brooke Holmes and Karen Marta). The scholars involved in the original meeting of *Marginality, Canonicity, Passion* have also continued to discuss their work among themselves, in the process of putting together this collection via intense debate and engagement with peer review. We hope that the papers gathered here—which include heavily revised versions of some of the papers presented at the original conference as well as some additional contributions—will help advance the dialogue. We would like to consider this book a laboratory of ideas, research insights, and propositions, rather than a set of definitive statements. We invite our readers to consider the fact that on various issues the editors and the contributors do not always agree and sometimes even conflict with one another as a productive rather than problematic aspect for the cohesion of the whole.

The editors would like to thank the volume contributors for their patience with a lengthy process, and especially the speakers and responders of the 2012 conference for their hard work then and since: apart from the scholars with chapters in the present volume, we heard papers and responses from Pavlos Avlamis, Alessandro Barchiesi, Shadi Bartsch, Thomas Beasley, Joshua Billings, Emma Buckley, Serafina Cuomo, Emily Greenwood, Emily Hauser, Ralph Hexter, Lidia Klara,

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David Konstan, Pauline LeVen, Glenn Most, Irene Peirano Garrison, and Mark Vessey. We would especially like to thank Hindy Najman, who stepped in at short notice as keynote speaker after Barbara Herrnstein Smith had to withdraw. We would also like to note that, because of the lengthy process (for which we, as editors, take full responsibility!), some of the contributors were not able to take account of every item of very recent bibliography. We also extend our thanks to the editors of the series Classical Presences and to the team at Oxford University Press, particularly to the precise and good-spirited copyediting of Manuela Tecusan. We are grateful to our anonymous press readers, to Olivia Stewart Lester for her patient editing, to Harrison Troyano for assisting with the index, and to Marta Ricci, who provided the cover image.

We dedicate this volume to Froma Zeitlin, who did us the honour of presenting a paper, 'Romancing the Classics', at the conference. Her powerful presence in our discipline has been a rich source of inspiration.

New Haven—Ghent
January 2018

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Note on Abbreviations

Abbreviations for classical authors and works follow the practice of the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* and of Liddell, Scott, and Jones' *Greek English Lexicon* (with the exception of 8.3, which uses abbreviations customized for the format of this table). Big corpora of fragments generally follow the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* but are usually explained at the first occurrence in a chapter. Journals and standard reference works are abbreviated according to *L'Année Philologique*.

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democratic theory, utopian thinking, and political emotions. Her publications include *Le corps virginal* (1987; translated as *Greek Virginity*, 1989), *Le Plaisir et le Mal: Philosophie de la drogue* (1997), *L'âme est un corps de femme* (2000), *The Daily Life of the Greek Gods* (2000), and *Sex and Sensuality in the Ancient World* (2008). She is currently working on ancient democracy and imperialism, on politics and the passions, and on the political pursuit of pleasure from Athens to Utopia.

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1

Introduction

I. Marginality and the Classics: Exemplary Extraneousness

Marco Formisano

In recent years the discipline of classics has been experiencing a profound transformation, which affects not only methodologies and hermeneutic practices, that is, *how* classicists read and interpret ancient literature, but also—and more importantly—the objects of study themselves, in other words *what* they read and interpret. One of the most important factors has been the launch and gradual establishment, both in research and in teaching, of reception studies, now widely acknowledged and welcomed as a particularly apt instrument for the renewal of the study of Greek and Roman literature, for one reason in particular: the study of the reception of classical literature and culture in later ages and in non-western cultures considerably expands the field by including a virtually infinite array of texts, artefacts, and other materials to be studied and taught about. This temporal and cultural expansion of the borders of classics generates many important and salutary effects, both pragmatically and theoretically. On the one hand, it opens up the field—traditionally considered to consist of a limited corpus, a *hortus conclusus* within specific temporal and cultural coordinates—to broader influences that derive from a fertile contact with other literary disciplines and cultural studies and with their various hermeneutical practices. On the other hand, classics can thereby regain a more prominent academic position, in some ways comparable to the leading role it once played within the humanities.

Yet, like any introduction of a theoretical and critical trend, this renewal of the field brings with it certain consequences that can be

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seen as unintended side effects. One of these side effects is an increased level of canonicity of those texts from the corpus of Greek and Roman literature that are the subject of inquiry. Reception studies has focused almost exclusively on the most canonical Greek and Latin texts, not only because they are appreciated per se but also because they have been received, rewritten, adapted, discussed, and alluded to on such a scale as to discourage discussion of other ancient texts, which were rarely or never the objects of significant reception.[1] To generalize, then: by definition, reception studies is uninterested in texts that have had no 'success' and, by implicitly adopting canonicity as an unspoken criterion, it de facto marginalizes those ancient texts that were not blessed with a significant *Nachleben*.

As Michael Silk, Ingo Gildenhard, and Rosemary Barrow (2014) observe even as they emphasize the radical difference between reception and tradition, the classical tradition, just like reception, is unavoidably canonical. 'It is', they write, 'not just any aspect of the Graeco-Roman world that inspires and influences, but, overwhelmingly, the special and the privileged.'[2]

On closer inspection, however, the tension between the canonicity of certain texts and the consequent marginality of certain others has marked the field of classics since its very origins as *Altertumswissenschaft* in the late eighteenth century. This tension was at first taken for granted as an indisputable fact, then gradually became truly invisible. This invisibility, I would argue, has been endorsed by certain characteristics of various academic systems in the western world. The discussion that the present volume seeks to generate begins by simply acknowledging the fact that to consider the conceptual tension between canonical and marginal texts within classics means opening up a Pandora's box of the discipline. If one looks at it this way, it becomes urgent to unveil a criterion that could be so enormously influential precisely because it was tacitly accepted and rarely discussed. For the reasons mentioned above, the salutary contribution made by reception studies makes this process of unveiling particularly timely.

[1] For instance, see Martindale 2013: 170, who recalls the initial policy adopted by the Cambridge Companions series on classical authors: 'Only those authors and topics were to be chosen where there was a significant reception history to be recounted.'

[2] Silk, Gildenhard, and Barrow 2014: 4.

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A clarification is needed at this point. Reception studies represents a significant methodological turn not only because it expands the discipline in terms of quantity (number of texts). At the very core of a discipline whose practitioners have traditionally sought to reconstruct the original meaning of texts in a specific historical context lies the principle that 'meaning is realized always at the point of reception'—as reception studies reminds us.[3] In other words, reception studies teaches classicists that they cannot read Virgil, for instance, without consciously—or, more often, unconsciously and with greater effect—resorting to Lucan, Statius, Dante, Milton, and other poets, novelists, critics, and translators who have produced ineradicable textual layers that will always contribute to the meaning we receive and construct while reading Virgil's text itself. But—although this consideration, while widely acknowledged at a theoretical level, is equally neglected in daily hermeneutical practice both in research and in teaching[4]—this chapter and the volume as a whole are not devoted to the discussion of reception studies and canonicity as such, that is, to their specific intellectual contributions. Rather, perhaps more modestly, the present volume seeks to explore the effects, implicit more than explicit, that reception studies has on the discourse of classics as an academic discipline. I should therefore emphasize straightaway that is not my intention to discuss how a certain text becomes canonical or marginal, for what reasons, in what historical and cultural contexts, or for what communities—for instance by looking at the original contexts of production, at the relevant ancient literary systems, or at the various paths of their transmission. This would not be a discussion of what is central, what is marginal, and why it is so.[5] Nor am I interested here in exploring the powerful and complex connections between canonicity and areas such as religion, politics, and power more generally. While some contributions to this volume (for instance chapters 3 and 11) respond to the anxieties aroused by a perceived dichotomy between canon and margins within classics, in this introduction I am more intent on bringing to light the subtle implications of canonicity. In a more

[3] Martindale 1993: 3.

[4] Goldhill 2012 (esp. 249–63) confronts this kind of hermeneutical dichotomy head on.

[5] For these aspects see, for instance, Edmunds 2010a and 2010c on minor Roman literature and Colesanti and Giordano 2014 (and note that two more volumes of Colesanti and Giordano appeared in subsequent years).

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limited way, I consider the functioning of canonicity and marginality within the practice of the discipline without trying either to reconstruct their geneaologies and long histories or to dismantle them as abstract categories.

I offer an example immediately related to the field of my own research. Whether explicitly or, more importantly for our discussion, implicitly, the relatively recent critical discovery of the literature of late antiquity tends to be heavily influenced by the hermeneutical practices *de rigueur* with classical texts—in particular poetic texts, which are celebrated as canonical in the literary and scholarly tradition and thus are considered central to the discipline and its politics. One effect is that poetic genres are generally considered to be more significant than prose ones. Another even more important effect is that the study of allusion and intertextuality is uncritically accepted as *the* criterion according to which late antique poetry must be read and interpreted—just like classical poetry. Scholars of late antique literature generally proceed on the unquestioned assumption that the search for classical models is a priority in their critical activity, so that there is an implicit tendency to discuss the literariness of late antique texts *as a result of* their relationship with classical texts (which, in turn, are most often taken to represent the aesthetic and literary standard). Another important factor consists of expectations of the job market, especially in Anglo-American academia, where classicists must show competence primarily, if not exclusively, in canonical texts from the classical periods. All these factors converge and, together, heavily influence the study of late antique textuality, its establishment, and its appreciation within classics; yet they are never discussed. This chapter and the entire volume are intended to unveil and critically discuss these kinds of mechanisms, which are so powerful precisely because they usually are accepted and reproduced—and sometimes dogmatically so.

This volume is not intended to be yet another occasion to talk about grand texts or great books, but rather an opportunity to consider whether and to what extent the study of marginal texts in the current academic practice of classicists might be capable of stimulating an interesting renewal of the discipline, in parallel with the trend of reception studies. More fundamentally still, we suggest that, on the wave of current discussions about the variety of methods and approaches in classics, it is time for scholars to take on the responsibility of defining what they

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mean by 'marginal' in Greco-Roman literature and of framing its study theoretically. In the following pages, current discussion of the tensions between literary canons and margins (as inspired for instance by Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Pascale Casanova, and Franco Moretti) stays in the background rather than being directly engaged—and, *repetita iuvant*, this is for one reason above all. The main concern here is by no means to discuss or contest the idea of canon and its various cultural, ideological, and political implications (as studied for instance in postcolonial studies),[6] but rather to explore canonicity as an invisible, yet nonetheless ruling principle within the disciplinary discourse and scholarly practice of classics.

One of our main arguments in this book is that marginality operates as a fundamental criterion at many levels, both inside and outside the field. Within the humanities, as is well known, classics no longer plays the prominent role it did in the past; but among scholars of other fields there is a widespread expectation that classics *should* deal with canonical authors and texts, because classical antiquity is the canon par excellence and the discipline devoted to classical antiquity has the task of preserving what constitutes this canon. Outside its own disciplinary boundaries, classics continues to be associated with big names, an association repeatedly brought home in countless ways, for example when (to give one out of many possible examples) innumerable passers-by see the names of Greek and Latin authors prominently adorning the frieze on the façade of the Butler Library of Columbia University: Homer, Herodotus, Sophocles, Plato, Aristotle, Demosthenes, Cicero, Virgil.[7] Interestingly, this process of canonization of classics has run in parallel with a disempowerment of Greek and Roman classical authors and texts as active ethical and aesthetic models for contemporary literature. Although the rewriting, reworking, and adaptation of ancient texts have never stopped and indeed form a conspicuous strand in contemporary literatures all over the world, for a variety of reasons these texts no longer function as the revered educational standard they were in the past. Might it be that canonicity within the discipline of classics is, among

[6] A good introduction to these aspects is given by Mukherjee 2014.

[7] Schein 1999: 293 notes some of the implications of the choice of authors on the frieze of Butler Library.

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other things, a self-protective reaction to loss of prominence, both inside and outside academia?

Insofar as scholars' biographies and personal experiences play a major role in the shaping of their intellectual production and thereby of the field within which these scholars operate, I would like to enrich this discussion by citing the example of my own experience. I came to the United States for the first time as a visiting student during the second year of my PhD program in classical literatures. I was an Italian student who had spent significant periods of study abroad (France and Germany in particular) and was working on a dissertation devoted to technical and scientific texts written in Latin between the fourth and the sixth centuries AD. As soon as I entered into contact with American fellow classicists, both PhD students and professors, my attention was drawn to something I had never even noticed before: I was writing on *marginal* texts produced in a *marginal* age. Although in recent years both ancient technical and scientific writings and late antique literature have enjoyed an enthusiastic critical rediscovery, this was decidedly not the case in the late 1990s. Besides the fact that, among my otherwise welcoming and generous hosts, I could not find a single interlocutor on matters related to my project, one encounter in particular was revealing. During the first week of my study period in New York City I had the honour and the pleasure of meeting the late Elaine Fantham, one of the most productive and enthusiastic Latinists and also one of the Anglo-American classicists best known and most appreciated in Europe. Professor Fantham had a supreme command of Italian (among other foreign languages), so that the conversation we had took place in my native language: this is by no means a secondary detail, since it enhanced the alienating effect of the conversation. Among the things we discussed, two points in our conversation illustrate particularly well some of the fundamental ideas underlying this volume. Fantham was clearly surprised by the topic of my dissertation. She immediately declared that she knew nothing about the texts I was writing about but, intellectually voracious as she was, she asked a great deal of questions that were of great help to me, perhaps above all because they taught me how to present a somewhat obscure topic to other classicists, and more generally to a broader audience. Her main question was: How and why are these texts relevant today? For 'relevant' she used the Italian word *rilevanti*. As it happens, 'relevant' is an English word that I must confess I still find

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difficult to use correctly because of a false correspondence with the Italian *rilevante*, which generally translates the English 'important', while in most cases English 'relevant' pairs up with Italian *pertinente*, 'directly connected to a given topic'. What is *relevant* in English, then, is to my Italian ears *important*, and something can be generally *important* without necessarily being immediately *relevant*. For me, the question posed then by the late revered Latinist to an unknown *late* Latinist at the beginning of his career is still charged with ambiguities that disclose the gap between two different scholarly attitudes and approaches to ancient texts and to classics as a discipline. The second point that is both *relevant to* and *important for* the topic of this volume is that Fantham expressed a passionately negative judgement on the early imperial poet Valerius Flaccus, whom she described as *assolutamente privo di qualsiasi spirito poetico*, 'totally lacking in poetic spirit', adding that, although she regularly taught classes on Latin epic poetry, only in this iteration (her final year before retirement) had she included Valerius Flaccus in her syllabus.

This conversation inspired in me a great deal of enthusiasm and discouragement at the same time. On the one hand, I was refreshed at the thought that an obscure late ancient technical text might possibly be *relevant* today, and indeed at the very idea that this is the question to ask at the beginning of a research project. It was equally refreshing to find a classicist freely expressing her passionate judgement on ancient texts in a way that I could not even imagine hearing from my Italian and German advisers and mentors. On the other hand, the conversation had an unequivocally sad effect on me: I had to acknowledge—in my native Italian at that!—that the topic of my current research was both irrelevant and unimportant, let alone irremediably boring. If Valerius Flaccus was 'totally lacking in poetic spirit', what about late Latin treatises on veterinary medicine?

Exaggeration aside, during the long periods that I subsequently spent as a visitor at various North American universities I regularly encountered this kind of response to my work. Certainly not meant to be offensive, it came as a sincere expression of surprise about my choice of topic, along with a slight embarrassment, concealed by well-meaning remarks on possible connections with other, more popular canonical topics. Soon it became clear to me that, if I wanted to 'sell' my marginal topic within the North American academic world, I would need at least to make connections with more canonical texts and topics. Within such

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an academic culture, the discussion of texts considered to be marginal, I discovered, could not stand by itself—unless I were a historian interested in a certain strand of knowledge because I attempted to reconstruct some specific historical, cultural, or material context; in other words, unless I were to use my 'marginal' treatises as sources rather than as texts to be studied in their own right.

If you want to study *literature*, the implicit logic goes, you must study those texts that are *literary* (according to today's standards); otherwise you are a historian of knowledge, science, technology, culture, religion, philosophy, mentality, textual transmission, and even literature; or you are a philologist. But you are not primarily a *literary* scholar. I would argue that most classicists have a tendency to conceive of the tension between central and marginal texts almost as an ontological difference between two fields: the study of literature, which implicitly justifies the canon, and the study of culture, which needs all sorts of texts and documents (and indeed, the more aesthetically or literarily mediocre a text is thought to be, the better suited it seems to the goal of historical reconstruction). But is it possible to conceive of a third way, namely of reading those 'mediocre' *sources* primarily as *texts*, on their own terms: texts that bear their own individual meaning just as much as (or even more than) they constitute a piece of historical evidence?[8] Very rarely have I found such an approach in the scholarship I have been consulting for my own research purposes, for instance on ancient technical texts, late antique literature, or early Christian martyr acts. The principal tendency still is to *use* these texts primarily in order to reconstruct all sorts of facts and contexts (politics, science and technology, religion) rather than to read them as texts.

All this has interesting implications for transatlantic differences in the conditions of an academic career as a classicist and in the perception of the role of ancient literature, both in and outside of the field of classics itself. In continental Europe it is highly unlikely (though perhaps things are beginning to change) that, as a matter of principle, a classical scholar would raise the question whether and to what extent a given text is *relevant* today, or would express a passionate dislike, especially in aesthetic terms, for a text written more than 2,000 years ago. And, even if some scholars might express themselves in this way, such attitudes would

[8] Elsewhere I have discussed this point in relation to ancient technical and scientific texts (see Formisano 2017a).

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certainly not furnish criteria either for choosing a dissertation topic or for getting an academic job, whereas the relevance of one's dissertation topic and the element of passion for one's work are commonly (if not always openly) applied criteria in Anglo-American contexts.

These considerations must of course be understood in connection with the various academic systems and intellectual styles of each country, and such a generalization, like any other, invites any number of qualifications. This is not the place to enter into a detailed sociological discussion, which would benefit a great deal from Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) famous *Homo academicus* (among other studies). Still, it is safe to say that, while in Anglo-American academia the research topic *itself* is as a rule a significant factor in the evaluation of applications for a position, this is not the case in continental European universities, where other criteria, such as the number of publications, or seniority, might play a stronger role. Michèle Lamont in her *How Professors Think: Inside the Curious World of Academic Judgement* (Lamont 2009) discusses the concept of 'homophily' in academic contexts, especially when scholars function as members of a panel or committee that has the task of selecting research projects. Her research is based exclusively on the observation of panels in North American universities, and the outcome is not surprising: panel members generally tend to select proposals that have basic affinities with their own research.

Apart from the psychosocial and academic implications of this homophily, one other aspect deserves particular attention: the fact that the kind of scholarly work generally supported by these decision-making bodies is implicitly 'canonical' with regard to the topic itself, the methodology, or both. An observable outcome—with exceptions, of course, but the overall tendency is noticeable, especially from a European perspective—is that a young scholar working exclusively on texts, authors, or genres considered 'lesser', 'minor', or 'obscure' is generally disadvantaged in terms of securing research grants and even positions in North American classics departments. Certainly anecdotal evidence suggests that those graduate students who decide to write a dissertation on 'minor' or 'marginal' topics are regularly advised to include at least one chapter on a more 'central' or 'major' author. Dedicating an entire project solely to lesser-known, obscure, or marginal texts is frequently seen as a luxury that established scholars can permit themselves once they have achieved tenure. In continental Europe, by contrast,

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PhD students are generally encouraged by their advisers to work precisely on texts that have been less studied—and this for a number of reasons, including the manageability of the bibliography, a higher probability that something new and original can be said, and the benefit of bringing neglected texts to the attention of other scholars and possibly of a broader audience. This is not to say that canonicity plays no role, but its significance and influence are limited to the discussion of matters of literary history and aesthetics; its influence on hiring practices is minimal to nil.

More fundamentally still, the basic structure of the educational system can be seen as one factor in establishing the importance of the canonical, both in classics and in literary studies in general. Many undergraduate students in North America are offered (and in some cases required to take) classes on 'great books' that, in many cases today, may well include texts from non-western cultures; nonetheless such classes remain programmatically oriented towards canonical masterpieces. At the graduate level, PhD candidates in classics are examined on the basis of departmental 'reading lists' of Greek and Latin texts considered fundamental for one's future (academic) career in classics. Even if these lists are not identical and change over time in accordance with trends in research (for instance by being expanded to include some late antique texts, a selection of scientific texts such as treatises from the Hippocratic Corpus or Galen, or the so-called 'ancient novel'), there is a basic 'core'. This core remains and, more fundamentally still, the very existence of reading lists inevitably places a stamp of canonicity—and thus also of marginality—on the discipline: everything on the list is fundamental, everything else is not. Neither 'great books' classes nor reading lists are found in European classics departments, with the consequence that European students are less directly confronted with the idea of a canon. Veritable 'canon wars' were waged decades ago in North America; but, no matter how one assesses the outcome of these wars, even the most innovative forms of teaching and research, theoretical approaches, and methodologies are still significantly informed by the very concept of canonicity. This is widely perceived by continental European scholars as a characteristic mark of Anglo-American classics.[9]

[9] Briggs 2007 discusses the influence of the classical tradition on American culture and academia from the seventeenth century until today but, surprisingly enough, never raises the issue of canonicity—perhaps precisely because it is a *fait accompli*.

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This is certainly not the place to enter into a detailed comparative discussion of the educational systems, the politics of hiring, and the various practices of selection and funding in continental Europe, Great Britain, and North America, and of course there are many internal differences within these systems. My goal here is simply to offer one suggestive glimpse into how the distinction between canonical and marginal texts can work, often invisibly. What I wish to emphasize here is how easily canonicity and marginality can be taken for granted, as factors that require no further discussion. Indeed, as I have suggested on a few occasions (including at the conference that generated the present volume), this topic has a tendency to provoke passionate argument, perhaps because it touches upon preconceptions or prejudices that may be so firmly rooted that it is impossible to approach them in an 'objective' manner. But I would suggest, with all due modesty, that scholars who have moved between different academic cultures and university systems are likely to be more sensitive to differences in approach and in the rules of our profession because they have the experience of having modified their own practice, questioned their own academic traditions, and perhaps even adopted those of others.

The discourse of canonicity is nourished and supported by several factors. I have already mentioned the indirect effect of the tendency, prevalent in studies of classical reception, to concentrate on the survival and transformation of the most influential and widely read texts. A related issue is the consideration of many Greek and Roman texts as 'world literature'. Karl Galinsky describes two Latin texts in these terms:

> Among the many poetic accomplishments of the Augustan age, two stand out and tower over the rest: Virgil's *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The reason is not just their epic length . . . but their richness and scope of defining the human experience. It is for that reason they have become, deservedly, world literature, a dimension that is fully borne out by their reception in later literature, art, and music, a reception that has lasted to our days . . . As all works of world literature, then, the *Aeneid* and the *Metamorphoses* are both products of their own culture-specific time and transcend it.[10]

In my view, this formulation, taken apart from the specific details of Galinsky's article, is exemplary in many ways, and especially through the

[10] Galinsky 2005a: 340.

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tautological quality of 'thinking big': the *Aeneid* and the *Metamorphoses* count as 'world literature' because they *are* 'world literature', grand works that both reflect and transcend the time in which they were conceived and massively succeed in 'defining the human experience'—a formulation that does *not* do precisely that: define 'the' human experience, here implicitly singular and universal.[11] As argued by John Guillory: 'How does the defender of the canon know that a work is great, if no criteria of greatness can be established beyond dispute? Here the defender must affirm by a bold tautology that the canonical work must be great whether or not any particular reader recognizes its greatness.'[12]

The concept of world literature, as is well known, derives from Goethe, in whose view *Weltliteratur* was the future of literature. Goethe coined this term in the first half of the nineteenth century, especially in order to challenge the rise of national literatures all over Europe by looking forward to a global modernity. Without entering into a discussion about the complexity and elusiveness of this highly influential Goethian concept (see Damrosch 2003 and Prendergast 2004), it is important to emphasize that it was precisely this concept of 'world literature'—generally understood today as a generous nod of acknowledgment and appreciation towards non-western literatures and towards what might be considered marginal from a western perspective—that actually ended up confirming and supporting the basic notion of canonicity, since of course only a finite number of texts can be included, and these texts are in turn regularly marked as the 'best' or most 'central' of their own traditions. In a recent book titled *In the Shadow of World Literature*, the comparativist Michael Allan discusses modern Egyptian literary culture and more generally literature written in Arabic, showing that 'world literature', far from being a neutral and comprehensive term, bears a specific conception of both literature and the world—a conception that imposes, for instance, the western obsession with canonicity (Allan 2016).

In a discussion of the reception of Homer in the twentieth century, Barbara Graziosi and Emily Greenwood, building on the work of Prendergast, observe that the oral aspects of the textuality of the Homeric poems, aspects usually considered marginal because not written, that is,

[11] In similar vein, see Zetzel 1983 on the canonicity of Virgil.
[12] Guillory 1995: 236.

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not literary, actually play a fundamental role in Homeric reception precisely because these aspects become a vehicle for the 'shift of focus from the western literary canon to world literature'.[13] In other words, this movement towards previously marginal 'others' takes place via a reception of the least traditionally 'literary' aspects of the most canonical of western authorial figures, Homer.

A comparable attitude can be detected on many other occasions, when classicists wish to emphasize the role of Greek and Roman antiquity as a term of comparison with other cultures. The editors of a monumental guide to the classical tradition observe in their preface that 'the Graeco-Roman *classical* tradition is only one of the limited number of *classical* traditions that define the history of world culture' and express the wish that their work be profitably read not only by 'the direct beneficiaries of the Graeco-Roman classical tradition' but also by 'interested members of other cultures'. They hope

> that scholars who understand those other, non-European cultures better than we do will be stimulated by work like ours to explore, together with us and with those who we hope will follow us, the similarities and differences between all these traditions, so that we will someday be in a position to understand better what it is that makes a classical tradition classic . . . What if anything differentiates the classical tradition in the West from the *histories* of other *canons*?[14]

This elegant declaration of modesty takes it for granted that every culture has a 'canon' comparable in significant ways to that of the classical tradition of the West, that the comparison can happen only via the canon(s), and that these canons have a history, which means a genealogy in which one text follows another, in linear, chronological development.[15] Yet Salvatore Settis himself argues elsewhere that other civilizations such as the Indian, the Chinese, and the Japanese do not have a concept of the 'classical' of their own, but borrowed it and the corresponding word from European cultures and their languages.[16] On that basis it would seem simply incorrect to assume that non-western cultures have their own classical periods and classical traditions, or a

[13] Graziosi and Greenwood 2007: 3–4.

[14] Grafton, Most, and Settis 2010: x, emphases added.

[15] Graziosi and Greenwood 2007: 12 argue for the importance of differentiated notions of temporality and a comparative rather than a historically linear approach.

[16] Settis 2004: 19.

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relationship with their own past that resembles that of western cultures, or that they even share with them a similar concept of temporality. But, more importantly for my discussion, the very concept of canon, and consequently of margins and of their conceptualization in western literature, may well not have any direct correspondent in other cultures. The discussion of Homeric receptions by Graziosi and Greenwood seems to reach a similar conclusion.[17]

The relationship between postcolonial studies and classics is significant in this regard. Obviously this relationship is vital from many perspectives, for example because it puts classics at the table of a much more global discussion and because it acknowledges and sheds light on the reception of classical texts in what were considered in the past, from a Eurocentric perspective, 'marginal areas'.[18] But if we ask *which* texts have been received and productively transformed in non-western cultures, the answer, again and again, turns out to be the same: some of the most widely read of Greek tragedies (Sophocles' *Antigone* and Euripides' *Medea* among them), and the epics of Homer and Virgil. In the same way, although feminist literary theories are programmatically devoted to making visible and giving voice to marginal aspects silenced through the centuries by a distinctively patriarchal culture, feminist studies of Greek and Latin literature generally concentrate on canonical texts.[19] Literary theorist Barbara Herrnstein Smith made an important point some years ago that is still worth making:

> Recent moves in the direction of opening the question of value and evaluation in the literary academy have come primarily from those who have sought to subject its canon to dramatic revaluation, notably feminist critics. Although their efforts have been significant to that end, they have not amounted as yet to the articulation of a well-developed noncanonical theory of value and evaluation.[20]

In other words, challenges to the canon have in most cases not led to a subversion of canonicity itself, but rather to changes in the canon, for example by making it more inclusive of a variety of perspectives, cultures, or tastes. The inescapability of the canon has after all been acknowledged

[17] See also Allan 2016 for a discussion of world literature, marginality, and canonicity in modern Egyptian culture.

[18] E.g. Hardwick and Gillespie 2007; Graziosi and Greenwood 2007; Bradley 2010.

[19] See e.g. Rabinowitz and Richlin 1993; Keith 2000.

[20] Herrnstein Smith 1988: 24.

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even by one of the most provocative of contemporary theorists, Gayatri Spivak, who reminds us that 'a full undoing of the canon-apocrypha opposition, is impossible . . . When we feminist Marxists are ourselves moved by a desire for alternative canon formations, we work with varieties of and variations upon the old standards.'[21]

Aleida Assmann and Jan Assmann (1987), together with their contributors, have argued for an intimate interconnection between the rise of canonicity and institutional practices. In particular they have drawn attention to three types of institutions: *Zensur* (censorship), *Textpflege* (care for the text), and *Sinnpflege* (care for sense). I would add an item to this list, as it relates to the specific situation of classics; this item is scholarly care. It is precisely classical scholars who are traditionally given the role of keepers of the flame of a canonized 'classical antiquity'. We, as readers and consumers of ancient Greek and Roman texts, are not novelists, essayists, or journalists: we are scholars and teachers, and hence integral parts of the academic institution. In our contemporary world, the reception of classical texts most often takes place in academic contexts: it is a preoccupation of scholars much more than of poets, novelists, dramatists, artists, or public intellectuals. Thus scholarship itself, especially (but not only) classical scholarship, must also be considered from the perspective of reception studies.[22] If this is true, then the question arises of what makes scholarship *different* from other fields in which ancient texts such as a poem, a speech, or a novel are received.

The interrelated questions of canonicity and marginality can thus be seen as a direct emanation of scholarship itself rather than as the ontological and aesthetic categories they are often taken to be—for instance by Harold Bloom in his bestseller *The Western Canon* (Bloom 1994). Classical scholarship, much more than other literary disciplines, stands in a privileged relationship with historical methodology; canonicity

[21] Spivak 1996: 110.

[22] Cf. Graziosi and Greenwood 2007: 7 ('We wish to show that scholarship itself is itself part of reception and engaged in a wider cultural dialogue'); Martindale 2007: 303 ('We tend to exclude our own receptions from these strictures, particularly if we are scholars'); Porter 2008: 469 ('One of the greatest ironies of classical studies is that they are *themselves* a form of reception studies'); Matzner 2016: 192 ('They [*sc.* Deep Classics] squarely locate scholars and scholarly voices as active agents inside the "classical tradition"'). Silk, Gildenhard, and Barrow 2014 seem to imply that scholars are not involved in reception but may be representatives of the classical tradition (see e.g. 5, on T. S. Eliot as an author of essays on Virgil).

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is based on literary history, that is, on a genealogical continuity established by scholars between various ages and the texts belonging to them. The consequence is that, in scholarly and teaching practice, knowledge of the models of a given text is considered the indisputably necessary starting point of any discussion. How to read Virgil without considering Homer, Euripides, Apollonius, and Ennius? It is precisely because of the urge to create historical continuities even between ages far remote from one another (take the case of late antiquity: as the very name suggests, it is always conceived of as a consequence of and as something related to classical antiquity, and very rarely as a cultural entity in its own right)[23]—it is precisely because of this urge that canonicity almost necessarily arises and establishes itself as a seemingly unavoidable category. Within given sequences of authors and texts, generally classified by genre, some stand out and illuminate the entire sequence, so that the other authors and texts are perhaps not at the same level but are still entitled to share some of their grandeur. The systematization and organization of genres and discourses are also functional to canonicity because, under the appearance of the neutrality of critical judgement, they have the effect of supporting a classification into 'better' and 'worse'.[24] Another implicit factor of canonicity is the insistence on the intentions of the author as fundamental to, and perhaps even sufficient for, a *correct* interpretation of the texts. Authorial intentions seem to be a compelling, indeed unimpeachable factor if they appear explicitly in the text itself; but they can also be deduced from other texts written by the same author or from the reconstruction of historical, cultural, or psychosocial contexts. They are functional to the classification of texts into genres and discourses, a factor that implicitly produces canonicity.

But what exactly counts as a marginal text in classics? A univocal answer is not possible but, generally speaking, marginal texts are texts that are not included in the canon or in reading lists and texts that cannot be easily assigned to any specific genre, period, or author. A three-volume Italian collection of studies, titled *Submerged Literature in Ancient Greek Culture* and published in 2014 and 2016, builds on the

[23] See Formisano 2014 and 2017b.

[24] Edmunds 2010c (esp. 34–6) reminds us that the label 'minor', so commonly applied to authors, texts, and genres in literary histories, does not necessarily imply either non-canonical status or a derogatory aesthetic judgement.

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recommendation made by the late Hellenist Luigi Enrico Rossi, that we study ancient Greek texts 'which were mistreated from the very beginning of their transmission, and even texts which were not transmitted at all'.[25] The intent of this anthology is thus eminently reconstructive (for vols 1 and 3, see Colesanti and Giordano 2014 and Ercolani and Giordano 2016; volume 2, edited by Giulio Colesanti and Laura Lulli, is concerned with case studies). The project is devoted to 'provid[ing] a more precise contextualization of the texts in the ancient Greek system of communication and performance',[26] above all by insisting on the fact that the very term 'literature' is historically inappropriate: not only because there is no equivalent comprehensive Greek term but, more importantly, because of the fact of oral/aural transmission and of the specificities of the occasions on which the performances took place.[27] In the last volume of the set, which expands the previous discussion by taking a comparative approach, the volume editors, Andrea Ercolani and Manuela Giordano, challenge what they appropriately regard as a 'tip-of-the-iceberg taxonomy'—namely the common intellectual attitude and scholarly practice of considering only those texts that have been safely handed down to us—in order to reconstruct an entire context. This kind of approach should be revisited for two reasons in particular: one is the obvious partiality of the data on the basis of which ancient Greek literary culture has been reconstructed; the other (which is more relevant to the present book) is that, 'if we accept *a priori* the categories used to construct a cultural or textual canon, we inadvertently and unknowingly foster and adhere to the tenets and to the agenda that led to canonization'.[28]

The already cited study on minor Roman poetry by Lowell Edmunds, who is also a contributor to this volume, on the one hand carefully reconstructs the genealogy of the definition, by considering various editions of 'minor' Roman poetry, and on the other hand establishes possible connections with twentieth-century theory. In particular,

[25] Ercolani and Giordano 2016: 7. [26] Colesanti and Giordano 2014: 3.

[27] Although volume 3 of this book (Ercolani and Giordano 2016) declares that it develops a 'comparative perspective', the various chapters are entirely devoted to reconstructing specific historical and cultural contexts and not to conceptualizing the role of marginality within classical studies (see also the criticism expressed by Stephen Halliwell in his review of the project: http://www.sehepunkte.de/2016/11/28692.html#fn1).

[28] Ercolani and Giordano 2016: 6.

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Edmunds considers the opportunity of adopting the perspective on minor literature formulated by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1975) in their well-known *Kafka: Pour une littérature mineure*. Edmunds points out that, unlike both Franz Kafka and Pascale Casanova, who discuss minor literature in relation to minor languages (i.e. languages spoken only by small communities), Deleuze and Guattari endorse a concept of minor literature as a phenomenon that originates in a major language when a minority enters into cultural and ideological conflict with it. The major language is then 'deterritorialized' by the minority, which uses it in order to subvert it.[29] I will return to this important point at the end of my discussion.

But what makes a text marginal (or, in Edmunds' terms, minor) remains—in most cases, if not always—an aesthetic judgement. As has been recently shown by Irene Peirano Garrison, the question of authenticity of ancient texts is always tied up, both for ancient and modern critics, with an aesthetic judgement about those texts: 'The project of the *Echtheitskritik* has been intimately involved from its earliest beginnings with the process of creating and defending a canon of works deemed superior.'[30] A spurious text or a text that cannot be assigned to a precise period or genre is a priori condemned to being considered inferior; it cannot enter the canon and thus it is marginal.

Although at a theoretical level the majority of classicists would agree with the 'death of the author', that is, with the only partial relevance of authorial intentions for the interpretation of texts, nonetheless most scholarly discussions continue to be based on the implicit dogma that the interpreter must appeal to, or attempt to reconstruct, precisely those intentions. The consequence is natural: a good interpretation is one that follows authorial intentions and/or is sympathetic with them. It is very common indeed to read, even in pieces of scholarship considered magisterial by most, that a given Greek or Roman author would never have thought in a certain way and that this presupposition, which in most cases is nothing but a guess, is authoritative for producing a *correct* interpretation. This kind of reasoning is rarely made explicit, but it is frequently perceptible between the lines.

[29] Edmunds 2010c: 78.
[30] Peirano 2012a: 217.

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The most pertinent points in Peirano Garrison's discussion of *Echtheitskritik* are not only the intimate connection it establishes between authenticity and the canon, but also the further insight that the canon is a preoccupation of scholarship rather than of literature itself. Furthermore, it is worth emphasizing that there are ancient texts that today are considered marginal but were once highly influential, while some others (for example, Christian texts of late antiquity) are not canonical for classicists but are of central importance in other fields. As argued above, this volume is not concerned with the re-evaluation of undeservedly neglected texts, nor does it have the goal of modifying the canon or enlarging reading lists by including more texts. More fundamentally and radically, I question as a matter of principle the importance of canon and reading lists for classics, both as an academic discipline within the humanities and at a more theoretical level.

Salvatore Settis opens his book *The Future of the 'Classical'* by recalling a fundamental distinction between two general approaches to the study of classics, both taken by his teacher Arnaldo Momigliano. One approach is to consider Greek and Roman history, art, and literature as a part of human experience that deserves our attention simply by virtue of being that, and just like the history, art, and literature of any other culture. The other approach considers Greece and Rome fundamental to our understanding of *our own* cultural heritage and identity, an instrument for the comprehension not only of the past but, more importantly, of the present.[31] Settis returns to this point at the end of his book, offering an answer that is worth quoting at length:

> It is worth studying Graeco-Roman 'classical' culture because of the manner in which it continuously shifts between identity and otherness, and in which it feels like 'ours' even though we acknowledge its 'diversity' from us. It is worth studying because it is intrinsic to Western culture and indispensable if we want to understand Western culture, but also because it encourages us to study and understand 'other' cultures. It is worth studying because it is a depository of values which we can still recognize as our own, but also because of what is irredeemably alien [*estraneo*] about those values.[32]

The sense of the 'alien' invoked by Settis has been developed in certain fields of classical studies, mostly thanks to the contribution made by

[31] Settis 2004: 3. [32] Settis 2006: 105–6.

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anthropological studies in France, where scholars such as Jean-Pierre Vernant, Pierre Vidal-Naquet, Nicole Loraux, and Marcel Detienne (to name only the best known) have been combining anthropology with the study of ancient (in particular Greek) culture, politics, and religion. Marcel Detienne has argued for a kind of cultural comparison that juxtaposes cultures that are thought to be incomparable, in contrast to the normal scholarly practice of comparing comparables. 'The incomparable', he writes, 'disturbs the initial comparatist's approach, facing him with a first resistance, forcing him to ask himself how and why this category doesn't exist or doesn't seem to make sense in one of the societies studied.'[33]

The anthropological approach to Greek and Roman cultures has had the indisputable merit of presenting, for the first time and in a systematic way, a methodology for exploring precisely how those worlds, traditionally believed to be our inescapable models, are actually *alien* to us. For the purposes of this volume, however, it is worth noting that, when an anthropological approach is taken to the ancient world, the result is that the text, whether canonical or not, is not read with an eye on its literary status or with attention to authorial intentions. Ultimately, no matter how sharp and sophisticated the interpretation, texts are treated as documents or sources for the reconstruction of the culture in which they were conceived.

On the one hand, in its continuous struggle for existence and visibility, the discipline of classics has opened up its temporal and methodological borders by combining approaches derived from other disciplines and has created and successfully launched its own model of reception—one that, as James Porter has observed,[34] is quite different from the *Rezeptionsästhetik* of the Constance School. On the other hand, many classicists continue to practice a kind of literary criticism that is neither influenced by the new avenues of research just mentioned nor sympathetic to the numerous *modi operandi* typical of other literary disciplines. The sense of alienness or otherness (*estraneità*) thematized by Settis is thus inherent not only in ancient culture itself but also in the very methodology of its study. Reconsidering the tension between marginality and canonicity—which, despite the recent and inspiring innovations in the

[33] Detienne 2008: 24. [34] Porter 2008: 474.

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field, still massively influences classical literary studies (in my opinion, as I have suggested above, rather more in Anglo-American academia than on the continent)—invites us to take stock of the influence of most recent theoretical insights on the philological, textual, and literary core of classics. Basically there is a sort of double vision in connection with two very different approaches, which can coexist even within one and the same scholar: a theoretical openness, promoted in particular by reception studies, which postulates the impossibility of reconstructing any original meaning of the (ancient) text and makes this impossibility productive by opening up the field to the infinite chain of various receptions; and the practice—still considered fundamental and widely applied and propagated in the classroom—of reconstructing the historical meaning of the text *as it really was*. For many scholars and teachers, this tension is not a conflict; the approach promoted by reception studies represents an optional, interesting development that does not affect the hard core of the disciplinary methods of classics, oriented as that is to a reconstructable, historically determined original 'meaning'.

As I mentioned above in passing, Simon Goldhill (2012) has been one of the very few critics to explicitly combine the two tendencies. In a programmatic coda, after having pondered the tension between the value of a text and its inescapable historical situatedness (or, as he puts it, 'between the drive towards historical self-consciousness' given by a reading that is conscious of reception theory and 'the drive towards the value invested in particular works of the past'), Goldhill introduces a term that, in his view, may be able to overcome that tension and possibly to substitute the very term *text*.[35] 'A script', he suggests, 'is a written or oral template which has the strange ability of maintaining itself through innumerable re-incarnations—and which only comes into voice in and through performance.' The 'script' is an exciting concept, in particular since it 'may have a physical existence but it has no original'. But, since the script exists only in its performances and 'the more the script is performed, the greater its influence, value, and power to speak to audiences',[36] the concept seems to reassert the main implication of reception studies, as mentioned in the opening of this chapter, by suggesting that a script that has little or no performance is not really *relevant*, maybe not

[35] Goldhill 2012: 259. [36] Ibid., 262.

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even *important*, since a script owes its life to performances, its meaning being re-enacted in reception. While 'script' is a very apt term to describe the situation of drama and other genres (Goldhill also refers to Thucydides), its application to ancient texts that are less or very little read may be less satisfactory. Again, a sense of canonicity, implicitly but equally powerfully, seems to shape the perception of classical literature even in a highly refined theorization.

In what follows in this part of my essay I would like to describe my own perspective, while emphasizing that it does not necessarily reflect that of the majority of the contributions to this volume. I propose expanding the kind of theoretical pluralism that characterizes the most intellectually engaging strands of classical scholarship to the more traditional textual and literary core of the discipline. In the epilogue to this volume, Joy Connolly recalls Tino Sehgal's *This Progress*, staged at the Guggenheim Museum in New York in 2010. I happened to be a visitor to *This Progress*, and one with no previous knowledge about the kind of experience I was about to have. I entered the museum, to find it completely empty; I could only see people walking around the white spaces of the iconic rotunda. I was immediately approached by a young girl who asked me the question: 'What is progress?' Amused and puzzled at once, I gave an answer and was then left by the girl and met by an adolescent who asked other questions. At the end of the second ramp an adult man joined the conversation, asking yet more questions. On the last ramp I was left with an older woman, who told me a story and asked further questions. In the end I was left alone, to reflect on the conversations I had just had with those unknown persons. Joy Connolly, who had the fortune of serving as one of the walking discussants at that event, treats some of the complex implications of Tino Sehgal's work in her chapter at the end of this volume. As a visitor who entered with no clue as to Tino Sehgal's previous work and concepts, I was and still am struck by two things in particular. First is the extreme difficulty of giving a definition to this event. It was neither an exhibition nor a performance in the usual sense of those words. It was not based on any specific material objects other than the building itself; the discussants were not dressed in any particular way established by the artist; the individual discussions were not to be recorded or reproduced. The only media were individuals of different ages, who were invited, on the basis of a minimal script, to interact with visitors. In my case, the fact that I am not a native speaker of English was

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not a secondary element in the experience and, while I like to think of myself as capable of expressing my thoughts in an academic context at a satisfactory level, I can have difficulties in more colloquial situations, as was the case in this particular event. Another key factor in this experience was the perception of the museum space itself, which was familiar to me from numerous previous visits for different exhibitions. As Connolly reminds us, a museum (and especially *that* museum) is a canonical space par excellence, and Sehgal's work had the merit not only of reflecting the circularity of the architecture in the conversations between discussants and visitors, but also of challenging the canonicity of that space by temporarily cancelling its iconicity as a museum and its function as container of art works.

It is no coincidence that both Joy Connolly and myself, independently of each other, consider Sehgal's work in this volume. Of course, it would deserve a much longer and nuanced discussion, but the two aspects I have briefly mentioned here offer a good parallel to my perspective on the goals of our discussion on marginality and canonicity: to enter the textual space of classical literature by opening its borders, traditionally defined according to authorial intentions, periods, genres, discourses, and other kinds of classifications endorsed and sanctioned by more than two centuries of classical scholarship. The question raised by Momigliano fifty years ago, as observed by Settis, is still urgent, still needs to be carefully articulated. If we limit ourselves to considering classical texts as *important* and *relevant* to us—either because they reveal the deep origins of western culture or because they show how irremediably 'other' and alien 'our' cultural predecessors are, or for both reasons, taken together—we risk missing the specificity of what has become the characteristic way of reading and interpreting ancient Greek and Roman texts. What I am proposing is to reserve for those texts a sort of metaspace, analogous but not identical with the global literary space proposed by Pascale Casanova in 1999, in *La république mondiale des lettres*—independent from, yet at the same time connected to, reality. To be sure, ancient literature and textuality are obviously comparable to other literatures and therefore can be read in various ways; but there is nonetheless a specific mode of reading, which pertains only to ancient texts and has been nurtured by classical scholarship over the last two centuries. The practice of close reading, which literary scholars in other fields treat as an option, is in fact *the* practice consistently adopted by classicists. Their approach to their

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texts is mediated through the intrinsic difficulty of the language, through cultural distance, and through the cognitive dissonance that is unavoidably produced by reading ancient textuality. This sense of otherness (Settis: *estraneità*) is arguably inscribed for us in the texts themselves: it is not only a *cultural* otherness that can be negotiated at different levels and to which anthropology on the one hand and reception studies on the other have given us significant access, but it is also a *textual* otherness. This textual otherness necessarily, almost ontologically, is in balance between the distance produced by the ancient languages themselves and the impossibility of entirely accessing their worlds and recognizing them as *ours*. It is the practice of most classicists to tenaciously attempt to reconstruct both the literal meaning of the text and its context, even if the same classicists salute the contributions to the field made by reception studies. At the same time, however, many are reluctant to recognize that the aesthetic criteria followed and shaped by ancient authors cannot simply be adopted in our own hermeneutical work. Even if scholars recognize enormous cultural distances that separate us from ancient texts as soon as the latter begin to talk about women, slavery, science, politics, religion, or sexuality, for example, in their interpretive work they tend to implicitly accept ancient aesthetic and textual values without questioning them radically. As I was arguing above, there is a sort of cognitive gap between theory (in its various articulations) and the classicist's characteristic techniques of reading an ancient text. Posing the question of marginality implies, among other things, reconsidering this gap by making it a conscious and productive instrument of research. Making a productive category out of marginality also implies a re-evaluation of the kind of knowledge promoted by philology, which has itself been progressively marginalized within the humanities. Sheldon Pollock, for example, advocates a 'world philology' as the 'theory of textuality as well as the history of textualized meaning'.[37]

Every text, whether highly canonical or the most marginal, comes with a 'surprise factor', that is, with certain aspects that cannot be described through appeals to authorial intention, genre, or discourse but emerge only from a close reading of the text, one that pays attention to its language. It has been argued many times that canonical texts are not

[37] Pollock 2015: 22.

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produced as such; on the contrary, the most canonical texts were originally subversive—they intended to subvert certain practices of the genre or discourse within which they were operating. Arguably, then, the process of canonization has had the effect of making invisible and unrecognizable the subversive quality of texts that have been 'normalized'—and, paradoxically, normalized through readers' appreciation. John Guillory, for instance, pleads for a way of reading that is resistant to the tendency to homogenize canonical texts as if they had always been destined—even designed—to be canonical. And, because situating a work historically is independent of canonization, which always takes place in later phases, Guillory proposes a historicizing reading.[38]

In this case, then, the surprise factor has nearly been silenced by the expectations of readers, which in most cases are shaped by scholarly preoccupations such as the rules of the genre and the reconstruction of authorial intentions. Approaching the surprise factor of an ancient text is like entering one of the most canonical buildings of our age, for instance the Guggenheim Museum, and discovering in it something completely new, which not only does not correspond to a museum space but in fact subverts its foundations as a museum. In a recent article Sebastian Matzner argues for the relevance of 'queer unhistoricism' (as theorized by Valerie Traub) to the disciplinary discourse of classics, in relation to the insights given by reception studies, which he interprets as a disturbing 'queer' factor for 'straight' classics (i.e. the traditional way of studying Greco-Roman antiquity, which considers reception an interesting complement rather than something essential to understanding the classical past). As Matzner puts it, 'the inherently oppositional dimension of queerness . . . underscores how important it is, especially in diachronic criticism, to perpetually challenge *both* the consensus of knowingness about a consolidated present *and* reductive representations of incommensurable strands of the past'.[39]

The fact that we can reconstruct the original meaning of an ancient text and its context only partially and up to a certain degree can thus be seen not as an obstacle, but rather as an enrichment to interpretation. For it compels us as readers to perceive ancient authors, texts, and literatures as abstract objects, as an *ideal* textual world detached from its historical reality (I here use the adjective 'ideal' neither in an ethical nor in an

[38] Guillory 1995: 244. [39] Matzner 2016: 192.

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aesthetic sense). In some sense, ancient textuality must be seen as pure literature, not because it was produced as such, but because of the way we receive it and *work* with it as scholars. Of course the fact that we cannot grasp an original meaning does not imply that we cannot grasp *any* meaning. Instead, the meaning we actively produce by reading the ancient text is paradigmatically located between the gap caused by the distance in language and culture and the meaning that, despite—or perhaps precisely because of—that gap, we construct and make our own.

Returning to Momigliano's question as repeated by Settis—whether classical culture should be studied because *any* past is interesting or because *this* past is a model for our present—I would argue that ancient texts can function as an example for current readers and at the same time be viewed as alien—a mode of reading that produces what I propose to call an 'exemplary extraneousness'. This exemplary extraneousness emerges from the fact that the alienating aspect does not reside merely in the fact that the content details derive from a culture that we cannot entirely understand or identify with (slavery, sexuality, politics, ethics, religion, science and technology, etc.); it resides in the very languages—ancient Greek and Latin—and in a textuality that speaks to us from a remote and unreconstructable past, yet nonetheless produces meanings that still fundamentally influence our own culture. Charles Martindale emphasizes that '[c]lassics registers in its very title a claim that the products of antiquity are *in some sense* exemplary for Western culture'[40] and cites Hans-Georg Gadamer:

> The classical preserves itself precisely because it is significant in itself and interprets itself; i.e., it speaks in such a way that it is not a statement about what is past . . . rather, it says something to the present as if it were said specifically to it. What we call 'classical' does not first require the overcoming of historical distance, for in its own constant mediation it overcomes this distance by itself.[41]

A recent collection of papers edited by Shane Butler explores how classics as a discipline thematizes its very distance from the classical past. 'Deep classics', as Butler describes this hermeneutical enterprise, makes us aware that the attention of classical scholars 'is directed towards time, as an obstacle to knowing that is forever on the verge of becoming itself the object of inquiry and contemplation'.[42] In this sense, if I rightly

[40] Martindale 2007: 310 (emphasis added).
[41] Gadamer 1989: 289.
[42] Butler 2016: 15.

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understand Butler's vision, classics is not only the study of a Greek and Roman antiquity but a more important, in fact a fundamental approach: 'the very pose by which the human present turns its attention to the distant human past'.[43]

Within what I call the exemplary extraneousness implicitly practised and propagated by classics, marginal texts, although generally ignored even in the most innovative discussions of classical literature and its receptions, play a pragmatic as well as a theoretical role. An awareness of this extraneousness urges us to reconsider ancient textuality from a perspective that I would label 'post-reception'—not in the sense that reception studies has been surpassed or is outdated, but rather in the sense that the fundamental concern of this discipline can now be applied to ancient texts themselves, through our fully acknowledging and making productive the impossibility of reaching their remote, original 'meaning'. In this sense, a marginal text—that is, a text that is not central to us anymore, be it because it is aesthetically unsatisfying, because it cannot be classified according to genre or discourse definitions, or because its content is not relevant to us anymore—offers better than any other the possibility of observing the temporal and cultural abyss at which, for instance, Butler's (2016) *Deep Classics* invites us to look. Deleuze and Guattari plead for a minor literature within a major language. They find their hero in Kafka, the author who writes in his own native German like a foreigner, *comme un étranger*.[44] In opposition to all styles, genres, and literary movements that seek to 'assume a major function in language', Kafka and other authors have created 'a becoming minor' (*un devenir mineur*).[45] Deleuze and Guattari identify in the 'deterritorialization' of a major language the driving concept of a minor literature, a literature both politically and aesthetically contrary to the canon.[46]

Ralph Hexter has proposed applying this concept to the study of medieval Latin literature. In particular, he is interested in emphasizing the interdependence of major and minor literature, classical Latin texts representing canonicity and medieval Latin texts resisting it. Given that

[43] Butler 2016: 14. [44] Deleuze and Guattari 1975: 48.

[45] Deleuze and Guattari 1975: 50 and 1986: 27.

[46] Edmunds 2010b argues that Deleuze and Guattari push their interpretation of Kafka too far when they insist on the politically revolutionary potential of Kafka's concept of minor literature. On the basis of the passages from Kafka's *Diaries* discussed by the French theorists, Edmunds argues that Kafka himself did not establish this connection.

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Deleuze and Guattari conceive of deterritorialization as a term apt for describing not only a language without a territory but, more importantly, 'a language becoming untethered, alienated—even exiled—from its own identity, hollowed out', Hexter uses this term in order to appreciate the particular situation of medieval Latin literary history, which lacks a canon of its own: 'It turns on its head the very canonicity Latin has regularly claimed for itself, indeed as its very own alone.'[47] This approach brilliantly illuminates the specificity of medieval Latin and its complex relationship with its alter ego—classical Latin as *the* canon. Here I would like to expand upon the concept of deterritorialization with the following suggestion. Reading any ancient text today, regardless of its political or aesthetic qualities in its original context, always implies a simple, though profound act of deterritorialization: this happens for many reasons, but in particular for one, which classicists tend systematically to evade—namely the very languages of the texts, which we can reach and understand only up to a certain point. From this perspective, all classical literature, usually considered the standard bearer of canonicity, may, by means of a radical change of perspective, be profitably seen as a huge corpus of 'minor literature' itself, deterritorialized and always irremediably *against*.

As noted above, a text may be marginal because it was marginal already for ancient readers, or because it has become marginal for us (as general readers and/or as classicists), or because it thematizes its own marginality, whether to literature in general or to any specific ancient genre. But in all three cases, why should the marginality of the subject be a criterion for academic and hiring procedures? Why should this very choice influence a career one way or another? To return to the question raised some years ago by Elaine Fantham, whether late Latin technical treatises might be 'relevant' for us today: asking about the relevance of studying certain texts rather than others and searching for the connection between ancient texts and ourselves are acts that implicitly emphasize a concept of canonicity to the extent that it directs research towards a selection of texts whose content still matters to us. But beside the canon, which, by definition, is always *relevant*, the value of the *important* needs to be re-established.

[47] Hexter 2012: 40.

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II. Overview of this Volume

Christina Shuttleworth Kraus

The chapters of which this volume is comprised approach our theme in various ways. We left it up to individual contributors to follow their own passions in writing; as a result—and as befits a collected volume—there is no single line of argument to be traced through the book. Instead, we have an appropriately ranging set of papers that appraise, interrogate, and challenge the ideas of marginality and canonicity. Dedicated to exploring the application and theory of these concepts, the present chapters form a whole larger than the sum of its parts. They invite readers to engage with the history of reading and using classical texts.

While each contributor pays heed to the practices of reading and reception that lie behind the labels 'margin' and 'canon', in the volume's editorial arrangement we begin with explicit theory and end with explicit practice. John Hamilton opens the discussion by exploring the ways in which philology alerts us 'to language's formal conditions, by indicating how meaning is produced without bearing any meaning itself' (p. 41). The notion of disciplinarity, so intrinsic to the canon and to the complex of centre and periphery, depends on the erotic energy brought to bear on a text by philology. Hamilton's test case is the French classicist Pascal Quignard: not his philological studies of the ancient novel or of philosophy, but his own novels, especially the 2007 *Sur le jadis: Dernier royaume II*. As Quignard uses philology as a mode both of study and of creative writing, so Hamilton investigates philologically the shifts of tense and aspect in *Sur le jadis* (a title itself incorporating a kind of archaic time), in order to see how interactions, in particular between the present tense and the aorist, overwhelm distance and how pulling the past into the present 'does not merely encounter this horizon [between times and spaces], but also decisively creates it'. The limits of past and present are both grammatical and experiential, of course. Hamilton's study sheds light from the margins (the contemporary novelist) onto philology's central game of definition and shows how both centre and margin are always in play, the marginal constantly retreating before the present, which in turn creates it.

We have paired Hamilton's provocative piece with Constanze Güthenke and Brooke Holmes' joint assessment of one consequence of that unending play on borders: the tension between the canon and the

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overabundance that always threatens to weaken its definition, a 'tension between expansion and limitation' that they see as 'constitutive of classics as a modern discipline, by which we mean an increasingly institutionalized and professionalized set of practices and forms of tacit knowledge that has been taking shape since the late eighteenth century' (pp. 57–8). Whether one sees the margins as threatening the canon (considered here as representative of the urtext) or as offering a way of opening up discourse, and the profession as well, to formerly excluded texts, the tension between the two has been essential not only to defining each (no canon without margin, no margin without canon), but also to defining the discipline—however much that definition may shift as the canon itself grows and shrinks. As for Hamilton, for Güthenke and Holmes it is the dynamic between the two that makes a persistent object of study. Coming out of their discussion of the interplay between competence and community, in which 'disciplinarity becomes one way of maintaining functioning lines of communication in a world where, as we face a proliferation of *what there is to know*, we also face choices, both individual and collective, about what *should be known*' (pp. 63–4), is the ideal of a 'nodal' classics, in which it is recognized that the comprehensive knowledge and training of students is impossible but we can continue our critical engagement with the objects of our enquiry, while at the same time we allow a fluidity around the study of a limited node, which in turn generates its own web of connections. They emphasize the importance of allowing reception to take a greater role in the ways we train students and do our own work, paying attention to the historiography of scholarship and respecting the active nature of making sense of evidence from the ancient world.

John Oksanish, Carmela Vircillo Franklin, and Giulia Sissa address the moving targets of textual meaning and the canon through a historiographical lens. Oksanish looks closely at the reception of one of Renaissance's most central ancient texts and, until very recently, one of modernity's most marginal: Vitruvius' *De architectura.* Exploring this unique survival of Augustan prose through the lenses of education (graduate reading lists, the cataloguing of books as 'technical' or 'literary') and of Vitruvius' reception in the discipline of art history, Oksanish situates the *De architectura* betwixt and between, as it were, before examining what the text itself and its reception tradition can tell us about how Vitruvius arrived where he is now. Reading Vitruvius through

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Alberti, Barth, and Ussing, Mackail, Oder, and Brown, Oksanish traces a rich trail of passionate readings that have all but obscured any 'real' Vitruvius. At the same time he stresses that there is no 'real' Vitruvius behind his reception: partly because Vitruvius himself puts himself always in context/contest with other writers, leaving himself (deliberately?) on the literary margins.

Franklin continues this look at 'marginal' texts through a historiographical lens in her comparison of two modern critical editions of the *Liber pontificalis* (*LP*), one by the historian Theodor Mommsen and one by the medievalist Louis Duchesne. Through engagement not only with the edited text and its mise-en-page, but also with the training and approach of these two editors, she 'illustrate[s] the themes of marginality and canonicity as they relate to literary genre and historical period, to religious commitment and national sentiment, and to the tension between classical methodology and medieval texts' (p. 103). Mommsen, who undertook this editing as much in the service of his discipline as for any personal commitment, treated the *LP* as he did the other texts he edited, prioritizing a restoration of the 'original' text—though he thought little of the content and value of these 'late' documents. Duchesne, on the other hand, like Mommsen trained as a historian and philologist, saw his role as editor to be one of providing an understanding of the continuing life of a text, especially one as fluid and accretive as the *LP*, which was used constantly after its 'original' incarnation—used as part of the Catholic church, to whose history it contributes and of whose history Duchesne, an ordained priest, was a living part. Disciplinary, national, and personal considerations combine here to produce two very different editions of the same text, which remains marginal for ancient history but becomes central to the study of the church.

With these studies of what constitutes appropriate philological reading, we have joined Giulia Sissa's rich investigation of the scholarship on *dēmokratia* and 'democracy', both by classicists and by political scientists. She pleads for a more inclusive consideration of ancient texts, in this case opening up what we read in order to more appropriately contextualize the ancient world. Her case study, a detailed reading of Aristotle's theorizing of 'the male' and of its place at the roots of political life, demands a fundamental shift in our view of Athenian democracy, namely one of focus 'from an allegedly "incidental" lack of women to an essential need of men, and only men' (p. 144). Many of the

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texts she puts into play have been studied before, of course, but her insistence that we change not the means of answering (by bringing what, from some angles, might be described as marginal texts to bear on the canon of Demosthenes, Thucydides, etc.) but the question itself (by asking not 'why are woman marginal?' but 'why are men central?') offers a fresh view on the question, especially in relation to contemporary reception of ancient political thought.

We shift at this point to show in detail what the kind of inclusive readings advocated for by Sissa can do for a 'marginal' text. Marco Fantuzzi offers a practical class on the reading and analysis of a work that has for centuries challenged the idea of centre and periphery in the Greek tragic canon. Long ascribed to the canonical Euripides, but of disputed authorship in antiquity, the tragedy *Rhesus* poses problems of style, genre, and quality. Fantuzzi does not set out to solve the mystery of the *Rhesus* (though he does propose a fourth-century context for it, seeing in its author 'a fellow traveller of Menander', p. 201). Instead, he traces historiographically the story of its analysis, before performing a dynamic comparison between this play and its model in the Homeric corpus, *Iliad* 10. It is particularly in the synchronic question of the play's themes and in the diachronic question of its intertextual relationships that Fantuzzi touches closely on the themes of this volume: how are we to read a 'marginal' text in comparison with other texts, and what does our reception of that text tell us about how to read? With this piece we have grouped Reviel Netz's *tour de force*: the investigation of the Hellenistic canon. What were the readers in Egypt reading? How can we reconstruct their reading from what they did not (any longer) read—that is, from the books they threw away, either because they were worn out or because, for whatever reasons, they no longer served any pressing need—be that intellectual, educational, or social? Netz's suggested model of a 'big-library/small-library balance' (p. 211) can account for the distribution of 'major' and 'minor' authors and texts—and also leads us back to the ways in which circulation of books went 'hand in hand with reputation (as reflected in the persistence of circulation across the social strata)' (p. 213). Ultimately Netz sees a bifurcated system, in which works that derive from, or suggest, performance become canonized, and works that do not—the specialized, debated scholarly works—remain outside. Paradoxically, perhaps, it is the former group of 'major' works that (as the evidence shows) 'became the frozen cultural presupposition'

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of society by the beginning of the third century BC (p. 229), while the 'minor' status of the second group—primarily non-performative prose—assured its dynamism.

Turning from analytical readings to more personal studies of reception, the last three chapters tackle the question of the major and the minor from the point of view of individual readers and paedagogical practices. James Porter wittily uses Homer as his example of the 'marginal' in an investigation of the epic poet's reception in ancient lives and scholarship. Homer, Porter reminds us, 'spawned not only the origins of ancient criticism (even before Theagenes in the sixth century), but also the origins of ancient critique, rebuff, parody, subversion, and revision that kept his image alive down through the centuries' (p. 232). This does not, by itself, make him a minor figure, of course. But, as Porter reminds us, the critique, parody, and subversion often took place in minor, marginal, and paraliterary forms of writing, from scholarship to burlesque. The distinction between canon and margin, in Porter's hands, collapses into what he calls 'margicanon'—or, as he describes it, a 'process of indistinction' (p. 238) for which reception is another name. Porter's test cases are Samuel Butler's *Authoress of the Odyssey* and Dio of Prusa's *Trojan Oration* (Or. 11)—two acts of reception that blur 'the fine line between scholarship and fantasy and between canons and margins' (p. 261), and in both cases he elaborates on the author's pleasure in subverting the canon.

Scott McGill explores the ancient 'cliff notes' appended to the *Aeneid*, the brief hexameter summaries now edited as part of the *Anthologia Latina* but found in their earliest form in the Codex Romanus (Vat. lat. 3827) of Virgil. As adjunct texts, these are, at one level, obviously subordinate to the 'original' *Aeneid*—but McGill is interested instead in their agonistic, playful, parodic nature. Somewhere between Monty Python's 'All-England Summarize Proust Competition' and the virtuosic attempts to miniaturize the *Iliad* in a nutshell, these summaries are in fact tools of reception, even allowing the reader to access the *Aeneid* by bypassing the original poem. In fact, as McGill shows, summarizing the *Aeneid* entails creating another *Aeneid*. Different audiences of these summaries will take away different things, from sophisticated *imitatio* to simple condensation. By asking us to focus on the summaries as reception texts, McGill puts their audiences on the margins, reading a canonical central text from the periphery.

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Finally, Lowell Edmunds looks closely at these audiences and their judgements about what is worth studying in a detailed investigation of the position of minor texts in the discipline and profession of classics. He returns us to the point from which Güthenke and Holmes started—the need for selectivity in scholarship—but addresses now the history of the profession, which 'makes the final decision on the rewards that research on minor literature receives and thus, in effect, on what is minor' (p. 290). Like Netz, Edmunds appeals to the discourse of a group of readers—a discourse proper to a social or professional stratum. His dense account of the ways in which the canon and the margin—not necessarily opposites—have been adjusted to reflect the needs of the profession brings us full circle to the question of the academy and the world. His account of how the discipline of classical philology (which 'remains pious towards the method; at the same time it is indifferent to the object of the method', p. 305) has found a way to maintain itself inside itself while also surpassing its own limits brings us squarely to reception. 'Philology + X'—a disciplinary model in which the profession's traditional identity is extended—has proved particularly fruitful in recent years, where x = reception studies.

In her epilogue, Joy Connolly takes us from written text to modern performance. She explores the physical relationship between the margin and the centre from the standpoint of passion in her own personal experience, namely in an account of her participation in Tino Sehgal's *This Progress*, which she finds 'exemplary for thinking about how classicists might productively disrupt our canonical spaces'—classrooms, talks, conferences, publications, and the canon(s) itself (p. 317). She then moves to engage us in a consideration of Hannah Arendt's model of 'thinking with' in order to make us conscious of our dependence on others and of how that awareness can change the way we read and contextualize classical texts. Her aim is to encourage us to question how the profession works, what do we research, what do we include and what exclude, in a final exploration of the relationship of the original to its reception. She advocates for 'not so much a literary hermeneutic or a theory of reception as . . . a model of creative, purposive conservation' (p. 319) that engages repetitious reading as a way of keeping tradition alive in contexts of new thinking. If Sehgal and Arendt are on the margins of the canons of our classical world, they can nevertheless

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show us ways of enriching both our discipline and our profession: in short, they can engage our passions.

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