Prologue

> It is a tale of Troy – nothing less than the *Giant Horse* himself! There he is – surrounded by horses as gigantic and marvellous in their powers and accomplishments as himself – steeds of magical capacity.
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> Anon., Newspaper Clipping, 14 August 1833.[1]

With right foreleg raised, a horse is poised as if ready to charge into the flaming city. Its inclined head fixes viewers and soldiers alike with a quizzical eye. Etched lines indicate wooden planks, while soldiers excitedly peer from their hiding place. Yet the sinuously curving tail and artfully placed characters who hide the platform wheels, as well as the absence of the horses which drew that platform onto the stage in the original performance, lend an urgent vitality to the scene. This Giant Horse upstages all other characters in the spectacular theatrical souvenir depicted on the cover of this book, just as it dominated advertisements and reviews. This surprisingly lifelike depiction was an appropriate emblem for an 'entirely new horse spectacle' at Astley's Amphitheatre.[2]

A beloved London venue which combined theatrical stage with circus arena, Astley's was widely acclaimed as the 'favourite summer resort alike of the infant and the adult'.[3] Even by this venue's exceptional standards, the entertainment depicted here was a phenomenal success. Described by a leading daily paper as 'one of the best dramas of the class to which it pertains that we have ever witnessed', *The Giant Horse; or, The Siege of Troy* delighted audiences with a solid run from Easter Monday throughout the record-setting heatwave season of 1833. In early August, the theatre was even lit up to celebrate the show's hundredth night: an emerging custom for what was, then, a truly remarkable achievement. Of course the illuminated edifice provided further advertisement, although eye-catching playbills had already attracted crowds. Journalists were breathless in their praise of the 'striking originality' with which this epic legend was brought to life – but

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[1] Review of Giant Horse at Astley's Amphitheatre, Clipping from unidentified newspaper British Library Scrapbook, 'Astley's clippings from newspapers, vol. 3 1806–1856', 14 August 1833.

[2] *Standard*, The theatres, 9 April 1833, 1.

[3] Ibid.

some were damning in their criticism of fellow spectators at this 'burlesque in the stables'.[4] Oddly, few seemed concerned that Menelaus was 'Troy's proud hero' and Paris 'the Grecian prince'.[5] All over the capital, extravagantly worded adverts competed for column space in newspapers, while posters and billboards jostled for bypassers' attention.

The most spectacular example (Figure 3.22), at almost a metre tall, featured a full-length woodcut of the Giant Horse in much the same pose – down to the rosette-shaped ornamental facepiece between the eyes – as in my cover illustration of the souvenir image. From his head-on perspective he appears ready to shake free the soldier attempting to scale his leg and charge out of the poster onto the street. Such playbills exploited the theatre's circus origins to emphasise the Horse's legendary size: alongside fairy ponies, wild zebras and a 'lion centaur', its exaggerated scale connotes the hyperbole of freak shows and fairground entertainment, even as it pokes fun at the Greco-Roman myth of the Wooden Horse, whose innards concealed a good number of the warriors who had sailed to Troy in their thousand ships to regain Helen. At the same time, the fact that the souvenir image was sold as a backdrop so that this show could be recreated in miniature toy theatres, usually by children and young men, also establishes the show's influence firmly within the well-to-do home.

On these table-top stages, the Horse's posture draws the eye to the brightly coloured flames licking the sky beyond. A fierce conflagration dramatically silhouettes the assorted towers and columns intended to evoke the city of Troy; it also delineates, to the far left of the image, a group of rearing horses poised above an archway. This is apparently Troy's great Scaean Gate, the main entrance to the city and iconic landmark for archaeologists, as well as the setting for dramatic encounters in epic accounts of the Trojan War.

Here, however, the gateway shifts the identity of the burning city: the intricate sculptural detail depicts the chariot of Nike, the goddess of victory, drawn by four horses. This quadriga aligns Troy's Scaean Gate not only with monuments in modern European cities – Berlin's Brandenburg Gate, Napoleon's Arc de Triomphe du Carousel in Paris and plans for the new Wellington Arch in London – but also evokes the hippodrome setting of the Roman bronze which inspired these recreations. Napoleon's campaigns would have been only too familiar to circus spectators: battles were recreated almost as soon as military reports reached London, and, much to

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[4]   *Morning Post*, 'Astley's Amphitheatre', 18 May 1833, 3; H. M., 'Burlesque in the stables', *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 3 September 1833, 134.
[5]   *Literary Gazette*, 'Unrehearsed stage effects', 8 June 1833, 364.

one critic's annoyance, the circus's infamous Bonaparte impersonator even participated in *Giant Horse*.[6]

The bold translocation of the Brandenburg Gate into Troy transforms the Wooden Horse ruse into Napoleon's triumphal entry into Berlin. It thereby fuses multiple afterlives: a Romantic version of a Roman copy of a posited Greek original, imagined into a legendary siege set in Bronze Age Asia Minor, as revivified on the modern stage. Such a complex anachronistic presence encapsulates the dramatic, disturbing parallels between ancient ruins and modern cities with which this book is concerned. Moreover, the production and commercial context of the image itself exemplifies the need for a new approach to disentangle the full extent to which classical antiquity was interwoven through the imaginative landscape of nineteenth-century Britain.

The drama of classical ruins was not confined to the theatre. As this book will explain, the ruins of Troy and Carthage influenced every aspect of nineteenth-century culture. Beyond schoolrooms and debates of learned societies, these ruined cities became the subject of political debates over funding priorities and religious clashes over the Bible's authenticity. They also stimulated the development of new technologies as well as animating children's toys and inspiring poets and painters. The mythological, epic and historical narratives surrounding these ruins also became a focus of class-based anxieties surrounding the increased availability of 'cheap knowledge'.

Giant Horse exemplifies the playfulness with which classical antiquity circulated throughout the cultural imagination across the social spectrum of nineteenth-century Britain. The chatter, hype and conflict which surrounded this production exposes the extent to which the Trojan War myths infused entertainment culture – and how contentious that enjoyment, and notions of what constituted classical knowledge, could be. Such daring, democratising, dynamic versions of the past transform our understanding of nineteenth-century classical receptions. This book examines how our sense of the tradition of classical antiquity changes when popular, playful versions of Troy and Carthage are allowed, once again, to enhance, or even outshine, the Homer and Virgil of the schoolroom and learned essay. These juxtapositions were part of everyday experience for many in the Regency, Victorian and Edwardian periods: schoolboys and governesses alike attended the circus, while scholarly breakthroughs were lampooned in satirical publications.

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[6] *Figaro in London*, 'Theatricals', 22 June 1833, 100.

Troy, Carthage and the Victorians will recreate the dramatic debates that greeted archaeological discoveries in the Troad and North Africa. The five chapters trace how the ruined cities of Troy and Carthage gained cultural currency, sparking bold reconstructions of the Trojan Wars as well as imaginative improvisations on the received, canonical narratives surrounding both cities. The range of cultural forms in which the ruins of Troy and Carthage circulated – from travelogues to theatrical scripts and paintings – demonstrates that such distinctions between elite and popular, highbrow and vernacular, are artificial. Rather, messier models are needed to encompass the diverse unruliness of classical knowledge and the cross-class, transcultural nature of classical antiquity's presence within the nineteenth-century imaginative landscape.

1 | Introduction: The Ruins of Troy and Carthage 'Still Flaming to the Imagination' in the Nineteenth Century

> Amidst the startling survivals of antiquity, the dusty revivals of the mythic man, not one has come with such a theatrical (would that we could say dramatic!) *éclat* upon us as the recent excavations in the Troad […] it was a sensation not unlike that from suddenly seeing a megatherium in the paddock beyond your garden wall, to hear the announcement of the discovery of King Priam's treasure.
>
> William Stillman*, Cornhill Magazine*, June 1874[1]

Throughout the summer of 1873, news had reached Britain of discoveries which, it was claimed, proved the existence of Homer's Troy.[2] Reviewing this exciting period the following summer, William Stillman, an American journalist residing in London, echoed Charles Dickens's comic description from two decades earlier in *Bleak House*, of 'a Megalosaurus, forty feet long or so, waddling like an elephantine lizard up Holburn Hill'. In likening the announcements from the German archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann to 'suddenly seeing a megatherium in the paddock beyond your garden wall', Stillman ranks the discovery of Troy's ruins as the pinnacle of those contemporary developments which seemed to be defining modern experience. The discovery of fossils belonging to dinosaurs and other prehistoric creatures had recently opened a window onto a hitherto unknown past; now this new archaeological evidence for the existence of Troy and its location at Hisarlik in modern-day Turkey shifted, and even dissolved, accepted boundaries between legend and history, mythology and reality. Both sorts of unearthed evidence changed notions of time and history: even as the ruins of ancient cities and antediluvian monsters popularised the new concept of prehistory, they raised troubling questions about the future of modernity.[3]

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[1] W. J. Stillman, 'Homer's Troy, and Schliemann's', *Cornhill Magazine*, June 1874, 663–74.

[2] E.g. *Pall Mall Gazette*, 'Occasional notes', 15 July 1874, 4; *Morning Post*, 'Banquet at the Royal Academy', 18 August 1873, 3.

[3] Houghton (1966) I, 358; Dickens (1853) 1. While a Megalosaurus (named in 1824) is a dinosaur, a Megatherium (named in 1796) is actually a giant land sloth, probably herbivorous. The fact that such creatures were, in scientific tradition, given names deriving from Latin and Greek perhaps creates a false sense of familiarity with this 'huge lizard' and 'huge beast'.

King Priam's treasure, seemingly unearthed from the palaces of Troy, was, as Stillman's comment underscores, a particularly sensational discovery. The *Iliad* and *Aeneid* were 'still flaming to the imagination': Homer's and Virgil's epics were two of the most formative works of the literary canon and acknowledged backbones of the classical tradition.[4] However, such extremes of enthusiasm and scepticism were not solely on account of Troy's central role in narratives of the Trojan War and its aftermath. The backdrop of the long and contentious search for Troy's remains was also a major factor that heightened the public impact of debates over the city's existence, location and relevance. In particular, the vast excitement over Schliemann's excavations can only have been intensified by the superbly ironic timing of his announcement: only weeks earlier, a vicious British debate perpetuated through a welter of articles, letters and cartoons in the popular press had discussed the worth of attempting to pinpoint the geographical location of an ancient epic poem, however canonical. Many participants, even those who agreed with *The Times* that Troy evoked 'scenes which are ever recurring to the imagination of every one who has received a classical education', backed the Chancellor's decision that excavations at the public expense would waste both time and taxpayers's money.[5] It was this controversy which predisposed Stillman to such surprise at Schliemann's announcements. His reaction emphasises the immediacy and ubiquity of such emotional investment in the classical past, as epitomised by the immense impact on both reading and spectating publics of ancient cities such as Troy.

Troy, Carthage and the Victorians provides a new cultural history of British absorption in the classical past throughout the long nineteenth century. Taking the mythological ruined city of Troy as its primary case study, with Carthage as its main comparative, this book analyses how specific elements of Regency, Victorian and Edwardian culture shaped how these mythical cities and their ruins were conceived. The ruins of Troy and Carthage were invested with a powerful imaginative resonance as loci of popular historical imagination, whose interpretation helped to define the epoch. These cities shift between Greek myth and Roman history, both as the physical sites and as prime locations within foundational literary works. This book will demonstrate how these cities were made symbolic of classical antiquity and exploited to conceptualise problematic relationships between past, present and future. In tracing how the narratives of the

4   John Eagles, 'The Trojan Horse; or, siege of Troy explained', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, February 1836, 239.
5   John Delane, 'Editorial', *The Times*, 27 March 1873, 9.

destruction of Troy and Carthage and the foundation of Rome made these cities stand for the predicted ruined future as well as the established ruined past, it will argue that they were used to conceive the implications of the classical heritage for three concentric spheres of influence: the futures of metropolis, empire and civilisation itself. In asking how classical antiquity was used as a resource for such discussions, this book adopts a different perspective from previous classical reception studies. Rather than a specific focus on a single aspect, such as elite appropriation or class-conscious sub-version of the Classics, it takes a more capacious approach, encompassing a wider range of genres and material, to highlight not only the important role played by the British appropriation and imitation of classical culture, but also the dangers of such paradigms and resultant rewriting of the classical past.

As Stillman's discussion makes clear, nineteenth-century debates over the possibility of locating a city from oral epic were largely pre-professional and pre-disciplinary: the majority of participants would not have considered themselves 'classicists' or even 'antiquaries', let alone 'archaeologists'.[6] Moreover, his exaltation of Priam's Treasure as prime example of 'dusty revivals of the mythic man' situates Troy in the context of the many other palaeontological and geological discoveries announced in the same decades, spurred by and in turn spurring on the development of archaeological and scientific techniques; these were often represented as part of the booming leisure industry in which 'theatrical' spectacles played such a huge part. These links between different sorts of 'startling survivals of antiquity', which today perhaps seem rather more startling than the actual discoveries themselves, would not in themselves have seemed odd to Stillman's middle-class readers, perusing a 'relatively inexpensive periodical' which embodied 'the cutting edge of the machine age'.[7] Such interconnections not only testify to the intertwined nature of nineteenth-century culture at a time when the disciplines we know today were only just segregating; they also attest to the central place of the Greco-Roman classical tradition; and within that, of the centrality of the Trojan War narrative. In addition, Stillman's descriptions of the sensory acquisition of information, while conditioned by the expectation of some readers owning a paddock and garden, hint further that contemporary perceptions of 'classical knowledge' could consist of more casual experiences, such as reading periodicals or attending the circus, as well as traditional, institutional education.

There has, until recently, been a general misperception that knowledge of, and familiarity with, the Classics in the nineteenth century was

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[6] See Levine (1986).
[7] Dawson (2004) 123; Secord (2014) 237.

restricted to the social elite. Debates over both archaeological discoveries and circus performances, along with the other cultural forms to be discussed, will show that classical antiquity actually mattered for a much wider range of participants, and for a much wider range of reasons, than just class identity: one's position on Troy's existence or location, for example, could define what it meant to be a British Christian. Large audiences now engaged with Homer's *Iliad* and Virgil's *Aeneid,* long held as cornerstones of civilisation, because the archaeological evidence seemed to vindicate understanding classical epic as true history. Meanwhile, playwrights and performers, artists and writers, journalists and consumers used these cities as opportunities to engage with a wide range of contemporary social and political debates. This is evident not only in shifting opinions over the existence and location of Troy, but in various comic and serious, theatrical and political anachronisms. These often conflated London with the ruined cities: metropolitan fire fighters in burlesque dramas could rescue Troy, whose site at Hisarlik was elsewhere compared in size to Trafalgar Square, and the *Iliad* could become an allegory for the Crimean War or the controversial Reform Bill, while Covent Garden's incinerated remains were likened to the ruins of Carthage after its destruction by the Romans.

These sorts of national debates and the widespread advertisement of such discoveries were enabled by the rapid increase in the circulation of printed media, including ephemeral and popular material. In the case of the debate over Troy's relevance which preceded Schliemann's announcements, discussion began among elite London circles but swiftly spread through national broadsheets to cheaper, local newspapers: the introduction of mass-produced books and penny magazines from the mid-1800s facilitated the wider circulation of such knowledge of, and participation in, formerly elite debates. This was also the period during which travel became cheaper and easier so that more people could visit the Troad and North Africa as well as read about such journeys, while these travellers's eager contributions to journals and newspapers further fuelled these sorts of discussions. Such journeys and their ensuing topographical publications had previously been restricted to gentlemen undertaking the Grand Tour, or to those on naval and military service or diplomatic business, but by the second half of the century, mass-produced travel guides were advising on such practical matters as essential items to pack and the best itineraries to follow. Moreover, all these developments were accompanied by the rise of leisure activities at home, especially in the burgeoning metropolis at the heart of the British Empire: London. Many different sorts of staged productions, and their accompanying reviews and playbills, developed during the course of the century for the entertainment of a wide variety of social groups; a surprising number staged the Trojan War myths.

As this book demonstrates, the extraordinary depth of contemporary interest in both cities reflects the enormous social, religious and scientific changes between the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries. Such changes also influenced how the classical epics and their cities resonated with different constituencies. For instance, what was the cultural impact of scientific developments which challenged accepted historical accounts? And how could discourses surrounding urbanisation or imperial activity produce versions of the Homeric account of siege warfare and the Virgilian narrative of the foundation of Rome in which Troy and Carthage were made to stand for both the manifestly ruined past and also the predicted ruined future?

In answering such questions, this book shines a spotlight onto non-traditional and ephemeral material: tour guides, classical burlesque, circus advertisements, theatrical souvenirs and children's books. Class-conscious Victorians and subsequent generations of scholars have, until very recently, consigned this evidence to wait in the wings; here, it is reinstated into its crucial role within the lively classical culture which itself played such a starring part in negotiating manifold nineteenth-century preoccupations. Encompassing this significant part of the diverse spread of cultural forms which co-existed across society reveals diverse, even opposing, versions of Homeric and Virgilian Troy and Carthage. Such juxtaposition of material, as it originally circulated, reveals how these representations functioned across the spectrum of more and less classically educated publics as a fulcrum for many contemporary discourses. Classical burlesque, for example, emerges as a highly complex cultural form which, as we shall see, engaged with the latest topographical journalism, display cultures and popular scientific shows, as well as spoofing contemporary political, military and cultural figures, and sending up the epics on which the plots were ostensibly based. Analysis of this range of elite and popular sources within their historical and cultural contexts demonstrates how current models of classical reception, which offer a linear 'classical tradition' by studying reworkings of individual texts, can move towards a model which encompasses the broader cultural imagination. Focusing on the cultural impact, rather than just the creative process, of these classical appropriations reveals not only a greater social dispersal of knowledge of classical mythology but also a much more complex model of interaction with the Classics.

This focus is enabled by the social mixture of participants and sources accessed, which includes 'popular' material. This slippery, and often derogatory, designation requires some definition. Within this book, it

connotes both a broad social and a large numerical circulation of mate-
rial: sources that were available to a wider range of people than those
produced (usually solely) for and by the educated minority in more tra-
ditional genres, and also more ephemeral material which enjoyed a large
circulation across the social spectrum. An additional complexity arises
because some material which, in comparison with the traditional genres
of classical reception, seems 'popular' in its large circulation, actually cir-
culated among the educated elite: for example, it seems that both classically
well-educated and less-educated spectators attended the burlesque perfor-
mances and venues which some middle- and upper-class critics tried to
construct as uneducated spaces; and while some of the newspapers and
periodicals which provided central fora for topical debates were fairly spe-
cific in their readerships at either end of both social and political scales,
ephemeral material, such as playbills displayed in the street, would have
been accessible to any passerby.[8]

In addition to these slippages in audience, the juxtaposition of differ-
ent sorts of genres and sources also exposes the overlapping relationships
between different cultural spaces, whether self-consciously intellectual
contexts (e.g. journals and learned societies) or more overtly imagina-
tive and leisure spheres (such as fictional narratives or theatrical perfor-
mances). While many of these areas are now segregated as objects of
study for the different disciplines that emerged during the course of the
nineteenth century, they nonetheless, as interlocking areas of the same cul-
tural imagination, all comprise facets of an overarching discourse about
conceiving the past, present and future.

Due to the highly interdisciplinary nature of this study, the remain-
der of this introduction is threefold. I begin by explaining further the
context and significance of my choice to examine classical afterlives in
nineteenth-century Britain and through the topic of Troy and Carthage,
Homer and Virgil's ruined cities. I then turn to the interdisciplinary
approaches borrowed and built upon here in conjoining and disentan-
gling the evidence: in particular, studies of the circulation of scientific
knowledge; journalists and their readers; and the analysis of socially
mixed theatre audiences and the comic reworking of canonical literature.
Finally, I outline how the range of material deployed in the follow-
ing four chapters enables me to build on some recent studies, which
have challenged traditional approaches to the afterlife of classical antiq-
uity, in order to encompass a greater spectrum of cultural arenas and
participants.

8 For a critical overview of theories and approaches to 'popular culture', see Storey (2015).