FEELING AND CLASSICAL PHILOLOGY

Nineteenth-century German classical philology underpins many structures of the modern humanities. In this book, Constanze Güthenke shows how a language of love and a longing for closeness with a personified antiquity have lastingly shaped modern professional reading habits, notions of biography, and the self-image of scholars and teachers. She argues that a discourse of love was instrumental in expressing the challenges of specialization and individual formation (*Bildung*), and in particular for the key importance of a Platonic scene of learning and instruction for imagining the modern scholar. The book is based on detailed readings of programmatic texts from, among others, Wolf, Schleiermacher, Boeckh, and Thiersch, to Dilthey, Wilamowitz, and Nietzsche. It makes a case for revising established narratives, but also for finding new value in imagining distance and an absence of nostalgic longing for antiquity.

CONSTANZE GÜTHENKE is Professor of Greek Literature at the University of Oxford and E. P. Warren Praelector in Classics at Corpus Christi College. Her main research interests lie in the field of antiquity after antiquity and in questions of the disciplinary shape of Classics and the history of scholarship. Her publications include *Placing Modern Greece: The Dynamics of Romantic Hellenism* (2008). She is a founding member of the Postclassicisms Collective (www.postclassicisms.org), and she is currently editor-in-chief of the *Classical Receptions Journal*.

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FEELING AND CLASSICAL PHILOLOGY

Knowing Antiquity in German Scholarship, 1770–1920

CONSTANZE GÜTHENKE

University of Oxford

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For my Princeton colleagues, regardless of distance

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Series Editors' Preface

What would it be like to devote one's life to the study of an object and not feel anything towards it? Is that *humanly* (with all that word implies) possible? Does being in the world inevitably involve commitments of feeling towards it? Once one acknowledges this 'compulsion to feel', it becomes necessary for the critic to ask a number of questions: in what ways do we feel towards an object of study? How do those feelings construct (both in limiting and in freeing) that object? What discourses do those feelings facilitate? What transferences of emotion do they authorize? What disavowals attend those feelings? Do those feelings have a history? And what legacy do those feelings establish for those who come after? Importantly, it invites us to imagine alternative ways of relating to objects and to consider the levels of energy and self-mastery such alternatives demand.

In this book, Constanze Güthenke faces up to these questions by inviting us to revisit a terrain of intense emotion, German philological scholarship in the long nineteenth century. In doing so, she takes us back to the origins of our discipline and shows us how insensible we have been to the passions that animated it. Rather than presenting just the dry, dusty, overly rational, mechanistic scholarship of conventional stereotypes, she shows us a world riven by desires and projections of fantasy. The language of metaphor continually betrays authors who imagine themselves in an interpersonal relationship with antiquity. Crucially, it is a relationship in which the lover imagines the beloved as whole and perfect, a vision that it is literally written into being, assembled from the scraps and fragments of antiquity in such a manner that no gaps are left, no seams exposed. The fallout from this relationship is felt in diverse ways. We see it most obviously in the various forms of biography (antique, scholarly, self-fashioned) that emerge in this period and which still dominate the discipline, as well as only partially suppressed anxieties about the material

absences in the survival of classical antiquity and the impossibility of reciprocity between scholars and the inanimate objects of their desire.

This book situates these emotions within the broader intellectual movements that had been sweeping Europe, showing how they emerged from the confluence of strands of thinking that have been developing for centuries. Economic, political, social, theological, and educational structures aligned to bring philology and its adherents into existence. None of the great father-figures of philology proved immune to the lure of recreating a seemingly intact and personified antiquity with which to commune. Readers will encounter in this work many familiar figures – Wilamowitz, Wolf, Schleiermacher, Schlegel, Boeckh, and Nietzsche – all made unfamiliar by the critical lens that Güthenke adopts. Also discussed within this work are a number of figures who deserve to be much better known in the Anglophone world of Classics. Her discussion of the work of Johann Georg Hamann firmly establishes his position as a figure with whom anybody who wishes to understand the history of our discipline needs to engage. As Güthenke shows, Hamann's 'wild, often formally experimental, parodic, and highly allusive writings' pre-empted many of the key discussions that would come to dominate the field of philology.

One of the most compelling aspects of this book is the way it examines epistemological structures of longing. Here Plato and his concomitant erotics of pedagogy played an important role. Güthenke shows how philology returns again and again to the figures of Socrates and Alcibiades. Pygmalion may have been an aspirational figure for his ability to bring dead stone to life, but it was through the figure of Alcibiades that the serious thinking about the practices and ethics of education was done. It is here that contemporary readers will find the politics of this work most urgent. The models established in the nineteenth century still hold tremendous sway today. The legacy of a foundational academic culture in which scholarship was construed as a fundamentally erotic process and the classroom as a space for amatory exploration has consequences. This is especially the case when the model you are wrestling with is Socrates and Alcibiades. There are dozens of ways of rehearsing this relationship – and as this book shows, German philology tried out most of them – but the least likely way is as a meeting of equals. This erotics is almost always hierarchical. It requires all to participate in a shared regime of yearning.

This book is a startling work of intellectual history that exposes classical philology's metaphorical unconscious and, in the process, strikes at the heart of contemporary debates about the embodiment of knowledge, and the place of affect, emotions, and the regulation of desire within the

academy. At the same time, it makes an important contribution to reimagining models for classical scholarship and pedagogy. In giving us a study that clarifies the intellectual genealogy and governing metaphors of the discipline, Constanze Güthenke also offers us a powerful provocation for the future as we negotiate the disintegration of the classical canon as fixed corpus and the plural and divergent forms of knowledge that follow in its wake.

ALASTAIR BLANSHARD
SHANE BUTLER
EMILY GREENWOOD
Editors, Classics after Antiquity

Preface

At a time when scholars are being challenged to rethink questions of institutional hierarchies and the structures that may enable the exploitation of inequality and asymmetry, there is urgency in scrutinizing what it means to belong to an academic community and all that this entails in terms of ethics, identity, and sensibility. To call out imbalanced personal relations in institutions of learning may at first look extrinsic to actual scholarship; but when it comes to how human emotions and human behaviour are at work in academic life, it matters how we express scholarly affects and how a language of desire functions in what we do and what we write.

This book offers an exploration of German academic practice and academic prose in the long nineteenth century through the lens of a language of love and intimacy. German academic prose is now largely remembered mostly for its dryness and technicality, and not for its rhetorical flourishes. This book aims not only to recover this forgotten language in a critical mode but also to trace the way in which this language of love continues to be active and how it has shaped scholarly discourse in the Anglophone world as well, both in Classics and in the humanities more broadly that rely on the institutional structures and institutional memory of philology. These metaphors, for all their mutability, are ingrained and persistent.

The 'erotics of pedagogy', the fact that teaching and learning situations generate their own complex forms of intimacy, is currently invoked more than usual on a wide spectrum of both affirmative and critical modes, and the discussion can draw on a range of voices: from George Steiner's hieratic *Lessons of the Masters* (2003) and its praise of the emotionally charged teaching relationship, to Yung In Chae's punchy online editorial 'A Myth on Campus: No, Education Is Not Erotic' (*Eidolon* 2018); and from Mary Beard, who in a *Times Literary Supplement* review of *The Dictionary of British Classicists* (2005) raised the history of harassment, but also reflected more unapologetically on the erotics of teaching, to

Leo Bersani and Adam Phillips' consideration of an 'impersonal narcissism' in their collaborative essay *Intimacies* (2008). It is important to acknowledge that the work of the mind is also work done by real people interacting with each other, creating its own intimacies, affects, and projections; but it is also worth discussing to what extent the language in which we acknowledge that fact has its own genealogy of tropes. What this book hopes to give is a historical perspective that shows how deeply integral to the developing discourse of Classics as a discipline this rhetoric has been, often relying on ancient tropes and underpinning modern ones. At the same time, this study does not aim to recover feeling as a component of institutional structures in order to endorse it in a new light. I offer some form of 'clarification' of such tropes as *eros*, feeling, and individuality and seek to identify how persistently interwoven they have been with disciplinary thinking, for better or worse.

In Classics, we continue to operate to a considerable extent within a tradition of imagining antiquity as if it were an individual writ large, making it a reflection of our own individuality. A case in point is the expectation of exclusivity, which underpins the familiar worry that if one studies more than one thing, let alone more than one antiquity, then this risks a lack of either commitment or thorough care for the separate objects of study; it persists in the tradition of making scholars' biographies and their 'lives and works' the central parameter of an internal historical view of the discipline; it is still visible in anxiety over the loss of a strong sense of individual authorship and style, ancient or modern; and it comes through in the continuing emphasis on and valuation of the vocational imperatives of passion and commitment. One can be extremely critical of one's subject matter, it is assumed, but one cannot be passionate about one's profession and academic work without also being passionate about the *content* of study. There is nothing wrong with commitment – but is commitment best glossed as the desire to come as close as possible to the subject matter at hand and to know it intimately and exclusively? The ultimate provocation in Classics would presumably be not to love one's subject, or to do so only provisionally, strategically, and intermittently.

The language of longing has remained durable in giving expression to scholarly attention that is, after all, predicated on a lack of reciprocity. If understanding a historically distant world and its objects is what we do, then absence, incomplete knowledge, and lack of reciprocity have been fundamental to this labour. The rhetoric of interpretive desire, of wanting to know the other as fully as possible, has served well to compensate for this one-sidedness. This book shows that such a language, linked to

a contemporary discourse of love and the continuing relevance of a Platonic language of aspiration and pedagogy, allowed the rise of a new, professional discipline throughout the long nineteenth century. Whether we look up to an erotics of pedagogy, or down on its continuing use as a trope, I hope that a historical analysis of its component parts can help us to ask more pointedly whether there are also alternative ways and images to harness the potential of a language of intimacy, of closeness as much as of distance, and to think through ongoing change in non-nostalgic and non-exclusive ways.

Acknowledgements

This is a book that sets out to critique the image of the individual scholar studying a personified past. For that reason, I am all the more aware that this project has been animated by a range of scholarly environments and scholarly feelings, by colleagues, collaborations, friendships, and, indeed, love. This book is the result of movement, some of it gradual, some of it sudden, some intentional and some serendipitous. This includes movement between disciplines, disciplinary and national cultures, and stages of professional and personal life, quite aside from a very large number of flights, transatlantic and trans-European.

In many ways, it began with a manoeuvre to turn questions about my disciplinary environment and its practices and rhetoric into a main research project. It was written across a dozen years during which I came to inhabit fully the profile of a classicist. Initially trained in Classics, with doctoral work in the study of Modern Languages and Literature in the UK, I was hired by a Classics department in the United States. At Princeton, I settled back into being a professional classicist in a country and within an institutional structure that were both new to me. With a joint appointment in Hellenic Studies, and with a strong humanities community around me, I felt encouraged and enabled to come to look at my own disciplinary situation obliquely and not to take habits for granted, while still working within that same discipline every day. The book was finished in Oxford, where the trajectories and customs again differ and follow very much their own rhythm. There, and especially so at Corpus Christi College, I have had the great good fortune to be part of a Classics community of colleagues and of students who take pride in asking questions about why and how classicists do what they do.

The joint thinking and writing with my colleagues on the Postclassicisms project over the last few years has allowed me to push the boat out even further than I would have thought when I started the project. It's been an education, and it's been fun, too. Colleagues in many locales have discussed

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