SYMPOSIUM ABSTRACTS

Ancient Greece and Rome in German Scholarship and Culture

18th to 20th Centuries

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Dr. Andrew Faulkner

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Introduction

The introduction will provide a brief survey of the topic and the presentations.

Dr. Kristine Palmeri

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Classical Philology in and beyond the Seminar

In the first half of the nineteenth century, Classics played a crucial role in the development of German thought and culture. That this occurred is widely acknowledged. Yet this fact typically serves as a point of departure rather than as an object of study in and of itself. This talk thus analyzes how and why Classical Philology came to be epistemically privileged in nineteenth-century Germany by focusing on the philology seminar and its impact on the institutional, intellectual, and pedagogical landscape of *Wissenschaft*. To this end, it begins with a brief history of the philology seminar through the early nineteenth century. It then traces how scholars outside of Classics adopted and adapted the philology seminar's pedagogical practices as well as its research ethos through a discussion of the Bonn natural sciences seminar, which was established in the 1820s. Finally, it turns to the role of *Bildung* in debates over secondary schooling, examining how advocates for the natural sciences drew on philological ideals to argue for their inclusion in curricula and public education more broadly. Taken together, these cases help to explain how and why Classical Philology came to shape German scholarship and culture far beyond the study of Classics. For while *Klassische Altertumswissenschaften* and German scholarship were (and are) indeed deeply interwoven, it was in the seminar, this talk reveals, that they were woven together.

Dr. Andreas Bendlin

Professor of Classical Studies, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario

The "Older Greeks" and Us: Greek (and Roman) Religion in the Nineteenth Century and Beyond

While studies of Friedrich Nietzsche's overall vision of antiquity are numerous, the indebtedness of this vision to earlier nineteenth-century scholarship has been studied less comprehensively. This holds particularly true in the field of ancient Greek and Roman religion in the nineteenth century, a particularly fertile period for the study of the subject. Starting from Nietzsche's abandoned *Untimely Meditation* "Wir Philologen" ("We Philologists" [1875]), I sketch his portrayal of the religion of "the older Greeks," as well as his negative views on Classical and Hellenistic Greek and Roman religion. These views respond to major advances in the field between the 1830s and 1870s, which the paper intends to illustrate by focusing on the work of Friedrich Gottlieb Welcker and Jakob Burckhardt. Nietzsche assigns supremacy to the religion of "the older Greeks" (that is, the Greek religious tradition in the "archaic period," from Homer to the Persian Wars), and his work continuously deprecates the religious history of the Classical, Hellenistic and Roman periods, including ancient Judaism and early Christianity, seeing them all as decline from a previous ideal.

Nietzsche's ideological impact on later work in the field of ancient religion, too, remains to be fleshed out more fully. My paper suggests that we can see Nietzsche's influence also in scholars who were directly or indirectly indebted to him, from Erwin Rohde to Jane Harrison, the French School of Religion, or Karl Meuli and Walter Burkert – all of whom notoriously struggled to conceptualize a sound history of post-classical Greek religion. But Nietzsche's portrayal

of religion must also be read as a critique of religion as such, both among the ancient Greeks and in the modern period, an intellectual tradition of the later nineteenth century that we can still recognize in modern scholarship.

Dr. Hannah Eldridge

Professor of German Studies, University of Wisconsin–Madison, USA

The Triad of German Literature: Roots, Nature, and Consequences

Appeals to Classical Studies (as the mediator of Ancient Greek and Roman culture) gave their name to the most prestigious German literary movements of the long 19th century, Weimar Classicism. While Goethe, Schiller, and Humboldt not only appealed to classical works but wrote in dialogue with classicists, including Gottfried Herrmann and August Boeckh, and despite the clash between Weimar and the romantics, August Wilhelm Schlegel and Friedrich Schlegel built on this foundation to work out systems of literary history and literary genre. My talk will consider 1) the emergence of the triadic genre structure of the epic, lyric, and dramatic from Classicism and Romanticism; 2) the way this triad incorporated categories and characteristics drawn from contemporaneous theorizations of race, culture, and history; and 3) the way those characteristics persist invisibly in twentieth- and twenty-first-century conceptions of lyric poetry. In doing so, I consider the uses to which classical texts and Classical Studies have been turned in German literary culture from 1800 to the present.

Dr. Sotera Fornaro

Professor of Greek Philology, Università della Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli," Italy

KEYNOTE LECTURE: Polyps and Puppets: Emotions and the Discipline of Emotions in the German Reception of Classical Antiquity

The history of so-called “classical” philology is linked to German culture by a complex web of connections. My paper seeks to bring to light one aspect that has so far received comparatively little attention: the emotional dimension that accompanied the modern establishment of the discipline in Germany and the emotions that shaped the scholarly study of antiquity.

Friedrich Schlegel compares epic poetry to a polyp endowed with numerous “arms” capable of continuing to live autonomously even when severed from the main body. Found in one of his early writings on Homer, the metaphor clearly evokes the animal’s mobility and capacity for self-regeneration, then a focus of research in the natural sciences. As Schlegel observes, the “poetic” polyp constitutes a unity both as a whole and in each of its individual parts. Less attention has been paid, however, to the fact that it is an animal equipped with tentacles: metaphorically, these attach themselves to the body of anyone who comes into contact with them and may, as it were, “infect” it. Schlegel’s image appeals both to the sense of touch and to the emotional response of anyone approaching the polyp: disgust? curiosity? admiration? On which emotions, then, is the scholarly study of Homeric poetry and, more generally, of archaic antiquity founded? How might the phenomenology of these emotions be described?

On the one hand, German culture seeks in the ancient “classical” world models of emotional discipline, immunity from the contagion of excess, and the ability to master powerful passions and even pain: Johann Joachim Winckelmann’s *Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works* may be read in this light. On the other hand, it seeks surrender to the passions, Dionysian excess, and festivity: everything that may help one escape a repressive and disciplinary education. For Hölderlin, passionate intensity constitutes the original element of Greek culture; he interprets its subsequent development as the error of attempting to discipline precisely that element. The dialectic between the expression and the discipline of emotions repeatedly returns in the relationship of German culture and classical scholarship to so-called classical antiquity. The scholar who subjects both emotions and body to an extremely rigorous discipline seeks, through this quasi-religious exercise, purification – a catharsis from the very emotions aroused by the objects of research, by texts and material objects. Kleist’s puppet may also be introduced here as a paradoxical figure: its perfect movement, apparently undisturbed by consciousness and affect, may reveal both the ideal of disciplined grace and the loss of creative freedom.

The emotional relationship to the study of antiquity is not exhausted by these figures, however, but extends throughout nineteenth-century German culture and continues into the discipline’s subsequent history. Between polyp and puppet, the study of antiquity in Germany appears at times as a means of surrendering to a contagious and creative vitality, at

times as an exercise in disciplining the passions and working through the nostalgia for what is believed to have been irretrievably lost, and at times as a path towards immunity from the disorder of the affections.

Dr. David Engels

Adjunct Professor of Ancient History and World History, Institut Catholique de Vendée, France

The Classical Paradigm: Antiquity and the Idea of Historical Totality in German Philosophy of History from Hegel to Heidegger

This paper examines the role of classical antiquity as a paradigmatic reference point in German philosophy of history from Hegel to Heidegger. Despite profound differences in their epistemological assumptions, political orientations, and methodological approaches, the most diverse thinkers repeatedly turned to the Greeks and Romans as exemplary models for conceptualizing historical totalities, developmental logics, and civilizational trajectories. Antiquity thus functioned less as an object of historical reconstruction than as an ideal-typical and seemingly self-contained cultural cycle through which broader theories of history could be articulated. For Hegel, the Greek polis and the Roman state embodied decisive stages in the self-unfolding of Spirit; for Marx and Engels, the ancient world represented a distinct socio-economic formation within the succession of modes of production. Nietzsche reinterpreted Greece as the site of primordial cultural forces, while Spengler integrated classical antiquity into his morphology of civilizations as the completed "Apollonian" culture. Heidegger's return to the Presocratics similarly presupposed the exemplary status of a historically bounded epoch. Jaspers, finally, despite emphasizing the plurality of world civilizations, accorded Greece a privileged place within the Axial Age as a paradigmatic moment of spiritual breakthrough. The paper argues that these diverse interpretations share a common tendency to construct antiquity as a coherent and completed cultural whole, uniquely suited to philosophical reflection on the meaning and intelligibility of history.

Dr. Mareile Haase

Assistant Professor of Classics and Historian of Religion, University of Toronto

From *Völkerpsychologie* to Nietzsche: Constructing "Mythical Thinking" in 19th-Century German Scholarship

Throughout the 19th century, Greek antiquity served German scholars and intellectuals as a privileged site for reflecting on the origins of culture, religion, language, and human thought. One result of these reflections was the emergence of "mythical thinking" as a category through which German scholars and intellectuals believed ancient societies could be approached and interpreted. Beginning with Moritz Lazarus and Hermann Steinthal's *Völkerpsychologie*, this paper traces the career of that concept across a series of intellectual contexts, including classical scholarship, cultural criticism, and philosophy. Particular consideration is given to its appearance in the works of Richard Wagner, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Eduard Meyer, where discussions of myth became intertwined with broader questions concerning antiquity and historical development. Rather than offering a history of myth itself, the paper examines a history of reflection upon myth and its significance for understanding the ancient world. By following the changing uses of "mythical thinking," it illuminates one strand of the complex relationship between German intellectual culture and Greek antiquity during the 19th century.

Dr. Christoph Begass

Privatdozent in Ancient History, University of Heidelberg

Eduard Schwartz and His Concept of *Altertumswissenschaften*

Dr. Marina Gallagher

Lecturer in Music, Conrad Grebel University College, University of Waterloo

An Obsession with the Past: Memory, Repression, and Revenge in Richard Strauss's *Elektra*

The past, like the presence of the deceased Mycenaean king Agamemnon, hangs heavily over Richard Strauss's one-act 1909 opera, *Elektra,* which centers on Elektra's all-consuming desire to avenge her father's murder. Although it is

based on Sophocles' play of the same name, Strauss's *Elektra* has been described as a "radical deviation" from Ancient Greek tragedy owing to its incorporation of Freudian hysteria and a wild Bacchic dance that brings about Elektra's death (Scott 2005: 11). Several scholars have examined the opera in light of psychoanalysis and fin-de-siècle conceptions of women (e.g. Wintle 2019; Wikshåland, 2007; Kramer 1993), but this paper argues that *Elektra*'s connections to the past are deeper than is generally acknowledged. It focuses on Strauss's musical characterization of Elektra, Klytaimnestra, and Chrysothemis and discusses three ways in which "the past" manifests in the opera, namely*:* (1) an indebtedness to Sophocles' original play and Ancient Greek theatrical and literary traditions surrounding Dionysian maenads, the *lex talionis,* and socially-accepted behaviour for women; (2) the ghost-like presence of the slain Agamemnon in the form of a Wagnerian leitmotif; and (3) the nineteenth-century Viennese waltz that undermines Elektra's hysteria.

Dr. Cordula Grewe

Professor of Art History, Indiana University Bloomington, USA

Circe's Spell: Modern Bodies and the Erotic Afterlife of Antiquity

If Greek and Roman antiquity furnished German scholarship with objects of scientific inquiry, it furnished German culture, no less powerfully, with bodies to desire and fantasies to inhabit. From Winckelmann's rapture before the Apollo Belvedere to the homoerotic charge of Arno Breker's muscle men, the ancient body retained an erotic force that Neoclassicism repeatedly sought to marshal, discipline, and disavow. This paper follows that current from the *Sattelzeit* into the present. It looks beyond "noble simplicity and quiet grandeur," not to replace ideality with appetite, but to ask how intimately the two were bound. Moving between Romney's painted flesh and Hamilton's living attitudes, between sculptural perfection and ideological physique, between the *studiolo* of the scholar and the gladiators' arena, I argue that desire was not an incidental response to antiquity. It was one of the formative energies of its modern reception. Antiquity authorized desire by giving it form; desire, in turn, kept the ancient body in motion. Circe presides over this history not as a warning against enchantment but as the emblem of Classicism's own sorcery—its power to make ancient forms enter modern flesh.

Dr. Paul Malone

Associate Professor of German, University of Waterloo

Antiquity in German Comics

Studies of the reception of classical antiquity in comics have mostly been devoted either to American comics, particularly superheroes; or to Franco-Belgian *bandes dessinées* such as Goscinny and Uderzo's *Astérix*, Martin's *Alix* or Dufaux and Delaby's *Murena*. Little has yet been written, however, about antiquity in German comics.

This is hardly surprising: the tiny German-language comics market remains dominated by licensed foreign material (including *Astérix*, *Alix* and *Murena*). By comparison, few homegrown comics deal with topics from antiquity. These include the East German propaganda comic *Mosaik*, whose time-travelling heroes spent a year (1957-1958) in the slave society of Rome. The 1970s and 1980s were dominated by West German imitations of *Astérix*, such as Bastei Verlag's *Jupiter* (1972-75), about the adventures of a third-century Roman charioteer; and *Birbad* (1986-96), concerning a village of indomitable *Germanen*. Meanwhile, the bizarre *Zeus & Co.* (1976-78) retold Greek myths in a childlike, distorted style.

Later comics have been more serious: *Prisca und Silvanus* (1995-96) tells the story of the Roman city Augusta Raurica (modern Augst), while two comics appeared about barbarian resistance to Rome, by the German hero Arminius and the Gaul Vercingetorix respectively (2010-11). In general, German visions of antiquity in comics have differed from those of comparable *bandes dessinées,* reflecting different national relationships with history both ancient (largely Roman) and modern.