

Institution: The Open University
Unit of Assessment: D31 Classics
Title of case study: Engaging with practitioners: the impact of Classical Receptions
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Classical Receptions at the OU raises awareness of how Greek and Roman texts, ideas and material culture have been interpreted, used and reworked, particularly in society today. Our research provides cultural and arts practitioners around the world – translators, poets and actors – with the tools to interpret ancient texts in modern contexts. Much of our research is presented in open-access assets – website, journals, seminars, workshops, conferences – thus providing resources both nationally and internationally. Working with the creative industries and beyond, we also help the wider public to gain a fuller understanding of the place of the classical within the contemporary world.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The Open University is an international centre for Classical Receptions, still a relatively new strand of Classical Studies. Our research analyses changing and creative responses to classical texts in a range of fields of modern culture. Professor Lorna Hardwick (OU 1976–2011; subsequently Professor Emerita) has a strong international and facilitating presence as journal editor (<i>Classical Receptions Journal</i>, launched 2009), book series co-editor (<i>Classical Presences</i>, OUP – 64 titles published since 2005) and Companion co-editor (<i>Blackwell Companion to Classical Receptions</i>, 2008). Her own research shows how ancient Greek drama and poetry, in particular, have been contested texts in modern culture and politics, including postcolonial societies. Ancient sources provide not a static ‘tradition’ but a rich source for debates about identity [1]. Her work further demonstrates how studying receptions raises new questions about the original ‘source’ texts and suggests fresh interpretations of them.</p> <p>Hardwick developed the terminology of the discipline, categorising the different types of relationship between a classical source text and the ways in which it can be changed creatively by users across time and space. She was founding director of the <i>Classical Receptions in Late Twentieth Century Drama and Poetry in English</i> project, funded by the British Academy (2006–8), the main outputs of which are two searchable online databases of archives of poetic and dramatic performances of classical texts from 1970 to the present, hosted by the OU. This archive is now widely used both by UK and overseas researchers of all kinds and by practitioners themselves, thereby allowing the mapping and analysis of the role of the creative industries in contemporary society. From 2006, the department has also published <i>New Voices in Classical Reception</i>, peer-reviewed and rated A by the Australian Research Council, which is unique in showcasing the work of early career scholars in this field (editor, Dr Trevor Fear, 2003–present).</p> <p>In RAE 2008, work undertaken in this unit centred on the relationships with classical literature in contemporary UK drama and poetry, with Dr Paula James (1993–present) also working on film and television [2]. Developing this focus, the 2009 monograph [3] by Dr James Robson (2000–present) foregrounds the performance aspect of Aristophanes’ plays in their ancient context, and investigates the way in which they have been translated and performed in the modern world, suggesting criteria through which modern translations and productions might usefully be assessed. The appointment of Dr Laura Swift (2012–present) further addresses receptions of Greek literature; her 2013 work [4] shows how the identity of the tragic chorus is intrinsically fluid, and that this allows dramatists to use it to shed light on questions of social grouping and affiliation. Other appointments in this census period further extend the focus on Classical Receptions. Dr Joanna Paul’s (2011–present) monograph [5] demonstrates how the connections between cinema and classical material – in particular, epic, as both literary tradition and socially-engaged performance – are more significant and more complex than is often assumed, and go far beyond straightforward notions of historical authenticity or literary adaptation. The work of Professor Helen King (2011–present) investigates uses of the ancient world in medicine from the sixteenth century to the present day. Her 2013 monograph <i>Making Sex on Trial</i> [6] shows how two classical stories, the</p>

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Hippocratic case history of Phaethousa and the story of Agnodice (the 'first midwife'), formed the battlefield on which those proposing very different approaches to sex difference fought in the early modern period. These classical sources, hardly known today, were sufficiently flexible for supporters of both 'one-sex' and 'two-sex' models to cite them as authorities, and were familiar to a wide public as well as to medical practitioners, both physicians and midwives.

3. References to the research

1. Hardwick, L.P. (ed.), with S. Harrison (2013) *Classics in the Wider World: A Democratic Turn?*, Oxford: OUP. (Contains essays by Hardwick, Paul and Anastasia Bakogianni).
2. James, P. (2011) *Ovid's Myth of Pygmalion on Screen: In Pursuit of the Perfect Woman*, London: Continuum Studies in Classical Reception.
3. Robson, J. (2009) *Aristophanes: An Introduction*, London: Duckworth.
4. Swift, L. (2013) 'Conflicting identities in the Euripidean chorus', in R. Gagné and M. Hopman (eds), *Choral Mediations in Greek Tragedy*, Cambridge: CUP, pp. 130–154.
5. Paul, J. (2013) *Film and the Classical Epic Tradition*, Oxford: OUP.
6. King, H. (2013) *Making Sex on Trial: The Classical and Early Modern Evidence*, Farnham: Ashgate.

Grants

2006–2008: £78,404 awarded by the British Academy to L.P. Hardwick for a project entitled 'Classical Receptions in Late Twentieth-Century Drama and Poetry in English'.

2011–2012: £72,737 awarded by AHRC to H. King for a project entitled 'Following Agnodike and Phaethousa'.

4. Details of the impact

Our research in Classical Receptions contributes to the arts and cultural sectors in the UK and abroad, providing platforms for practitioners to explore the relationship between their work and classical texts. We work with a range of institutions and media groups, as well as with A-level and university students across the humanities. Impacts are clustered in three areas:

- performance and practice impact
- cultural impact: the enhancement of the theatre, museums and galleries sector
- teaching

Performance and practice

Our department's history of working with theatre groups goes back before the current REF cycle. For example, Hardwick was overseas consultant to the Australian academic and theatre 'Linkage' project (Monash University/Malthouse Theatre, Melbourne, funded by Australian Research Council).

In this cycle, Robson's research on Aristophanes led to a 2012–2013 project making a series of 6 audios and 5 videos, 'Birth of Comedy', commissioned by the OU and produced by an external production company [1]. Three of these videos feature two professional actors, acting out three scenes from Aristophanic comedy translated by Robson; the audios, written and presented by Robson, include interviews with academics and practitioners. The materials are available on open access. In 2012 Robson took part in a public discussion at the Witte de With Art Gallery, Rotterdam with the artist in residence, Alexandre Singh, designed to feed into Singh's Aristophanes-inspired project, 'The Humans', modelled on the plays of Aristophanes. This discussion will develop the piece for a further presentation in Autumn 2013 [2].

Swift's research on the role of the chorus has led to work with the directors and casts of theatre productions, in particular the National Theatre's (NT) *Antigone*, and subsequently to external funding to develop a play based on fragments of ancient drama. She features in three National Theatre YouTube videos introducing ancient theatre, aimed at schools (17,082, 5,976 and 2,887 views since their launch in January–March 2013) [3].

The Classical Receptions group also engages and influences practitioners in the creative

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industries through the e-journal *Practitioners' Voices in Classical Reception Studies* (ed. Dr Jessica Hughes, since 2007). The journal provides a forum in which theatre directors, designers, dramaturges, actors, poets, translators and artists involved in the creative practices that are so crucial to Classical Receptions can discuss the relationship between their work and the classical texts, themes and contexts on which they draw. Artists featured, such as Marian Maguire and Craig Hamilton, then link to their work for the journal on their websites [4].

Our view of 'practitioners' is a broad one. King, a Visiting Professor at the Peninsula Medical School in Truro for the past 6 years, teaches medical students the history of dissection, helping them to develop a historical perspective to a practice which is not part of their core curriculum. Having published on Classical Receptions in the history of midwifery, she also works with practising midwives and from 2011 has been on the steering group of the mostly practitioner-based *De Partu* History of Childbirth group, where her role is to act as a bridge between the practitioner and academic communities.

Cultural impact

Supported by OU media training, the work of the Classical Receptions group has enhanced the provision of key public institutions within the creative economy; for example, giving pre-performance talks and working with museums and galleries to facilitate public understanding of the classical inheritance of plays, artefacts and broader cultural institutions.

Swift wrote programme notes (NT *Antigone*, 2012; English National Orchestra *Medea*, 2013), while Robson gave pre-performance talks on *Clouds* (2009) and *Lysistrata* (2011). King's research led to her involvement in the exhibition *Leonardo da Vinci: Anatomist* at the Queen's Gallery in 2012, which was the most successful exhibition in the history of the Gallery (148,299 visitors). King features in the app (which sold 12,821 copies by the end of July 2013), lecture programme and audio guide, and the follow-up exhibition at Holyroodhouse [5]. She also discussed Titian's 'Diana and Callisto' as reception in a National Gallery podcast on the 'Metamorphosis' exhibition (2012), supporting this with a blog post [6]. She discussed the classical history of hysteria in a concert interval piece for Radio 3 (2012). Paul worked on the extra materials for the blu-ray release of Oliver Stone's 'Alexander', and King and Professor Phil Perkins were featured on Radio 4, 'In our Time' (2011, 2012, 2013).

Our contributions extend beyond interviews to research-led podcasts for public consumption. The Classics Confidential vodcast website (over 50,000 visits), established in 2011 and run by Hughes and Dr Elton Barker, engages the general public with behind-the-scenes view of the research (or artistic creation) undertaken by scholars and practitioners from the classics community both here and abroad [7]. User profiles of the 350+ members of its Facebook group and of the 1800+ Twitter followers indicate interest from general enthusiasts for Classical Studies from outside the academy. In 2010 James developed podcasts from her research on artificially constructed women from Ovid's *Pygmalion* to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*; these have had over 90,000 downloads [8].

Teaching

We engage other universities and students with our research as users of the *Classical Receptions in Late Twentieth Century Drama and Poetry in English* Project [9], and through our staffing and hosting the website for the *Classical Reception Studies Network* (CRSN), established by Professor Lorna Hardwick in 2004 [10]. CRSN encourages collaboration across institutional, national and sector boundaries, fostering cross-disciplinary exchanges of research and teaching by promoting rigorous debate about classical reception studies. At the census date, CRSN had 57 institutional members and 89 individual members worldwide; 33 institutional members are outside the UK, including 12 in the USA, one in Brazil and two in Africa. Not all are universities; the USA members include Shaker Heights High School. Currently King is co-chair, Bakogianni (2009-present) – formerly a post-doctoral OU-funded researcher on *Classical Receptions in Drama and Poetry* – is administrator, and Paul and Hughes (2008-present) lead the teaching and communications strands respectively.

CRSN's mission includes a commitment to training students from UK universities. At least one workshop a year is run for UK postgraduate students, recently covering teaching Classical Receptions (2012), and Classical Receptions and the job market (2013). Alongside a full archive of

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a series of open e-seminars and international conferences, the CRSN website includes materials aimed at those beginning to teach in the field. Many CS staff address school audiences; Robson's work on Aristophanes has included speaking to 600 students at the Bryanston summer school (July 2013) on *Lysistrata*. CRSN organised panels on teaching classical reception studies at the 2012 Higher Education Academy conference and at the 2013 American Philological Association conference.

CRSN tweets (@CRSN_UK; over 600 followers including many general enthusiasts). In terms of engaging the widest audience for our research, CRSN partner universities have priority in the competition for places on the AHRC-funded training programme for graduate students and ECR researchers, 'Communicating Ancient Greece and Rome', to enable the growth of collaborative projects with the media, arts/heritage and education sectors; successful projects are those of Dr Henry Stead (PhD awarded 2011) in 2010-12 and, in 2013-15 those of Dr Laura Swift, PhD student Iarla Manny and AL/Research Associate of the department Dr Emma Bridges.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. 'The Birth of Comedy': <http://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/history/classical-studies/the-birth-comedy> and Robson, J. (2009) 'The Greeks were true masters of obscenity', in the *Evening Standard* (25.11.09), based on his book *Aristophanes: An Introduction* (London: Duckworth, 2008), which was shortlisted for the Runciman Award.

2. September 2012 event at Witte de With featuring James Robson; at <http://www.wdw.nl/event/causerie-aristophanes/>

3. Letter from the director, Polly Findlay, on Laura Swift's work as advisor: 'an absolutely direct impact on our choices about how to stage, frame and animate the piece' (4 October 2013).

National Theatre pieces aimed at A/AS level students featuring Laura Swift:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aSRLK7SogvE&list=SP2F6E4C2C4700F0E3>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dSr6mP-zxUc&feature=c4-overview-vl&list=PLJqBmjHpqgs59hmAjlAsX_vh0vGYv_3Jm

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H-BvMbfkxcc>

4. Examples of artists with whom *Practitioners' Voices* has worked: at <http://www.marianmaguire.com/>

<http://www.craighamiltonarchitects.com/docs1/essays/index.html>

5. 'Leonardo: Anatomist' exhibition: email from Director of Publishing and New Media, Royal Gallery Collection Trust confirming number of downloads of Leonardo da Vinci: Anatomist app.

6. King, H. (2012) 'On Titian's "Diana and Callisto"', National Gallery Podcast 70, July; <http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/podcasts/> and see blog post 'Diana, Callisto and Philip II' on <http://www.wondersandmarvels.com/2012/08/diana-and-callisto.html>

7. Classics Confidential at <http://classicsconfidential.co.uk>.

8. James, P., 'From Ovid's *Pygmalion* to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*', an iTunes U podcast, at <http://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/pygmalion-meets-buffy-the-vampire-slayer> and <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/itunes-u/pygmalion-meets-buffy-vampire/id388040310>

9. The 'Reception of classical texts online database' is hosted at <http://www2.open.ac.uk/ClassicalStudies/GreekPlays/Projectsite/welcom.html>. It is linked from a range of other sites including: http://www.proz.com/kudoz/english/art_literary/158738-greek_and_elizabethan_drama.html (a translators' blog); and <http://ejw.i8.com/litweb.htm> (a literature website)

10. The Classical Reception Studies Network pages at <http://www.open.ac.uk/arts/research/crsn/>