reading of Gibbon, whose impact on other artists, from Wagner to Joe Orton, is similarly traced in several of the essays collected here. Gibbon is, in many ways, the appropriately unifying presence in the book.

Artists are just as significant as scholars in B.'s account; sometimes they come together, as in Gibbon, whose history is a work of literary genius, and also, more personally, when B. reminisces about his own portrayal of the messenger in a 1956 production (as that year's Harvard Greek play) of *Oedipus at Colonus*, in which the part of Creon was played by Erich Segal, classicist and, subsequently, novelist. This memory is freighted by the ever-present history of classical scholarship, as Herbert Bloch and Werner Jaeger (refugees from Nazi Germany, and living links to a tradition of classical scholarship that had had an enormous impact on American universities) were in the audience on that occasion. An artistic parallel informs B.'s appreciation of the 'pointillist brilliance' displayed in Burckhardt's *Greichische Kulturgeschichte*, and parallelism turns into the *Ding an sich* as B. describes Berlioz's *Aeneid*-inspired opera *Les Troyens* creating an impact 'uncannily like the experience of reading – and hearing – Virgil's poem'. On one occasion only does one feel that B. privileges the achievement of the artist over the claims of scholarship, and this occurs in the final piece, a short introduction to Auden's essay, 'The Fall of Rome'. B.'s essay is infinitely better than Auden's: one feels, *contra* B., that the editors of *Life* were right to reject it in 1966. Auden drew on E.R. Dodds and Charles Norris Cochrane, a justly forgotten populariser of post-war Christian angst, in making his etiolated argument; Dodds was clearly Auden's superior in this area, even though the book that inspired him in this instance, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety*, is itself far from being Dodds's best work. Dodds was rather more discriminating in his friendships with poets than Auden was in his sometimes embarrassingly pseudo-academic enthusiasms.

In common with Dodds, B. is a scholar alive to all that art and literature, past and present, have to offer, and this shapes his literary style. He presents his reflections with clarity of judgement and a lucidity of argument that would-be popularisers of such material very rarely attain. His championing of Gibbon's commitment to achieving the exacting Horation fusion of *dulce* and *utile* is becomingly reflected.

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WAR POETS

VANDIVER (E.) *Stand in the Trench, Achilles. Classical Receptions in British Poetry of the Great War*. Pp. xx + 455, ill. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. Cased, £75. ISBN: 978-0-19-954274-1.
doi:10.1017/S0009840X1100196X

In winter 1917–18, four years into the first industrialised mass war the world had seen, readers of *The Spectator* were preoccupied with rendering Sir Henry Newbolt's famous line 'Play the Game' into Latin. The magazine published no less than seventeen letters from readers who suggested translations ranging from the brief and literal (*lude juste*) to the elaborate (*ad astra, non populos, ludite*). However, some readers wondered whether the sentiment was essentially untranslatable since 'No short phrase of classical Latin could include the light-heartedness,

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the chivalry, and the devotion to duty of the English' (p. 45). A faithful translation was considered difficult, if not impossible, but, interestingly, not one reader questioned the purpose of the whole exercise. This episode illustrates three core themes running through V.'s fascinating monograph on classical representations (or 'receptions', as V. puts it) in British poetry of the Great War that appears in Oxford University Press's 'Classical Presences' series. First, the *Spectator* correspondence shows the importance of ancient languages, literatures and history for the self-expression of the educated elite; second, the blending of Latin with chivalric, Christian and sporting motifs reveals a characteristic eclecticism or 'multivalence' (p. 393); and, finally, it sheds new light on the nexus of classics and national identity in the era of the Great War.

The book's title is borrowed from a poem by Patrick Shaw-Stewart, a banker and gifted classicist educated at Eton and Oxford. Shaw-Stewart was driven by neither 'war enthusiasm' nor hatred towards Germany but enlisted out of a sense of duty. Serving in the Dardanelles, his search for meaning in the war led him to rediscover the *Iliad*. Shaw-Steward's recourse to Homeric heroes was not unique but rather typical of the public-school-educated officer class. Even though few achieved Shaw-Steward's competency in ancient languages, many retained a lifelong fascination with classical antiquity. During the war, many cultivated a habit of turning to classical antecedents and quotations to articulate (in verse) their own experiences. Some soldier poets cast the modern combatants as the equivalent of Homeric warriors while others such as Shaw-Stewart recognised an unbridgeable gap between themselves and their role models.

There can be no doubt that an education in classics was by and large the preserve of the elite. The majority of the approximately 400 war poets who used classics had attended public and grammar schools. However, building on Jonathan Rose's work *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (2001), V. goes to great lengths to argue that classics exercised a hold on the imagination of the working and lower-middle classes, too. Having dipped into a (somewhat random) selection of trench journals, she suggests that the editors and contributors assumed a certain degree of familiarity with ancient myth and classical tags among both officer and other ranks. Compendia, condensations and translations provided access to ancient history and classical literature to autodidacts. The best known representative of the semi-educated war poet with a penchant for classical themes and quotations was Wilfred Owen. Owen's relationship to classics was far more complex than an isolated reading of his poem 'Dulce et decorum est' would indicate. Owen struggled with his Latin, yet he considered a command of ancient languages crucial to his development as a poet. V. highlights the evocations and reworkings of Greek and Latin poetry in Owen's *œuvre*. His 'Strange Meeting' in hell with a German soldier he had killed was inspired by the idea of *katabasis*, a living man's journey to Hades. Significantly, Owen wrote this poem shortly after reading J.A.K. Thomson's *The Greek Tradition* (1915).

Homer provided a particularly rich mine of images and tropes, and the Trojan War became a principal reference point, notably for those war poets who fought at Gallipoli. The mythic resonances of the location fired soldiers' imagination. Homer – and, to a lesser extent, Virgil – allowed them to come to terms with the gruesome experience of death and violence. Homer's heroes do not suffer excruciating pain but succumb almost instantly to fatal wounds. Moreover, the Homeric dead could rise to witness and admire their twentieth-century ancestors. Occasionally, war poets summoned Achilles and Hector together with Lancelot and Tristan. The

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blending of classical and Arthurian heroes suggests that 'classical presences' were an eclectic amalgam of temporal notions rather than a coherent set of intellectual propositions. Even within the classical discourse, the system of equivalences is neither straightforward nor unambiguous. Soldier poets identified with both the Greeks and the Trojans, the Athenians at Marathon and the Spartans at Thermopylae, and Rome could stand for German 'frightfulness' as well as Allied valour.

Classical representations in British war poetry demonstrate the formative influence of the public schools which, as V. rightly notes, offered tuition in little else than classics. Notably the amalgamation of classicism, medievalism, 'muscular Christianity' and Englishness betrays its origin in the ethos of the public schools. Yet V.'s claim that the appropriation of classics was a 'specifically British' (p. 77) phenomenon does not stand scrutiny. On the contrary, classicism belonged to the intellectual baggage that the European elites carried with them to war – regardless of whether they had attended a public school, a *Gymnasium* or a *lycée*. To be sure, the transnational or pan-European character of the classical tradition disintegrated in the new age of total war.

After reading V.'s in-depth study of classical images and notations in British poetry of the Great War, the *Spectator* correspondence appears not bizarre but indicative of the frame of mind of men brought up on a diet of Homeric warriors and Latin declensions. To them, the purpose of translating Newbolt's phrase into Latin at a time of war was utterly self-evident. V. is a professor of Latin and classics who has ventured into the increasingly interdisciplinary field of First World War studies. Her research produces further support for the position originally staked out by the cultural historian Jay Winter: that the Great War, the most 'modern' of wars, unleashed an avalanche of the traditional. British war poetry was saturated with allusions to ancient Greece and Rome. Some such reconfigurations are still recognisable to the modern-day reader, especially those that invoke the Trojan War or the battle of Thermopylae. However, other references are so subtle (such as imitations of metrical and lexical styles) that they have escaped most modern historians and literary critics, scholars to whom the ancient past is more often than not a 'foreign country'.

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DEISSMANN

GERBER (A.) *Deissmann the Philologist*. (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche 171.) Pp. xxiv + 649, ills, maps. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010. Cased, €139.95, US$217. ISBN: 978-3-11-022431-3.
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G. has produced an extraordinarily learned and extensive biographical study of the life and work of Gustav Adolf Deissmann (1866–1937). It is a perfect example of well-researched *Werkbiographie* drawing on some 25 archives, personal letters, diary entries and conversations with Deissmann's family members, particularly with the late son Gerhard Deissmann to whom the book is dedicated. G. introduces Deissmann's manifold philological (Part 1), archaeological (Part 2) and ecumenical–political (Part 3) contributions and achievements, and convincingly argues that it

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