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Swinish classics; or a conservative clash with Cockney culture



On 1 November 1790 Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* was published in England. The counter-revolutionary intervention of a Whig politician who had previously championed numerous progressive causes provided an important rallying point for traditionalist thinkers by expressing in plain language their concerns

about the social upheaval across the channel. From the viewpoint of pro-revolutionaries, Burke's *Reflections* gave shape to the conservative forces they were up against; its publication provoked a 'pamphlet war', which included such key radical responses to the *Reflections* as Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Man* (1790) and Tom Paine's *The Rights of Man* (1791).¹ In Burke's treatise, he expressed a concern for the fate of French civilisation and its culture, and in so doing coined a term that would haunt his counter-revolutionary campaign. Capping his deliberation about what would happen to French civilisation following the overthrow of its nobility and clergy, which he viewed as the twin guardians of European culture, he wrote, 'learning will be cast into the mire, and trodden down under the hoofs of a swinish multitude'.

This chapter asks what part the Greek and Roman classics played in the cultural war between British reformists and conservatives in the periodical press of the late 1810s and early 1820s. The ideological struggle—as we shall see—over the 'correct' use and 'ownership' of classical culture had its very real, *material* counterpart in the intense fight over the social and political rights (and, therefore, living and working conditions) of the British under-classes. The chapter focuses specifically on the conservative critical assaults upon those predominantly professional writers, artists and thinkers associated with the 'Cockney school', who clustered around the reformist poet, journalist and 'King of Cockaigne', Leigh Hunt (1784-1859). The group had its own high-circulation Sunday journal in *The Examiner* (founded in 1808), which printed and promoted the work of its circle, disseminating their reformist ideology to the steadily growing reading public. The assaults—under consideration here—made on Hunt and his friends were conducted chiefly by the notorious team of reviewers writing under the pseudonym of 'Z' for the Scottish Tory

monthly, the *Blackwood's Magazine* (founded in 1817) including John Gibson Lockhart (1794-1854), John Wilson Croker (1780-1857) and William Maginn (1794-1842).² Since these attacks were part of a public dialogue, wherever possible I shall address both the provocation and counterattack, in each case exploring the vying appropriations of classical culture.

In his *Reflections* Edmund Burke was writing about France, and his swine were therefore French swine, but it was all too clear that his anxieties about the shifts in world order (now that the stabilizing forces of unquestioning deference to the crown, orthodox religion and the landed gentry were being dismantled) transcended national boundaries and played heavily too upon the cultured ease of the British aristocracy. His derogatory characterisation of the animalistic masses was by no means limited to France. In the same publication Burke also drew unfavourable parallels between the French Revolutionaries and Catiline, Cethegus and the heaven-storming giants; but these were not the comparisons that caught the imagination of the British public. It was Burke's swine (or their self-appointed British radical representatives) that would steal the day and rally against him, provocatively squealing their way through the 1790s and, as we shall see, well beyond.

Burke's pigs were pressed into service by British radicals, who remorselessly exploited such an ideologically loaded phrase. All of a sudden the expression was everywhere in the radical press, notably in Thomas Spence's revolutionary periodical, *One Penny Worth of Pig's Meat: Lessons for the Swinish Multitude* (1793), Richard 'Citizen' Lee's *The Rights of Swine, an address to the poor* (1795) and Daniel Isaac Eaton's *Politics for the People, or Hogs Wash* (1793). An especially potent, but lesser known, example can be found in the influential fourth edition of Thomas Bridges of Hull's burlesque translation of Homer's *Iliad*, printed by G. G. and J. Robinson of

Paternoster Row in 1797.³ The same booksellers, who were in November 1793 fined for selling copies of Tom Paine's *The Rights of Man*, introduced into Bridges's translation—before the first line of the humorously abridged classic—an illustration of a blind Homer among a parcel of pigs (figure 4.1). The caption reads: 'Homer casting pearls before swine'. This clever hybrid allusion to Burke's polemic via Matthew 7:6 ('Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.'⁴) exemplifies the carefully balanced and covert industry of radical booksellers, many of whom were committed to communicating dissent at huge personal risk of imprisonment and bankruptcy. Burke may have considered it futile to cast the pearls of learning before the uneducated masses, but Homer (as depicted) was blind to such class distinction, and the act of disseminating a burlesqued *Iliad* became explicitly one of powerful political and social protest.

We find in Shelley's *Oedipus Tyrannus* (1819) a further and much later example of the radical appropriation of Burke's hogs. In listing among the *dramatis personae* of his version of Sophocles' tragedy 'a chorus of the Swinish Multitude', the reformist poet was not so much alluding to Burke's conservative treatise, as to what must have appeared in the post-revolutionary 'gloom' of the 1810s to be the Golden Age of British popular radicalism. In his poem *The Mask of Anarchy* – written, as *Oedipus*, in the wake of the Peterloo Massacre (1819) – Shelley would memorably call upon the working classes to 'Shake your chains to earth like dew' and remember that 'Ye are many—they are few!'⁵ It was natural for post-revolutionary radicals such as Shelley to attempt to reignite the spirit of the 1790s in a moment of renewed crisis. Calls for social reform in Britain had over the previous two decades been dampened by the clamour of patriotism aroused by the identification of a new,

and yet time-honoured, foreign enemy, the new French Republic. Critics of the war, such as Leigh Hunt, had to be careful not to appear unpatriotic.

In the aftermath of the French Revolution, social reform had become associated with revolution, and revolution with the crude gallows of lampposts and the thud of the guillotine. It became the principal calling of those reformist writers, whom it is now common practice to call either the second generation Romantics, or the ‘Cockney School’, to rebrand the struggle for social reform.⁶ John Keats says as much in a letter to his brother and sister in law in 1819:

[The French Revolution] has had an unlucky termination. It put a stop to the rapid progress of free sentiments in England, and gave our Court hopes of turning back to the despotism of the 16th century. They have made a handle of this event in every way to undermine our freedom. They spread a horrid superstition against all innovation and improvement. The present struggle in England of the people is to destroy this superstition.⁷

One important way the Cockney radical poets attempted to ‘destroy this superstition’ and rebrand the struggle for reform was to work with ancient Greek and Roman culture – the very foundations of conservative culture – and do with it something radically new. The Cockney classicism of the late 1810s and early 1820s became a site of political contest because their hijacking of conservative elite culture, and their communication of it via popular ‘broadcast’ channels—i.e. the middle-class periodical press—to a burgeoning, educated and newly culturally confident consumer society, was evidence that the aristocratic stronghold of the classical education had been breached.⁸ Such a breach reflected the erosion of traditional means of preserving social order by class distinction, as much as it was of the rise of consumerism as a power to rival the ownership of land, international trade and big industry. In the press the old battle lines from the revolutionary 1790s were re-established: while Shelley and his fellow ‘Cockneys’ were reaching back to the inflammatory language of Spence, Lee and Eaton, conservative critics reached back to many of the same

satirical strategies as those employed by the editors of the influential counter-revolutionary periodical, the *Anti-Jacobin* (1797-98), namely George Canning, John Hookham Frere, George Ellis and William Gifford.⁹

Part of the power (and indeed appeal) of the invective found in the Tory periodical press of the 1810s—as of the 1790s—was the skilful blend of fact and fiction; a key feature of the attacks was their interweaving of shrewd and detailed observation with cynical flights of smearing fantasy. This technique was beguiling enough not only to have influenced contemporary reception of the highly politicized ‘Cockney culture’ and—by extension—the progress of that part of the reform movement, but also to continue distorting our retrospective view of the cultural output of those writers and artists who, as we shall see, posed a serious threat to the upholders of the status quo. Lockhart and friends would write with deceptive precision and insight about the Cockneys and their work, and then—in the blink of an eye—fly off into outrageous and comical hyperbole. They simultaneously make astute (albeit openly class-prejudiced) jibes against Leigh Hunt and his circle, and mix them in with entertainingly bizarre and fanciful denunciations of their inhumanity, likening them, for example, to wild animals, or—when humanity was granted them—they were painted in the most intricately outlandish caricature. The skilful reactionary critics thus fostered their own credibility whilst also destroying that of their enemies and their progressive cause. A reader is, and was, hard pressed to tell the learned truth and the savage fiction apart.¹⁰

I humbly suggest, that you [...] conduct yourself, at your court at Lisson Grove, with a stateliness and hauteur that may be considered, by the youthful nobility of Cockaigne, a perfect model of monarchical dignity, but is, in fact, risibly characteristic of your plebeian origin and education.¹¹

Reading Z's work is a lesson in how fiction laid on thick enough, repeated and reinforced with strands of realism, appears as reality. We are therefore landed with the difficult job of disentangling *Blackwood's* forceful 'reality' from that with which a more objective analysis of Hunt-school reform furnishes us.

What the high-profile feuding between Scotch Tory and the London-based left-wing writers reveals is a sustained period (1810s to 1820s), like that of the late 1790s, in which there was a clear perception that poetry, and its critical reception, really could change the world. The stakes have rarely been higher. It was the time of the Spa Field Riots (1816) and the March of the Blanketeers (1817), which provoked Lord Liverpool's government to pass the Seditious Meetings Act in the same year. While the cavalry were sent by the government to disperse peaceful mass meetings in the open (e.g. 'Peterloo Massacre', Manchester, 1819), the Tory journalists wielded their own sabres in the periodical press. It was not only the printing and distribution of the great political pamphlets that spurred on social reform in Britain, but the more enigmatic, but equally potent expressions of dissent in poetry, whose importance was increased by the authorities' determination to suppress distribution of radical pamphlets.

Classical knowledge and reference to ancient Greek and Roman texts loom large in these cultural wars not only because it was a key feature of the Cockney style of the late 1810s, but also because a favoured way for Tory critics to ridicule their political opponents was to demonstrate the superiority of their own classical learning. It was something of a Tory critical common-place to suggest that their political opponents were ignorant of classical culture. This premise, in combination with the overtly classical writings of the Cockneys, made for a classical showdown. Lockhart, Maginn and Croker could each have pulled classical rank over just about anyone – for

their knowledge as classicists was not only profound, it was certified by the top educational institutions of the day.¹² The scene was set for an epic clash between reformist writers and their reactionary foe, both reaching for classical culture as their weapons of choice, but these weapons could scarcely have resembled one another less. Both sides poured scorn on the other's notion of the classical: Hunt saw that 'what they called the classical', was, in fact, 'Horace and the Latin breeding, instead of the elementary inspiration of Greece'.¹³ Lockhart and friends, as we shall see, would repeatedly delight in reminding their readers (misleadingly) that Hunt and his Cockneys knew nothing of ancient Greece because they could not even read Greek.

That the men and women associated with the Cockney school, most of whom had not been to university nor—in some cases—the top schools, should profess to commune with the classical poets was portrayed as a hilarious breach of etiquette. As Lockhart at his most provocative would have it 'a Hottentot in top-boots is not more ridiculous than a classical Cockney'.¹⁴ It is important, however, that we resist buying into the *Blackwood's* homogenization of the socioeconomically diverse 'school', which ranged from the lower middle classes (e.g. Keats and Hazlitt) to the landed gentry (both Shelley and Byron were intimates of Hunt and linked closely by the Tory press to the Cockney school).¹⁵ One of the most impressive achievements of the group was the example they set that people could put their differences aside, defeat their class prejudices and club together in their struggle for the common goal of social reform. Jeffrey Cox rightly points out that 'the attempt by *Blackwood's* to reduce the complexities of the group's social status to a single class category... is a sign of their [the Cockneys'] success in forging a group solidarity beyond ordinary class positions'.¹⁶ It is a persistent misconception, for example, that Keats was raised in poverty and poorly educated, knowing scarcely any Latin and no Greek. The grain of

truth, around which the other accretions have gathered, is that Keats knew precious little Greek. The rest is based on a highly selective presentation of the facts, carelessly dismissive of any education (formal or informal) outside of the leading public schools and Oxbridge, and apparently blind to degrees of social and economical status between crow-scarer and monarch of the realm. Both Keats and Hunt were, broadly speaking, middle-class and well-educated men; neither went to university, nor, in consequence, did they ever profess to be scholars, in spite of their obsessive study of the poetry and culture of ancient Greece and Rome. Hunt wrote in his preface to *Foliage* (1818): ‘I pretend to be no great scholar myself; but what I do read, I read closely and with a due sense of what the poet demands’.¹⁷

As I have pointed out elsewhere, Keats’s Latinity has been severely underestimated, and Hunt could have boasted that he was a ‘deputy Grecian’ at Christ’s Hospital, a school with the famously irascible headmaster and learned classicist, the Rev. James Bowyer. Although still only a schoolboy accolade, being a ‘deputy Grecian’ meant that Hunt left school having read a quantity of Roman literary texts (from Republican to post-classical Latin) that would rival if not surpass most classics graduates today. It also, of course, meant that he had advanced to the study of ancient Greek literature, including everything deemed worthwhile by the rigorous Bowyer, excepting the Greek tragedies, which were reserved for the full ‘Grecians’, or final-year classical scholars at Christ’s Hospital.¹⁸

The universe according to *Blackwood’s* was one of stark contrasts. This resulted, especially in the literary criticism of the likes of Lockhart, in the fictional creation of a Britain made up of a population repelled to political and social extremes: at one end was the polite and educated gentry – *alias* the sensible Tories, and at the other – the vulgar mob, identified politically with the ‘radical’ Whiggish left. Such a

polarisation of class division is of course absurdly reductive, as well as anachronistic. The Tory critics who wrote the counter-Cockney reviews appear to uphold an outmoded, quasi-feudal society. Their ‘peasantry’, or simply those who are not ‘us’ (i.e. respectable Tory *Blackwood’s* readers – largely referring to the aspirant middle classes and the professional and commercial *nouveau riches*),¹⁹ was the threatening ‘other’. This ‘peasant population’ consisted largely of the educated, economically secure and increasingly culturally confident middle classes, who alongside the upper-class radicals and many of the newly and increasingly literate working classes, were calling for social reform. *Blackwood’s* flattered their readers by casting them as the defenders of aristocratic values, high culture, established religion, and national morality.²⁰

As can be detected in phrases that acknowledge the popularity of the Cockney’s cultural output, and by the vehemence of the Tory attacks themselves, this group was enormous and therefore an enormous threat to the cultural ascendancy of the conservative establishment. The attacks were, as Cox notes, ‘in fact a counterattack, an act of recognition by ideological enemies of the gathering of writers around Leigh Hunt’.²¹ Social distinction by education and cultural activities and interests (in which the classics played a key role) was becoming ever more difficult to maintain in a newly industrial and commercial Britain, where basic education was improving, alternative routes to classical culture becoming available, and increasing numbers of the emerging managerial and professional classes were acquiring the means to buy a classical education for their children. Rolf Lessenich puts it well, when he writes:

It was a standing joke with Tories that Whigs and Dissenters, who fashioned themselves and Britain in the liberal succession of Athens with its cultural and religious variety and tolerance, knew neither Attic Greek nor refined manners due to their alleged ignorance of the Classical Tradition.²²

In the October edition of *Blackwood's* magazine 1817 readers would find a new feature bearing the title: 'ON THE COCKNEY SCHOOL OF POETRY'. They could tell that it was just the beginning of a new series by the fact that the column's second line was given entirely to a generously sized 'No. I'.²³ Immediately below was the epigraph or motto taken from a poem written by the almost entirely obscure poet Cornelius Webb, whom Keats referred to as a 'poetaster' and who appears as something of a hanger-on at the social gatherings of the Cockneys.²⁴

Our talk shall be (a theme we never tire on)
Of Chaucer, Spenser, Shakspeare, Milton, Byron,
(Our England's Dante) – Wordsworth – HUNT, and KEATS,
The Muses' son of promise; and of what feats
He may yet do.

As Cox notes, however, Webb was, at the time, a relatively well-published poet with strong ideological as well as stylistic ties to the Cockneys, and: 'In praising his colleagues in strong terms, Webb brought down abuse upon himself and them, for *Blackwood's* and its conservative allies could not allow a claim for cultural power by the liberal Hunt circle to go unchallenged'.²⁵ Poor forgotten Cornelius Webb was a convenient scapegoat. The crime of which he is undoubtedly guilty was the provision

of so tantalisingly a distilled version of what Lockhart and his cronies hated most about Hunt and the Cockneys, which was their high-profile trespassing on areas of high culture previously enclosed (like the common land) by the gentry via the expenses of a classical education and foreign travel. It is interesting that the language of trespass is directly invoked by Maginn in 1821, when he calls the Cockney poet Bryan Waller Proctor (alongside Haynes and Dillon) ‘poachers on the domains of tragedy’.²⁶ The Harrow-educated Proctor, also known as Barry Cornwall, was a commercially successful proponent of the Cockney classical poet. Now, like Webb, few have heard of him.

There were by this point—in the age, for example, of a democratizing educational press and improvements to working- and middle-class living conditions and education, and increased access to museums and reproductions of ‘high’ art—a considerable number and variety of alternative routes, and shortcuts, to ancient Mediterranean and Renaissance culture. People could sail the seven seas through cheap novels and travel journals, explore ancient monuments and admire classical material culture through the line drawings of Henry Moses (d. 1870), and even adorn their suburban boxes (in the parlance of *Blackwood’s*) with faux-marble busts of their favourite classical poets made from plaster or papier-mâché.²⁷ Thanks in part to Hunt’s friend, Vincent Novello (1781-1861), who established Novello & Co., and then later his son, who really innovated the cheap music press, anyone who could afford an upright piano could now learn to play in their own homes the songs (from sheet music) which they could never have hoped to afford to hear in the concert halls. This was a mixed blessing for the thin-walled metropolitans, but a dramatic example of the wide-ranging cultural democratization in action in Regency London. Newly empowered and culturally confident, these intolerable parvenus with their heads full

of ‘inadequate’ translations and papier-mâché Venuses had now begun writing poetry, and, what’s worse, people were reading it and putting it on a level with ‘real poets’! That is, in any case, the kind of class-based incredulity the *Blackwood’s* reviewers would have their readers feel.

However much the contemporary conservative critics damaged the reputations and consequent receptions of the cultural output of this new breed of artist, the reality is that these ‘parvenus’, powerfully represented by the Cockney school—but by no means limited to them—were not creating inferior cultural artefacts, they were simply creating different kinds of artistic product for new audiences, new readerships, largely uninterested in, if not entirely free from, the class-connnotations of their production, in which I include the nuances of their unorthodox, occasionally mediated genesis.²⁸ Keats’s ecstatic, inspired and (therefore?) ‘masturbatory’ poetry has been ingeniously classified and expiated by critics, following in the prints of Byron and the likes of William Gifford and Lockhart. For example, Marjorie Levinson in the sophisticated and elegantly misleading analysis writes of how

the early readers [of Keats’s poetry] sensed the violence of Keats’s raids upon that empowering system: a violence driven by the strongest desire for an authorial manner and means, and for the social legitimacy felt to go with it. In the alienated reflexiveness of Keats’s poetry, the critics read the signature of a certain kind of life, itself the sign of a new social phenomenon’.²⁹

This is *exactly* what was going on in the minds of the classically educated and reactionary critics, and those of the readers who took their word for gospel. But it is also categorically *not* the reception of his circle, nor of the majority of Keats’s

readers, once he had them (after his death), and, even more importantly, *not* what should be going on in the heads of apparently disinterested critics in the twenty-first century. It does not take into account the plurality of readerships in Romantic-era Britain. Influential though the *Blackwood's* and *Quarterly* reviewers undoubtedly were, their opinion tells only one—and one extremely partisan—side of a far more complex reception history. In this cynical tradition of criticism, poems that openly celebrate encounters with high culture have long been understood as masturbatory, middle-class *faux pas*, or expressions of social anxiety. There is logic in such readings, but little sense. How many of us read *On Chapman's Homer* and find in it the anguished yelp of a Cockney upstart? We can be safe in the assumption that it was not written for the reader who thinks that way, but for a reader or listener who was willing to be swept along with the poet's genuine excitement of connecting with something of the spirit of deep-browed Homer, in the only way he knew how – which is, of course, dependent upon his complex class conditioning – but not necessarily negatively so. Although it may influence a reader's reception of the sonnet, the fact that Keats had never read Homer in Greek does not make his poem culturally inferior, and neither does it mean that Keats was suffering from any kind of cultural or social anxiety, nor does it make it a rooky *faux pas*. It was written for the likes of Leigh Hunt, the readers of the *Examiner*, and all those people who could share in the defiant spirit if not actual experience of turning one's back on Alexander Pope's 'gentle' couplets and diving headlong into the rugged and (according to Keats) more authentic lines of Chapman's Elizabethan translation.

The direct connection to classical inheritance through scholarship was already in Keats's own time being forcibly called into question, for example, when Elgin stripped the Parthenon of its frieze and other architectural features, and shipped them

to London in 1808. By 1816 and following a noisy public debate they were eventually bought by the government and housed (for all to see and without appointment) in the newly built British Museum. Britain was divided on the matter of the marbles' authenticity. Wealthy connoisseurs of the Dilettanti, led by Richard Payne Knight (1751-1824), said they were Roman replicas, but the community of artistic practitioners rallied. Indeed it was the voice of the 'Cockney Raphael' that helped to swing the debate; Benjamin Robert Haydon, a professional artist and central figure of the Cockney circle played an important role in the verification of the Parthenon marbles. Against towering opposition, Haydon vociferously wrested cultural authority away from the connoisseur, scholar and moneyed elite, and demonstrated to all that the professional creative practitioner's voice was not only as loud, but as culturally valuable as that of the traditionally educated amateur. After weeks of waiting to be called upon as witness to the Select Committee, he finally took to print. In Hunt's *Examiner* and other newspapers he wrote an impassioned open letter, entitled *On the Judgement of Connoisseurs being preferred to that of Professional Men*:

In no other profession is the opinion of the man who has studied it for his amusement preferred to that of him who has devoted his soul to excel in it.³⁰

Keats would spend, we are told, hours among the marbles.³¹ While others obsessed over their disputed provenance, he wallowed among the objects, which had (as far as he was concerned) fallen straight from ancient Athens, and the workshop of Phidias himself. There was no more direct route to ancient Greece than these stones carved by the hands of the ancients. He wrote many a celebration of what he would in *Ode on Indolence* call 'Phidian lore', beginning with his two sonnets addressed to

Haydon (March, 1817), who first took him to see the marbles. Their stony presence is never too far beneath the surface of the five odes he wrote in the spring of 1819, breaking through most visibly perhaps in that ‘heifer lowing at the skies’ (figure 4.2) in stanza four of his *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, which has as a literary source also Catullus’s sixty-fourth poem.³²

In Keats’s *On the Elgin Marbles* he compares himself to a ‘sick eagle looking at the sky’. Hardly—at first glance—a celebrative simile. But it is. Keats was so awestruck by the workmanship and beauty of the stonework that he felt artistically dwarfed by their achievement. This is, of course, an expression of inferiority, but one of inspiration as opposed to depression. It is similar to the way he imagined his favourite poet, Shakespeare, towering above him when he likens himself, also addressing Haydon – but this time in a letter (May, 1817) – to a Shakespearean samphire picker half way up the ‘Cliff of Poesy’. But he saw below him the (to him) entirely mundane Alexander Pope, whose words seemed ‘like mice to mine’. His expressions of inferiority are often attended on by ones of extraordinary self-confidence, easily forgotten when focus is placed on his humble expression rather than the lofty figures with which he compared himself.

In response to a. Hunt’s *Story of Rimini* (1816), b. Webb’s socially hubristic poem, and c. the ‘Cockney’ breach of the ring-fenced worlds of literature and scholarship, Lockhart whetted his quill and produced nothing less than a master class of critical genocide. He reduced in one article a socioeconomically and educationally diverse group of independent thinkers, bound by a shared commitment to social reform and an inclusive cultural practice, to a vulgar bunch of mal-educated and lowborn pretenders, ‘The Cockney School’.

Its chief Doctor and Professor is Mr Leigh Hunt... a man of little education. He knows nothing of Greek, almost nothing of Latin, and his knowledge of Italian literature is confined to a few of the most popular of Petrarch's sonnets, and an imperfect acquaintance with Ariosto, through the medium of Mr Hoole.³³

In one fell swoop, Lockhart destroyed any claim Hunt may have made to scholarship, or even the basic knowledge needed for one who dared to propose a new generation of poets.³⁴ As always it is hard to disentangle the truth from Lockhart's scathing fiction. Hunt apparently 'knows nothing' of the classics and only knows some Italian poetry through translation. The factually unfounded abuse continues. Lockhart points out Hunt's various wants, including any direct engagement with French and Spanish literature.³⁵ Lockhart, as a university-educated and prize-winning classical scholar, could without qualm look down upon the classical attainment of Hunt, who was (as he himself admitted) nothing more than a passionate reader of classical poetry and an intelligent graduate of Christ's Hospital.³⁶

It was of course not only literature in which the Cockney professor was deficient. Lockhart attacks Hunt with numerous charges of parochialism:

He raves perpetually about 'green fields', 'jaunty streams', and 'o'er-arching leafiness', exactly as a Cheapside shop-keeper does about the beauties of his box on the Camberwell road. [...] His fame as a poet [...] is entirely confined to the young attorneys and embryo-barristers about town. In the opinion of these competent judges, London is the world – and Hunt is a Homer.³⁷

It is in this passage that we see that the demographic with whom Lockhart associates Hunt and the Cockneys corresponds not at all with the working classes. The jobs listed here are explicitly middle class and metropolitan – junior lawyers and suburban grocers. The King of Cockaigne can only be considered a Homer by those whose cultural horizon extends no further than the over-crowded and morally corrupt capital. Lockhart’s nicknaming Hunt the ‘Cockney Homer’ is just one of many apparently ridiculous epithets attributed to members of the school. We have already met Haydon, known to Lockhart as the ‘Cockney Raphael’;³⁸ in the same article (the fifth Cockney School attack) William Hazlitt was dubbed the ‘Cockney Aristotle’, and Keats is in one place referred to as ‘Esculapius’ to Hunt’s Apollo.³⁹ As upper-class readers, we are encouraged to laugh scoffingly at the group’s hopeless pretensions to classical knowledge.

In the third article in the series, Lockhart as ‘Z’ closes with a classical flourish, saying that Hazlitt and Hunt are ‘Arcades ambo / Et cantare pares...’⁴⁰ Lockhart’s use of classical allusion, both the more obviously ironic epithets aligning them comically with leading and cherished figures from classical, or at least, classic culture, and the more erudite allusion to Virgil’s *Eclogues* 7.4 are designed simultaneously to flatter his classically educated readers and shame those Cockneys, who – we are to imagine (mistakenly) – could not understand the jokes made by the critic at their expense. The reviewer gives Hunt and Hazlitt little room for manoeuvre; they are at once incurably metropolitan, and ridiculously rustic. ‘Arcades ambo’ (literally ‘Arcadians both’, i.e. people from the pastoral common-place of Arcadia), however, seems to have naturally been employed by aristocrats at the time as a damning class slur. The Eton and Oxford-educated lawyer and critic John Taylor Coleridge (1790-1876)—nephew of the poet—responded learnedly, referring to the

Cockney king in a mid-1818 *Quarterly Review* as ‘Arcadian Hunt’ – which might at first glance appear a compliment.⁴¹ Lord Byron too, in a letter to his friend Hobhouse, applies the term to the radicals Henry ‘Orator’ Hunt and William Cobbett on 22 April 1820, pinning down the term with a quick ‘*id est*, blackguards both’.⁴² In the same letter he follows immediately with: ‘Why our classical education alone – should teach us to trample on such unredeemed dirt... and all who follow them.’ It will be noted that in this usage too there are both political and class dimensions. This, of course, results from the fact that the struggle for social reform and its reactionary suppression was at the heart of contemporary political debate. Since the classical education was the foundation of both of Burke’s twin bastions of an unequal yet stable society, Religion and gentility, it is no wonder that central too to both the social and political debate were the Greek and Roman classics.

Lockhart, writing in ‘The Cockney School of Poetry, No. IV’, laments the madness gripping the British people:

Of all the manias of this mad age, the most incurable, as well as the most common, seems to be no other than the metromanie.⁴³

But what does Lockhart mean by ‘metromanie’?⁴⁴ Literally it means ‘a madness for poetry’. But it speaks, here, of far more than a love of verse, symbolizing a heightened cultural confidence among the lower classes:

The just celebrity of Robert Burns and Miss Ballie [both poets of humble origin] has had the melancholy effect of turning the heads of we know not how many farm-servants and unmarried ladies; our very footmen compose tragedies,

and there is scarcely a superannuated governess in the island that does not leave a roll of lyrics behind her in her bandbox.

The reason for his lamentation is that the poet John Keats is a victim of the malady, and this article is dedicated to the character assassination of Lockhart's Keatsian persona. It is a persona because, as with Lockhart's portrayal of Hunt, it has a loose relationship with the facts of Keats's life. Likening Keats to raving governesses and farm-servants is his first blow, and is partially responsible for the persistent perception of Keats as an impoverished and culturally malnourished young man, which he was not.⁴⁵ On the subject of Keats's longer narrative poem *Endymion: A Poetic Romance* (1818), Lockhart wrote:

The old story of the moon falling in love with a shepherd, so prettily told by a Roman classic, and so exquisitely enlarged and adorned by one of the most elegant of German poets, has been seized upon by Mr John Keats, to be done with as might seem good unto the sickly fancy of one who never read a single line either of Ovid or Wieland.⁴⁶

Keats's choice of subject, a classical story already told by Ovid and Wieland, is a key provocation. How dare a man who did not go to one of the great schools before one of the two ancient universities take on the tale of Endymion? 'His Endymion,' Lockhart continues, 'is not a Greek shepherd loved by a Grecian goddess; he is merely a young Cockney rhymester dreaming a fantastic dream at the full of the moon'. Keats's distance from his source is therefore a further provocation. Keats used the story as the premise for his own original work, imagining how the socially unequal relationship between the shepherd boy Endymion and the goddess Phoebe might be conceived in

his own day, according to the modern mythology of transcendence and dream states, which were, as has been endlessly documented, important to Romantic poets.

The effective internalization of the divine and the implicit challenge to social hierarchy of mortal/immortal relations were as noxious to the establishment as the unapologetic celebration of the pagan imagery and mythology. Add to that the self-aware and stylized delivery of Keats—at his most Cockney—flaunting his loose rhymes, compound adjectives and Huntian neologistic adverbs, which they all knew so frustrated their Tory critics. In the face of such Tory-baiting it is perhaps a wonder Lockhart is not more splenetic:

From his prototype Hunt, John Keats has acquired a sort of vague idea that the Greeks were a most tasteful people, and that their mythology can be so finely adapted for the purposes of poetry as theirs. It is amusing to see what a hand the two Cockneys make of this mythology: the one confesses that he never read the Greek tragedians, and the other knows Homer only from Chapman – and both of them write about Apollo, Pan, nymphs, muses and mysteries as might be expected from persons of their education.⁴⁷

The attack again focuses on their lack of knowledge and lack of education. Lockhart attempts to laugh it off ('it is amusing...'), but he has betrayed his true feelings, his true fears. If this kind of 'metromanie' is as widespread as he sets out at the beginning of the article, then surely the threat it poses is no laughing matter. Lockhart's attempted conflation of the 'metromanie' of governesses and farm-servants and the radical rewriting of classical myth is unconvincing.

Although the two kinds of poetry appear immiscible, this does not mean that they are not born from the same movement, the cultural empowerment of the middle classes. Lockhart's infamous criticism, although highly visible at the time, due to the high circulation of *Blackwood's*, and now, due to its fiendish literary quality and, ironically, its affiliation with the poets it sought to destroy, was in the wider perspective tantamount to the barking of a dog in a tropical storm. The popular invasion of high culture was well underway. This said, the impact of the Cockneys' radical appropriation of the classical, a natural consequence of the wider popular movement, was to some extent stemmed by the Tory critics, who undermined their opponents any which way they could.⁴⁸ In such criticism the fused languages of moral conduct and class predominate:

No man whose mind has ever been imbued with the smallest knowledge or feeling of classical poetry or classical history, could have stooped to profane and vulgarize every association in the manner which has been adopted by this 'son of promise' [Keats].⁴⁹

This can be paraphrased as: 'only a man with no classical education could be so morally corrupt (to *profane*) as to render in the language of the common people (*vulgarize*) the cultural material that comes from the ancient world (every association [of the classical]) and is digested in some kind of secret and obscure way (the *feeling*) by those of us who have been expensively educated at the top establishments. As Olivia Smith neatly summarises in *The Politics of Language 1791-1819*, the kinds of

polarization in play completely obscure the far more subtle and varied relationships between social class, education and language of the day:

A vulgar language was said to exist, a refined language was said to exist, and others were not recognized. Such extreme concepts dismissed everyone except the classically educated as an identifiable group characterized by their incapacity for refined thought and moral behavior. Varieties of social class and modes of education were disregarded as diverse groups of people were reduced to one, most disreputable kind...⁵⁰

In the sixth Cockney attack Lockhart as ‘Z’ gets even more creative, pretending that Hunt has died and that his recent collection of poems in *Foliage* (1818), was printed posthumously. ‘There is,’ Lockhart explains ‘too much reason to believe, that this everlasting tea-drinking was the chief cause of Leigh Hunt’s death. The truth is, that he had for many years been sipping *imitation-tea*, a pleasant but deleterious preparation – more pernicious by far than the very worst port’.⁵¹ Why death by tea? Tea-drinking was just one aspect of Hunt’s flamboyantly countercultural lifestyle that critics such as Lockhart and Croker simply loved to hate. It was commonly associated with domesticity and considered a feminine pastime, in comparison with the manly drinking of coffee, which was done in the male dominated coffeehouses of the big cities.⁵² Others ranged from his famous yellow breeches and open collar to his vegetarianism and ‘chaunting’ sonnets in public places. It was tea-drinking that Lockhart would focus on in his review of *Foliage* because among the collection’s miscellanies was a verse epistle to Hazlitt containing the following paean to Hunt’s wife’s tea:

The tea made by one, who although my wife be,

If Jove were to drink it, would soon be his Hebe,
Then silence a little, a creeping twilight,
Then an egg for your supper with lettuces white,
And a moon and friend's arm to go home with at night.⁵³

Lockhart reproduced this extract in *Blackwood's* prefacing it with: 'Mr Hunt's notions of sociality are moderate ones indeed...' The joy Hunt takes in the simpler things in life was a part of his programme of promoting thrifty forms of entertainment, which enabled him in a proto-hippy fashion to opt out of the daily grind.

The poets only do with their imaginations what all might do with their practice,
- live at as cheap, natural, easy, and truly pleasurable a rate as possible; for it is
not industry, but a defeat of the ends of it, and a mere want of ideas, to work
and trouble themselves so much as most of our countrymen do; neither is it
taste, but an ostentatious want of it, that is expensive...⁵⁴

Lockhart continues: 'Think of the delicacy of the compliment paid to the lady who pours out the gun-powder! Jupiter drinking tea at Hampstead with Mr and Mrs Hunt, and Mr Hazlitt! "Cedite Romani Scriptores Cedite Graii."' The Latin quotation is deeply ironic. It comes from Propertius 2. 34 (line 41) and has been well translated as 'make way you Roman writers, and you Greek, make way!' The following line in the Roman poem runs 'nescio quid maius nascitur Iliade' ('a [something] greater than the *Iliad* is born').⁵⁵ By the implication of the unspoken line Hunt's epistle to Hazlitt is humorously and mockingly likened to Virgil's great epic, the arrival of which Propertius was alluding to. The joke, of course, demands knowledge not only of the

Latin language but also a familiarity with the literary context of the quotation. It was a relatively common citation, the kind to be found in a book of quotations, but it would surely have been one of those tags embossed on the brains of all leavers from the leading schools.

In the same collection is a poem called *Fancy's Party, a fragment*. It has as its epigraph a quotation from Manilius 'Juvat ire per ipsum / Aera et immense spatentem vivere caelo', for which he offers the following translation in the line below: 'We take our pleasure through the very air, / And breathing the great heav'n, expatiate there.'⁵⁶ Even in the translation can be seen Hunt's desire to display in the ancient poets a precedent for his own radical blend of sociality and his much scoffed-at 'philosophy of cheer'; the 'breathing' of the air and the somewhat quirky 'expatiation' at once recalls Hunt's famed rambles up on Hampstead Heath, and the scarcely breathable air of the newly industrial city—especially downwind of the factory quarters where the working poor lived. Hunt has chopped off the end of Manilius' oft-quoted sentence. The Roman astrological poet continues in his imagined journey from the ground, through the earth's atmosphere, towards outer space and ultimately the hallowed knowledge of the movements of the cosmos: 'and get to know the signs and contrary movements of the stars' (*signaque et aduersos stellarum noscere cursus*). Hunt literally tethers the cosmic ambition expressed by Manilius in lines 13-15 of book one of his *Astronomica*, and makes what has now become a relatively bland fragment read as a truncated yet enraptured Cockney manifesto. What 'they', in Hunt's epigraph, are so pleased to escape from and leave behind on the earth's surface is the real subject of the poem. And Hunt reveals this, reflecting briefly before taking flight bound for his ethereal *locus amoenus*:

In this poetic corner
With books about and o'er us,
With busts and flowers,
And pictured bowers,
And the sight of fields before us;
Why think of these fatalities,
And all their dull realities?
'Tis fancies now must charm us;
Nor is the bliss ideal,
For all we feel,
In woe or weal,
Is, while we feel it, real:
Heaven's nooks they are for getting in,
When weeping weather's setting in.

'Et in Arcadia ego': thoughts of the recent dead, at Waterloo and Peterloo, leer into Hunt's poetic corner. He makes it absolutely clear that his cheerful escapism is a direct response to the horrors of the present.

But back to the tea party:

One is at a loss to know if Jupiter staid supper, short commons for a god, who,
in days of yore, went to sleep on Juno's bosom, full of nectar and ambrosia –

An egg for his supper and lettuces white!

Then think of letting Jove decamp, without so much as offering him a bed –
leaning on the arm of Mr William Hazlitt – and perhaps obliged, after all, to put
up for the night at Old Mother Red-Caps!⁵⁷

Old Mother Red-Caps was a famous coaching inn on the site where *The World's End* now stands in Camden. Needless to say it was not the kind of place the king of the gods, nor even any respectable gentleman would be seen dead. Hunt's cottage in the Vale of Health was small, too small to comfortably accommodate his family and houseguests, which is exactly what Lockhart wanted to remind his readers. When imagining what it would be like when Byron visited Hunt, Lockhart wrote: 'We have sometimes imagined what "confusion worse confounded" must have reigned in the box at Hampstead, when the maid-servant announced his lordship, more especially if it happened to be washing-day.'⁵⁸ How could a man who could not even afford to play host to a member of the gentry have the nerve to write about the Greek gods, even in jest?

In his criticism of Hunt's translation Lockhart does not mince his words: 'Hunt makes Homer call a fountain "clear and crisp", which had he ever done, Apollo would have shot him instantly dead.' By his own admission, Hunt's translations of Homer were experiments of 'how far I could give the intelligent reader, who is no scholar, a stronger sense of the natural energy of the original, than has yet been furnished him'.⁵⁹ He wanted to provide his English readers with an approximation of Homer's style and an opportunity to get closer to the Greek poet than other translators had before him. The bold directness of Lockhart's criticism indicates his utter

command of the subject. Still by this point a young man (twenty-three in 1817), Lockhart had long excelled in his classical studies as something of a child prodigy.

After a spell at Glasgow Grammar School, Lockhart was admitted to the University, where at the age of thirteen he won the gold medal in Greek on the infamous Blackstone Chair. This was literally a chair with a slab of black marble inlaid on which the quaking examinee would sit before a public audience and take a grilling from his professor on the book list he had ‘professed’ (to know) before the happy moment when the sand in the glass timer ran out. It is said that Lockhart professed a formidable list of books and showed ‘an intimate knowledge of them in translation and comment’. To win, as Lockhart did, the medal in Greek was to be proved ‘a very sound classicist’.⁶⁰ The following year, 1808, saw Lockhart being awarded the Snell Exhibition to Balliol, Oxford, whence in 1813, he graduated with first class honours. What he writes about the classical poets is usually full of insight, but what he writes of Hunt and friends is always full of biased, misleading and manipulative bile.

The following description, though very conceited and passionless, seems to us the best thing the late Mr Hunt ever did "in the poetic line". But instead of breathing "of the fine imagination of the Greeks", it is nothing more than a copy in words of a picture in oil. Mr Hunt used to be a great loungee in picture-dealer's shops... Whenever you meet with a vivid image in his verses, you are sure that it is taken from a picture.’⁶¹

There is much truth in the fact that Hunt, and indeed Keats, were highly influenced by classicizing artwork. What is misleading is the implication that this creative practice is exclusive of other more ‘textual’, ‘direct’ and thus ‘legitimate’ engagements with

classical sources. The contemporary reader may well have followed Lockhart in the estimation that creating ‘a copy in words of a picture in oil’ is somehow a lesser poetic achievement than conceiving something entirely new. Without the heightened preoccupation with artistic originality, it may strike many readers today as a foolish argument. In any case, the selective reproduction in *Blackwood’s* and damnation of Hunt’s polemical collection with false praise, such as this, is typical of the slippery sophism at work in the Z attacks.⁶²

We ought not to forget that he was conducting these callous character assassinations partly for comic effect. His particular blend of invective is consistently highly amusing. He has a mastery over the stinging insult without which English literature would be considerably worse off. The harsher and more fanciful he gets the funnier it is; the insults are protected from gratuitousness by his deft balance of biting reality and insightful readings of the Cockney poems. Were it not for Z’s criticism it would have been easy to see *Foliage* (1818), an important Romantic text, fall into obscurity. Hunt’s more sociable lyrics often appear like those of a spoken word artist, or performance poet. They are relaxed in form and designed to delight as much by the delivery and personality of the poet as by their textual content. John Wilson Croker memorably played on Coleridge’s famous definition of poetry, when he defined Cockney poetry as consisting of ‘the most incongruous ideas in the most uncouth language’.⁶³ He and Lockhart were on the same page:

How could any man of high original genius ever stoop publicly, at the present day, to dip his fingers in the least of those glittering and rancid obscenities which float on the surface of Mr. Hunt’s Hippocrene? His poetry is that of a man who has kept company with kept-mistresses. He talks indelicately like a tea-sipping milliner girl.

Back to tea. But this time, the class import of tea-drinking is made explicit. It is the occupation of gossiping female apprentices in trade. Has Hunt, in his generous and progressive attempt to free himself and those around him of the trappings of class division, defiled the holy spring of the ancient muses? Or has he instead incurred the wrath of a particularly sensitive establishment by exposing without reserve the counter-cultural and Grecomaniacal lifestyle of his social group to the public gaze?

By engaging freely with classical mythology and poetry ('not as a set of school-boy common-places which it was thought manly to give up'⁶⁴), and including luxurious scenes of sexual excess, moral depravity and unapologetic display of pre-Christian religiosity, Hunt set out to disturb the very foundations upon which (Burke knew) class division stood, gentility and clergy, both themselves nourished by the classical education. The poetry (original and translated) of the Cockney school in the 1810s had a purposefully high irritant factor. The free and celebratory 'misuse' of classical subject matter was perfectly calibrated simultaneously to please their philhellenic readerships and rile their conservative adversaries. In all decency (it was thought) reference to classical deities and classical verse ought to be confined to the schoolboy's jotter and the yellowing pages of poets dead and gone. The classical in contemporary poetry had long since reached the status of cliché for the literary establishment. There was, we can assume, a greater tolerance in the wider reading public. Hunt did not become a successful newspaperman by writing and printing outmoded work. The Cockneys were tapping into the contemporary frenzy for 'all things Greek'; it was for many clearly the height of fashion:

There is something very curious [...] in the way in which he [Keats], and Mr Barry Cornwall also, have dealt with the Pagan mythology, of which they have

made so much use in their poetry. Instead of presenting its imaginary persons under the trite and vulgar traits that belong to them in the ordinary systems, little more is borrowed from these than the general conception of their conditions and relations; and an original character and distinct individuality is bestowed on them, which has all the merit of invention, and all the grace and attraction of the fictions on which it is engrafted.⁶⁵

The *Edinburgh Review*'s Francis Jeffrey (1773-1850) here observes that the Cockney classical is new in the way it comes at classical mythology. It avoids triteness and vulgarity by 'grafting' originality onto the graceful, attractive and I would add aesthetically 'on trend' fictions of classical myth. That is to say nothing of its reformist aesthetic, which would have perhaps repelled as many readers as it attracted. The example of 'the Greeks' was absolutely central to Hunt's recipe for a good life:

The main feature of the book are a love of sociality, of the country, and of the fine imagination of the Greeks.⁶⁶

Hunt's major poetic intervention broke into three strands then: sociality, Nature and his reception of ancient Greece (mediated in large part by Latin and English poetry, visual art, and material culture).

Jeffrey admits that he 'scarcely recollect[s] a passage in all the writings of antiquity in which the passions of an immortal are fairly disclosed to the scrutiny and observations of men'. Keats and his associates were therefore adding cultural value to a tired subject matter by having 'created and imagined an entire new set of characters, and bringing closely and minutely before us the love and sorrows and perplexities of

beings, with whose names and supernatural attributes we had long been familiar, without any sense or feeling of their personal character'. Jeffrey here lights upon a key factor: classical subject matter was *familiar* to readers (from their predominantly classical education), which situation allowed such things as classical travesties and burlesques to be popular, as well as re-imagined classical mythological stories to build on classical reading and stretch it by allusive techniques of which Keats, for example, was a master.

Other critics were less indulgent of this original approach to classical mythology, as can be seen in a Cockney parody printed in the *Literary Journal*, entitled 'Pleasant Walks; A Cockney Pastoral – In the Manner of Leigh Hunt Esq'.⁶⁷ It takes the form of a verse epistle to Keats by Hunt.

Do you not like [...]
To go, and see the industrious pig root up
The buried acorn, where the oaks shoot up,
Making itself "green head-dresses,"
And "leafy Wildernesses,"
Lovely dryad! – and the "young-eyed" lambs
That walk by their dams,
With their milk-white dresses,
And their light prettinesses,
And feet that go skipity-skip!
And the sage cow,
That munches the drooping newly-clad bough,
Hanging its fresh'ning leaves o'er her head

And her back's glossy red;

O! these *are* objects for Castalian springs!

But *I*, you know, can see "the beautiful of things!"

This parody is useful for understanding the Tory perception of Cockney poetry. The haphazard and forced rhyming and the abundant compound adjectives exaggerate the Cockney style, while the comical appropriation of the classical head-dress and dryadic status to an 'industrious pig' truffling for an acorn highlights the perceived bathetic debasement of the classical in the hands of the Cockneys. The declaration of Hunt's farmyard scene as 'the objects for Castalian springs' shows the Cockneys getting the classics wildly wrong. Pseudo-Hunt's classical coronation of a pig is an example of his seeing classical beauty and wonder where none can possibly be. Nor is there any direct engagement with classical sources, which renders the Greek elements entirely decorative. The chattiness of the poem and Hunt's constant self-aggrandisement build a picture of Hunt as a wannabe aesthete suffering from a serious taste malfunction.

It is telling that in his criticism of *Foliage* (1818) Lockhart did not dwell on Hunt's translations from the Greek and Latin, aside from the passing swipe quoted above. Hunt's 'Evergreens; or Translations from the Poets of Antiquity' make up around half of the book, over one hundred pages. The poets translated are Homer, Theocritus, Bion and Moschus, Anacreon and Catullus. They all bear the unmistakable mark of Hunt's irrepressibly flamboyant and accessible style. Catullus, as honorary Greek, is represented by two of his most Greek compositions, the dark galliambic poem 63 ('Super alta vectus Attis celeri rate maria'), which tells of the young man, Attis, who regrets his decision to join the celebrants of the mother

goddess, Cybele, and the epithalamium 61 ('Collis o Heliconii'), which Hunt entitles 'The Nuptial Song of Julia and Manlius'. In reference to poem 63, Hunt rightly points out that 'among the other pieces' it 'comes as a spectre at noon-day'.⁶⁸

Aside from the three episodes from Homer's *Iliad* and one from the *Odyssey*, Hunt was displaying an altogether different side of classical poetry to that traditionally exploited by the classical education. It would no doubt have stretched many university graduates, but not, we might suspect, the voracious Lockhart and friends of *Blackwood's*. Horace, Juvenal, Ovid and Virgil, the staples of the school curriculum, are conspicuously absent. Hunt explains the predominance of pastoral by expressing the opinion that the 'real genius and character [of those poets] the public have hitherto had no idea whatsoever given them by the translators.'⁶⁹ Whether or not he does this is the subject of another study.

This deliberate display of classical learning in combination with the familiarity, liveliness and eminent readability of his translations, show just how possible it was at the time for a man outside of formal education but immersed in his profession to navigate the realms of gold. It was undoubtedly not the young Keats alone that this man inspired to defy the gamekeepers of the literary establishment and trespass on classical land by whatever route necessary. Hunt's sunny depiction of antiquity was a welcome antidote to what he called 'the gross mistake of what they [the French school, and by extension their descendants] called classical'.⁷⁰ *Foliage* and Cockney classicism as a whole was also an antidote to the post-revolutionary gloom of the 1810s. Hunt's conception of Greek mythology was 'something which it requires more than mere scholarship to understand,-- as the elevation of the external world and of accomplished humanity to the highest pitch of the graceful, and as embodied essences of all the grand and lovely qualities of nature'. The message

wrapped up in the apparently innocuous expression ‘mere scholarship’ was the celestial fire wrapped up in Prometheus’s heart-shaped fennel. This does not belong to you; it belongs to us. Every bit as incendiary as its Promethean counterpart, this message—in a time of intense social and cultural struggle—was identified by the government press as something which needed to be violently stamped out.

¹ Burke’s *Reflections* demanded a swift and strong response from the Left partly because Burke was not a reactionary. As a Whig MP, before defecting to Pitt’s government in 1791 as a Whig MP he had fought for numerous progressive causes including supporting the Irish patriots in the early stages of the American War of Independence.

² It is difficult to tell at any given time which of the three Blackwood’s writers is writing under the cover of ‘Z’. It is generally understood that Lockhart was the primary author behind ‘Z’ and therefore of the Cockney attacks, but – as with the editors of the *Anti-Jacobin* – it is to some extent a case of collaborative authorship, Strout 1959: 8-13.

³ Bridges 1797. Bridges’s burlesque translation was first printed in 1762. The illustrations were new to the 1797 edition. In 1810 Byron read a copy on a tour of the ‘Trojan Plain’ Letters and Journals of Lord Byron -- Journal Entry: 11 January 1821.

⁴ King James Version (1611).

⁵ Shelley *Mask of Anarchy* 1819 lines 380-2.

⁶ On the ‘Cockney school’ see Cox’s groundbreaking study *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School* (1998).

⁷ Keats *Letter to George and Georgiana Keats* Sept. 1819.

⁸ For the classical education as means of social closure, see Stray in this volume and 1998, 2007.

⁹ I use the term ‘Cockney’ frequently in this chapter (henceforth without inverted commas) as an identifier of association with the Hunt circle; it does not mean, as today, someone from East London. Indeed, they were identified most strongly with the area we would now consider North London, around Hampstead Heath. It was an offensive label, and one not used of the Cockneys themselves; but it has, in recent years, been appropriated by scholars as a neutral signifier of this group of reformist writers, artists and thinkers, Cox 1998 and Roe 1997. Being an aristocrat the conservative press refrained from placing him in the ‘Cockney school’ even though he was a central figure. On the *Anti-Jacobin* and the use of classics, see Lessenich 2012 and Stead forthcoming, 2015, chapter 3.ii.

¹⁰ One telling example is Blackwood’s persistent reference to William Hazlitt as the ‘pimpled Hazlitt’, on which see Strout 1937.

¹¹ ‘Letter from Z. to Leigh Hunt, King of the Cockneys’, *Blackwood’s* 3. 14: 196 (May 1818).

¹² ‘At eleven (1806) he [Maginn] entered Trinity College, Dublin, ranking near the top of examinations in Latin and Greek, and taking the premium in Hebrew. [...] He was awarded an LLD in 1819, reputedly the youngest to be so honoured. His background and education gave him strong unionist and establishment views.’ Latané *ODNB* 2004. In November 1819 he translated ‘Chevy Chase’ into Latin, *Blackwood’s* 6. 32: 199. Croker was also a distinguished classicist trained at Trinity College, Dublin. A contemporary of Thomas Moore, the translator of Anacreon. More on Lockhart to come.

¹³ Hunt 1818: 11. It is somewhat ironic that much of Cockney ‘Hellenism’ was mediated by Roman literature – see Stead forthcoming, 2015. Hunt was talking about the old French school of poets here, but we ought to assume that those reactionary critics rightly or wrongly identified as supporters of the French school and Pope would have been tarred with the same brush.

¹⁴ *Blackwood's* 13. 76: 541 (May 1823).

¹⁵ Lockhart attempts at first to enlist Byron as an anti-type to the Cockneys by virtue of his class and education, but his close association with Hunt and his ‘school of poetry’ could not and cannot be denied.

¹⁶ Cox 1998: 51-2.

¹⁷ Hunt 1818: 32.

¹⁸ For full discussion see Stead forthcoming, 2015, chapter 4 on Leigh Hunt and 5 on John Keats.

¹⁹ The ‘county lords’ they affected to address were more likely reading the *Quarterly Review*. See Klancher 1987: 51-52, where he also notes that a single edition of *Blackwood's* would cost a worker a full day’s pay.

²⁰ Wheatley 1992: 6.

²¹ Cox 1998: 22.

²² Lessenich 2012: 335.

²³ *Blackwood's* 2. 7: 38 (October 1817).

²⁴ ‘[...] One Cornelius Webb Poetaster—who unfortunately was of our party occasionally at Hampstead’. Keats in Rollins ed. 1958. 1: 180.

²⁵ Cox 1998: 16-19.

²⁶ ‘Letter from Sappho the Younger, of Blowbladder Street’, *Blackwood's* 10. 57: 477 (Nov. 1821).

²⁷ Moses finished his *Select Greek and Roman Antiquities* in 1817.

²⁸ The lack of interest was, I would argue, in the class-notations of the genesis of the classicizing product, emphatically not the class-notations of what the product represented. Then, as now, people would to varying degrees have been attracted to classical objects—among which I include classicizing art, texts etc.—by the élan and cultural capital (to use Bourdieu’s term) their appreciation appears to bestow.

²⁹ Levinson 1988: 4. Other examples abound in the (1970s and 1980s) psychoanalytical tradition of literary study, which—although often deeply insightful—invented a Keats with all manner of neuroses, built largely upon an unspoken willingness to agree with the largely fictitious and hugely partisan contemporary criticism.

³⁰ For the reception of the so-called ‘Elgin Marbles’, see St Clair 1967 and Webb 1982: 220. For fellow Cockney, Benjamin Robert Haydon’s account of first seeing the marbles in 1808, see Haydon (1998).

³¹ Sharp 1892: 32.

³² Stead forthcoming, 2015. See also Cox 1998. The heifer lows (at time of writing) in Room 18 of the British Museum as part of the Elgin Collection (GR South Frieze XLIV, 129-131).

³³ *Blackwood’s* 2. 7: 38 (October 1817).

³⁴ Hunt publically launched Keats, Shelley and John Hamilton Reynolds in an article entitled YOUNG POETS in the *Examiner* 1 December 1816.

³⁵ Hunt was at this point a good reader of both Greek and Latin, and was capable of using a French edition of Catullus in his own interactions with that Roman poet, so he also had a working knowledge of that language. Italian he also could probably read well enough, although he did not travel there till 1822. On Hunt’s life, including

education, see Roe 2005 and in *ODNB* 2004, and for his use of classical learning in later life, see Stead forthcoming, 2015.

³⁶ The school was well respected at the time for its rigorous classical curriculum. Charles Lamb, as well as Coleridge, was an alumnus of Christ's Hospital. For his account see his essays: 'Recollections of Christ's Hospital' (1813) and 'Christ's Hospital five-and-thirty years ago' (1820). See also Coleridge 1817b, 1:145-6—where he praises Bowyer highly.

³⁷ *Blackwood's* 2. 7: 39 (October 1817).

³⁸ *Blackwood's* 5. 25: 97 (April 1819).

³⁹ Asclepius ('god of healing arts') was particularly apt for Lockhart's purpose since – as they knew full well – Keats until recently was training as an apothecary. The spelling is not a mocking mis-spelling (e.g. 'Oppolo' for Apollo in *Anti-Gallican Monitor*, 8 June 1817, reprinted in Cox 1998: 22—designed to poke fun at the Cockneys' illiteracy) but a learned variant employed consistently throughout *Blackwood's* of that period.

⁴⁰ *Blackwood's* 3. 16: 453 (July 1818).

⁴¹ *Quarterly Review* 18, 1818: 324.

⁴² Byron & Marchand ed. 1977: 81.

⁴³ *Blackwood's* 3. 17: 519 (August 1818).

⁴⁴ The word—first coined in this usage in English by Gifford in his *Baviad*, line 310—ultimately derives from μέτρον ('a poetic foot' and by synecdoche 'poetry') and μᾶνία ('maddness', 'obsession'), hence 'a madness for poetry'.

⁴⁵ He was poor by his choice to live without working on a small living allowance, which gave him ample time for reading and writing. See Roe 2012: 3-195.

⁴⁶ *Blackwood's* 3. 17: 521 (August 1818).

⁴⁷ *Blackwood's* 3. 17: 522 (August 1818).

⁴⁸ For discussion of critical techniques employed by *Blackwood's* reviewers see De Montluzin 1998, Wheatley 1992 and 2013, and Cox 1998: 16-37.

⁴⁹ *Blackwood's* 3. 17: 522 (August 1818).

⁵⁰ Smith 1984: x.

⁵¹ *Blackwood's* 6. 31: 73 (October 1819).

⁵² On tea and tea-drinking see Ellis 2010.

⁵³ *Blackwood's* 6. 31: 72 (October 1819).

⁵⁴ Hunt 1818: 18-9.

⁵⁵ Translation Guy Lee 1994, with minor disruption in squared brackets for clarity.

⁵⁶ 'It is pleasing to walk through the air itself and live strolling in the immense sky'.

How we translate *spatiens* considerably alters the import and tone of the lines. As well as 'strolling' (i.e. taking a walk) it can more obliquely refer to the action of 'spreading out'.

⁵⁷ *Blackwood's* 6. 31: 72 (October 1819).

⁵⁸ *Blackwood's* 6. 31: 70 (October 1819). 'Confusion worse confounded' is from Milton's *Paradise Lost* ii. 996.

⁵⁹ Hunt 1818: 31.

⁶⁰ Lochhead 1954: 11.

⁶¹ *Blackwood's* 6. 31: 74 (October 1819).

⁶² For concept of originality and Romanticism see Saunders in Saunders et al. 2012: 65-86.

⁶³ [Croker] *Quarterly Review* 19, 1818: 204-8 - qt. Lessenich 2012: 341.

⁶⁴ Hunt 1818: 23.

⁶⁵ *Edinburgh Review* August 1820, reproduced in Schwartz 1973: 177.

⁶⁶ Hunt 1818: 18.

⁶⁷ *Literary Journal* 1819. 192 (20 March) reproduced in Schwartz 1973: 152-55.

⁶⁸ Hunt 1818: 34. For a full account of Hunt's interaction with Catullus, see Stead forthcoming, 2015.

⁶⁹ Hunt 1818: 33.

⁷⁰ Hunt 1818: 11.