

The Interest in Greece and Greek Literature in England from 1801-1836

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England has ever been known as a land which supported and nourished the study of the Greek and Latin literatures. Much of her political philosophy has been derived from these sources and a great part of the basis of her culture can be found in them. During the opening years of the nineteenth century this tradition not only was continued and rooted even more firmly but also was spread among the middle and lower classes to a degree which amounted to a popularization of those literatures, especially that of ancient Greece. Three causes, at least, contributed to this emphasis upon Greek rather than Latin: The first was the rise of cheap translations and inexpensive books of information concerning Greece and Grecian antiquities; the second was the continued classical education in the public schools and Universities, with a fresh scholarly interest in Greek from the interpretive point of view; the third element was the political revolution in Greece against the enslaving and barbarous rule of Turkey, which aroused much interest in England and finally was successful only because of her assistance. In this article I propose to discuss the first of these three causes; the other two I shall consider at another time.

Undoubtedly the most potent factor in arousing an interest in Greek literature was the publication of cheap translations. Practically every Greek author of any value whatever was either translated anew or sent abroad again by means of a reprint of some former translation which was still regarded as standard. Homer, Euripides, Sophocles, Aeschylus, Aristophanes, Anacreon, Aristotle, Xenophon, Thucydides, and many

of minor note were issued in English from the presses of the enterprising publishers. This desire for translations on the part of the public caused the publication of at least one hundred and eighty-three editions in the thirty-six years. The great majority of these were new translations and under ten shillings in price.

In this respect the most significant production of the period was "The Family Classical Library." This "Library" was a collection of fifty-two volumes of translations from the Greek and Roman classics. They were published by Valpy between 1830 and 1834 at the exceedingly moderate price of 4 shillings and 6 pence a volume. The proportion of Greek translations to Latin ones is significant as showing the trend of the times; for sixteen of the authors were Greek and but eleven were Latin. For a general view of Greek literature the "Library" admirably served its purpose. In history there were Thucydides, Herodotus, Xenophon, and Plutarch's *Lives*; in drama, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides; in epic poetry, Homer and Hesiod; in lyric poetry, Anacreon, Pindar, and Lycophron; in pastoral poetry, Bion, and Moschus; in oratory, Demosthenes; and in character-writing, Theophrastus. Aside from the omission of Plato, Aristotle, and Theocritus the "Library" is unique in containing a fairly broad survey of Greek literature. The time of its publication was most opportune, for it was produced just at the close of the Greek revolution, during which Greece had been much in the public eye of England. Although this collection of books is the only one of its kind during the period, the importance of its cheapness and its emphasis on Greek literature must not be overlooked.

There were, however, several collections of selected translations, published in one to three volumes, from various classical authors, which served the purpose of introducing the reader

to this literature as a whole. Typical of these is "Specimens of the Classic Poets, in a Chronological Series, from Homer to Tryphiodorus, translated into English verse, and illustrated by Biographical and Critical Notices." By Charles Abraham Elton, Author of a translation of Hesiod. 3 vols. £1 16s. Here was offered to the untutored reader at the price of Scott's "Ivanhoe," a complete view of Greek and Roman literature. Longman's "Classical Selections in Verse" at 4s. a copy ran into its second edition shortly after its original printing in 1808. During this time Cadell published David Lyndsay's collection and translation of the "Dramas of the Ancient World," priced at 10s. 6d. a copy. The book catalogues of this period record ten or twelve such popular translations which aimed at giving a compendious summary of classical literature.

The great bulk of the translations, however, was not in the form of collections but of individual versions of Greek authors. Of these Homer far exceeds the rest in the number of editions in English. A number of publishers evidently thought it incumbent upon them to publish his poems either completely or in part. The reprinting of Pope's translation is of great interest here, for it was the only Greek translation carried over from that school. His complete works were republished twice, his *Iliad* three times, and his *Odyssey* twice. Inasmuch as book publishing is a business and not a hobby we must judge from these figures that there was a steady demand for Pope's translation. But the trend of the times for a more literal and exact translation is to be noted in the remaining twenty English versions which were brought out during the period. A second edition of Cowper's translation of Homer (1791) is noted in 1802, another in 1809, which was reprinted in 1810 with additional illustrations, and a fourth edition in 1836. This fourth edition was published in two vol-

umes at the cheap price of 11s. The Hymns and the *Batrachomyomachia*, which were then believed to have been written by Homer, as translated by George Chapman, were reprinted in 1818. The other translations have no distinctive marks; some were in prose and some were in verse; but the fact that there were twenty-seven of them shows that the greatest of all epic poets was thoroughly enjoyed in England at the opening of the Victorian period.

The enjoyment of Homer is paralleled only by the appreciation of the ancient drama of the Greeks. Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes were translated abundantly during this time. Five translations of Aeschylus are to be found at prices ranging from 10s. 6d. to 8s., values which placed them within the reach of everybody. In addition to these there were four translations of the "*Agamemnon*" and five of the "*Prometheus Bound*," at prices equally attractive. On the other hand, there were seven complete translations of Sophocles' tragedies and only six editions of the separate plays. The prices of these vary from 4s. to 25s., for some were issued in two volumes. Of the individual plays no particular one seems to have been in demand. Euripides, however, was published more largely in editions of separate plays than in complete versions. His collected works were published three times and only once was the price reasonable enough to fit the general reader's purse. The "*Bacchae*," the "*Heraclides*," the "*Hecuba*," the "*Orestes*," and others were printed usually in groups of two or three and sold at 8s. a copy. The eight different editions of this sort contain all the plays of Euripides. On the contrary, the collected editions of Aristophanes seem to have been intended for the average reader more than those of Euripides, because of the four complete translations two of them were published at 8s. and 12s. respectively. Among

the editions which contained only two or three plays, the "Plutus" was in greatest demand; for of six possible printings it was in three of them. As with Euripides so with Aristophanes these scattered versions of separate plays would, when collected together, form a complete or almost complete translation of his extant works. The prevailing interest in the Old Attic Drama is evident, first, from the great number of times it was translated (for these four dramatists together were printed forty-nine times either completely or in part); and secondly, from the reasonableness of the prices of these editions, eight shillings being the general rule.

Turning from drama to philosophy, we find that pre-Victorians were interested most in Aristotle and Plato. Diogenes was translated once and Longinus (who was at that time classified as a philosopher) twice, but no other philosophers are to be found. The general interest was centered in Aristotle's "Rhetoric" and "Ethics"; for they were each translated five times. So far as complete translations of all their works are concerned both Plato and Aristotle were published only once. The conclusions from these facts would seem to be that the interest in Greek philosophy was not very strong throughout the general public and that the publishers realizing this did not issue cheap editions of those writers.

This list of translations has revealed some curious likes and dislikes of the people of the first thirty years of the century which has just passed. Aesop's "Fables" were printed in three cheap editions, 3s. 6d., 4s., and 10s. respectively. The keen and enjoyable dialogues of Lucian received only two printings and one of these was at the prohibitive price of £5 5s. That odd little book, the "Characters" of Theophrastus, was published at £1 1s., and, as was noted above, in Valpy's "Family Classical Library". But the surprising feature is the

fact that Demosthenes was issued only once and that Lysias, Isocrates, Aeschines, and the other Attic Orators were not translated at all; and this at a time when Parliamentary debate was at the height of its glory! Hesiod, the epic poet who falls only a little short of Homer, was translated twice, but at the moderate prices of 12s. and 6s. From these facts it is evident that the works of Aesop, Lucian, Demosthenes, and Hesiod did not stimulate sufficient interest in themselves to demand frequent publication in English.

History, on the other hand, if one may judge from the number of translations, the pre-Victorians found more enjoyable. Thucydides, Herodotus, Xenophon, Polybius, and Plutarch received abundant treatment at the hands of the translators. Xenophon's writings were translated eleven times, of which translations seven were concerned with the expedition of Cyrus. In 1831 a complete edition of his works was printed by Jones for 12s. a copy. This moderate price, with one exception, is true of all editions of Xenophon; for they were all below 12s. Thucydides' "History of the Peloponnesian War" was nearly as much in demand as Xenophon's "Anabasis," there being eight translations within the thirty-six years. The translations were, however, more expensive, varying from £2 5s. to 12s. a copy. Two of these were reprints of Hobbes' translation and three of them of Smith's. Next in order of frequency of translation are the works of Herodotus, of which six were issued. In this case also the prices, with two exceptions, were a little higher than those of the popular novels of the day. However, a translation by Isaac Taylor and another by Isaac Littlebury were obtainable at 16s. and 14s respectively. To be grouped with these historians are three translations of Polybius, two of which were of the complete works and the third of a newly-discovered fragment at Mt. Athos. The

cost of the history was relatively moderate at 16s. In this connection it may be well to consider the biographies of Plutarch. One of these, an abridged edition by Mavor, may be considered a popular translation; for it sold at 5s. 6d. a copy: the other two, published in six and eight volumes respectively, were still only for the man of means; for their prices were £2 14s. and £1 16s. Thus it is apparent that from the publishers' and general reader's point of the view, the major interest, so far as history was concerned, lay in Xenophon, Thucydides, and Herodotus.

Of minor concern are the two translations of Greek travelers. Pausanias' "Description of Greece" and "The Voyage of Nearchus and the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea" were issued once each at prices prohibitive for the general reader. The absence of any translation of Strabo is as remarkable as the presence of Nearchus. But as will be shown later, the readers of the period were interested in ancient geography from the point of view of modern research and not from that of the ancients themselves.

The remaining translations of these thirty-six years can be collected under the head of lyric poetry. The Odes of Anacreon evidently were much sought after; for the book lists note thirteen separate editions. As early as 1803 Robinson, a printer of Yarmouth, published the Odes at 8s. 6d. Thomas Moore's translation went into its second edition in England in 1802; it was printed in Dublin, Ireland, in 1803; and a third edition appeared in England about 1820. The prices of all of these were very cheap, the majority being 6s. or less. The interest in pastoral poetry was not so great, for Theocritus was translated only three times and Bion and Moschus six. These were popular editions, costing at the most 12s. The Greek Anthology, too, received no marked

attention, for there were only three translations of minor importance. Pindar is meagrely represented by one high-priced translation. The omission of elegiac and iambic poetry, together with the lyrics of Sappho, is very noticeable. The interest in lyric poetry, possibly because of Moore's splendid poetical translation at the beginning of the century, seems to have been centered about Anacreon if one may judge from the comparative number of translations of the poets.

This short summary of the translations published between 1801 and 1836 has at least suggested two things: First, that the pre-Victorian reader had certain likes and dislikes about what he wanted to read in Greek literature; and secondly, that any man of moderate income could purchase in translation all the decisive works of this ancient literature. Homer, drama, and history were the chief subjects in demand; on the other hand, oratory, and lyric poetry, aside from Anacreon, were not very much desired. The outstanding fact, however, is the cheapness of the great majority of these works, which made them accessible to all who were able to afford the luxury of a university education with its attendant instruction in the Greek language. This diffusion of cheap translations probably did more for the creation of a reading public with an understanding of Greek literary ideals and achievements than all the learned lectures delivered upon those subjects at the universities or any other single factor.

The second element which had much to do with the spread of popular knowledge of the contents of Greek literature, was the dissemination of an increasing number of classical dictionaries, mythologies, and books of a similar nature. Of these classical dictionaries Lempriere's was by far the most popular, for it went through five separate printings at the

hands of as many publishers. Four of these cost less than 12s. a copy. Brown's "Classical Dictionary" at 8s. was the cheapest one published at this time. The interest in classical mythology is evidenced by the publication of nine compendiums of that subject, some of which were as cheap as 3s. 6d. and 4s. There were also various introductions to the classics, a dictionary of classical quotations, a classical student's manual, and a curious "Greek-English Derivative Dictionary." This last book was intended to show all the words in English which had been borrowed from the Greek; its distinctive feature was that the Greek words were printed in English characters in order to make the book useful to the man who did not understand that language. By means of these manuals the person who had had no classical education was enabled to understand the allusions to the ancient literatures and stories, or, as in the case of Keats, to gather sufficient Greek lore at second-hand to produce poetry imbued with a Grecian Spirit.

Books written by travellers who had recently visited Greece, of which no less than thirty-five were published during this period, also contributed to the popular knowledge of that country. Their subject-matter covered all of Greece and the relations between Greece and Turkey. A series of books edited by Conder and published by Duncan at 5s. 6d. a volume constituted the group known as "The Modern Traveller"; volumes 15 and 16 of this collection were on Greece. Such books as T. A. Trant's "Journey through Greece" and George Waddington's "Visit to Greece" are typical of the writings of travellers to Greece. Other books were published, though at prices which made them too costly for the general reader, containing drawings and views of Greece as it was at the time. All of these works, the majority of which were well within the reach of the purse of the average man, did much to spread the knowl-

edge of Greece and Greek life beyond the limited class of those who could afford to travel.

The fourth important element which had much to do with the popularization of Greece and Greek achievements, was the very real interest in Greek antiquities and arts. Eleven "Manuals of Grecian Antiquities" were issued during this time and at very reasonable prices. Books on the antiquities of particular localities in Greece also were written, such as, Stuart and Revett's "Antiquities of Athens" and Stanhope's "Topography of Olympia." A work entitled "An Essay on the Social Conditions of the Ancient Greeks" was published by Longman at the price of 3s. Weston's "Historic Notices of the Towns in Greece" grouped together the ancient information concerning the places of interest there. Edward Dodwell in his book "Pelagic Remains in Greece and Italy" brought before the general reader the results of his investigations of this prehistoric people. Among the fine arts, architecture, Greek vases, and sculpture received a very fair amount of treatment. The Earl of Aberdeen's "Inquiry into Grecian Architecture," priced at 7s., is representative of the six books on the subject published during these three decades and a half. The one book on vases, Sir. W. Hamilton's "Outlines from the Greek, Roman, and Etruscan Vases," is distinctive in showing to what extent the research into ancient art had progressed. Similarly, the six books published on sculpture, although they cost more than the average reader could afford, show a steady interest in the finest products of Greek culture.

Grecian art and sculpture were brought even more closely to the attention of the people of England by the importation of the Elgin Marbles. Their presence in England excited so much comment that their history is not without some importance in this study. Lord Elgin (1766-1841) was the British

ambassador to the Ottoman Porte from 1799 to 1802. While there he conceived the idea of transporting to England a number of pieces of sculpture which were to be found among the ruins of the Acropolis. Under his Turkish firman he took the principal figures from the Parthenon, fifteen from its metopes, and fifty-six slabs from its frieze; he also took one of the Caryatids from the Erechtheum, and a part of the frieze from the temple of Athena Nike. He began his work in 1803 but, because of the war in Europe and the wreck of one of his vessels on the shore of the Mediterranean, the last of the marbles did not reach England until 1812. The taking of these monuments of antiquity from their ancient settings and the transference of them to England raised a very loud storm of protest. Byron in his "Curse of Minerva," written in Athens in 1811, voices this protest when he writes:

Survey this vacant, violated fane;
 Recount the relics torn that yet remain:
These Cecrops placed, **this** Pericles adorn'd,
That Adrian rear'd when drooping Science mourn'd.
 What more I owe let gratitude attest—
 Know, Alaric and Elgin did the rest.
 That all may learn from whence the plunderer came,
 The insulted wall sustains his hated name:
 For Elgin's fame thus grateful Pallas pleads,
 Below, his name—above, behold his deeds!
 Be ever hail'd with equal honour here
 The Gothic monarch and the Pictish peer:
 Arms gave the first his right, the last had none,
 But basely stole what less barbarians won.
 So when the lion quits his fell repast,
 Next prowls the wolf, the filthy jackal last:
 Flesh, limbs, and blood the former make their own
 The last poor brute securely gnaws the bone.
 Yet still the gods are just, and crimes are cross'd:
 See here what Elgin won, and what he lost!¹

In an effort to reconcile the British public and to teach them the greatness and value of the treasures, Lord Elgin arranged the marbles in his own home near London and in-

¹The Works of Lord Byron, Ed. by Thomas Moore, London: 1832 Vol. IX, pp. 113-114.

vited the public to view them. The tone of the adverse criticism began to change after they had been studied for a little while. Visconti pointed out their artistic and historical worth; and Lord Elgin published a defence of his actions which was more or less favorably received. With the turn in public opinion there arose an interest in them on the part of Parliament; and finally, that body appointed a committee to look into the desirability of their purchase by the government. On June 7, 1816, this committee reported to Parliament that it was advisable to purchase them for the sum of £35,000. Accordingly, they were bought and placed in the British Museum. Lord Elgin, however, lost a large amount of money in the transaction; for it cost him almost £74,000 to collect and bring them to England.

After the conclusion of the Greek revolution the English never regretted the removal of the marbles; for they considered that Lord Elgin had saved them from almost certain destruction. In an edition of Byron's works, published in 1832, Thomas Moore summed up the attitude of the Englishman of that time toward the marbles. "Few can wonder that Lord Byron's feelings should have been powerfully excited by the spectacle of the despoiled Parthenon; but it is only due to Lord Elgin to keep in mind, that, had those precious marbles remained, they must, in all likelihood, have perished for ever amidst the miserable scenes of violence which Athens has since witnessed; and that their presence in England has already, by universal admission, been of the most essential advantage to the fine arts of our own country."¹

The last factor in the education of the reading public of the early part of the nineteenth century for a sympathetic

¹The work of Lord Byron. Ed. by Thomas Moore. London: 1832. Vol. IX, P. 108.

understanding of Greek literature and culture is to be found in the periodical literature. The "Edinburgh Review," "Blackwood's Edinburgh Review," "The Quarterly Review," "The Monthly Review," and "The Gentleman's Magazine" gave much space to the reviewing of classical books both in the original languages and in translation. The "Edinburgh Review" may be taken as typical of the attitude of all of them; for their individual differences lay rather in their opinion of the books themselves than in the necessity of the reviewing of classical books. The analysis of the contents of "The Edinburgh Review," so far as classical reviews are concerned, is as follows:

Classical Articles (1802-1836)

	Translations	Originals	Criticisms	
Greek	11	13	5	= 29
Latin	5	3	2	= 10
	<hr/> 16	<hr/> 16	<hr/> 7	<hr/> = 39

This table shows very plainly that the emphasis was on Greek rather on Latin. So far as the choice of books lay between editions of the original and translations, no preference seems to have been shown. Indeed, so carefully were the reviews of the editions of the original made that when Professor Butler objected to certain remarks in the review of his edition of Aeschylus' "Tragedies," the reviewer replied with an article which minutely discussed the fine points involved in the readings of the different manuscripts. Surely the "Edinburgh Review" must have had among its readers people who knew Greek and Greek literature very well. This carefulness is true, too, of the reviews of translations; for very frequently they were compared with the original text and their accuracy noted. "The Gentleman's Magazine" thought enough of its readers understood Greek to make it desirable to print an elegy in Greek which had been written by a young man on

the death of his father. Perhaps the following quotation, taken from a review of Strabo's "Geography" in the "Edinburgh Review," will show the general attitude taken by that magazine, and typical of many others of its kind, toward Greek and the study of the Greek language and literature in the universities.

Nothing in Europe is at all comparable, in point of extent and magnificence, to the endowment of the University of Oxford,—or to the veneration which is there paid to the Greek and Latin languages. A competent knowledge of these tongues, is the principal if not the sole intellectual accomplishment required in individuals to qualify them for enjoying the benefits of the very valuable and extensive ecclesiastical patronage possessed by the different Colleges; and a critically accurate knowledge of them is justly esteemed the most safe and effectual means of forming the taste, moulding the judgment, and directing the imagination of those, whose stations or talents befit them for more active scenes of life, and open to their dawning ambition the more brilliant prospects of political advancement.

In every free state, eloquence is the principal medium of government, and the most direct and honourable road to rank, power, and reputation; and even to those, who do not wish to take an active part in the politics or jurisprudence of the times, a prompt, fluent, correct, unembarrassed, and unaffected use of speech, is the most pleasing and ornamental of all accomplishments; and has even been esteemed, from the days of Homer to the present, the most infallible criterion that can distinguish a gentleman. In languages so irregularly constructed as our own, this can only be acquired, perhaps, by accustoming our thoughts to flow through purer channels; in which every distinct operation of the mind, or mode of thinking, has its distinct vehicle of expression; and every deviation from just order in our thoughts, an immediate and obvious corrective in a correspondent deviation from the established mode of speech.

It is not, therefore, without reason, that this learned University makes the study of the Greek and Latin languages, especially of the former, its first object in the education of those committed to its care; and we have often contemplated, with sentiments of patriotic pride and exultation, the spacious and comfortable abodes and ample revenues provided for the instructors; which exempt them from all worldly cares, but those of learning and teaching; and at the same time, protect them from those dangerous lures of pleasure and dissipation, which so often distract and unnerve the mind of the scholar amidst the busy bustling throng of a great and luxurious metropolis.¹

In this brief way an attempt has been made to portray, not in any sense completely but by the presentation of a few

¹The Edinburgh Review. 1809. Vol. 14, pp. 429-430.

significant facts, the popularizing influences of Greek in the early part of the nineteenth century. The literature of Greece was translated afresh and scattered broadcast throughout the country in the form of cheap editions. The general reader had at hand a variety of classical manuals that the Greek allusion in his book might not be lost to him. His knowledge of Greece itself was strengthened and his curiosity sharpened by the reports of travellers to that historic land. He knew the habits, customs, and arts of the Greeks from the handbooks published for his special benefit; and he knew the sculpture of Greece from his own observation of the Elgin marbles in the British Museum. Finally, the magazines of the day, from the two-penny "Mirror" to the imperious "Edinburgh" or "Quarterly," kept his mind constantly alert by their disquisitions on the Greek translations and studies which were being published. All these factors together may be said to have created a great impetus toward the popularizing of the knowledge of Greek literature and Greece itself throughout the reading public of the first thirty-six years of the nineteenth century.

TABLE OF PUBLICATIONS

(1801-1836)

Translations

Aeschylus: Works or Plays	15	
Aesop	3	
Anacreon	13	
Anthology	3	
Aristophanes: Works or Plays	10	
Aristotle: Complete Works	1	
Metaphysics	1	
Poetics	1	
Politics	1	
Rhetoric	5	
Ethics	5	
	—	14

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Bion and Moschus	4	
Demosthenes	1	
Diogenes	1	
Euripides: Works or Plays	11	
Herodotus	6	
Hesiod	2	
Homer: Iliad and Odyssey	7	
Iliad	13	
Odyssey	7	
Hymns	1	
	—	28
Longinus	2	
Lucian	2	
Nearchus	1	
Pausanias	1	
Pindar	1	
Plato: Complete and in part	4	
Plutarch	3	
Polybius	3	
Sophocles: Works or Plays	13	
Theocritus	3	
Theophrastus	1	
Thucydides	8	
Xenophon	11	
General Translations	12	
Valpy's "Family Library"	16	
	—	183

Editions of the Greek Texts

Aeschylus	20
Aesop	2
Anacreon	3
Aristophanes	21
Aristotle	9
Bion	1
Callimachus	1
Comic Poets	1
Demosthenes	12
Euripides	45
Herodotus	8
Homer	16
Isocrates	1
Longinus	1
Lucian	2
Minor Poets	1
Moschus	1
Orators, Attic	7
Pindar	1
Plato	5
Plotinus	1
Polybius	1
Sophocles	29
Theocritus	1
Thucydides	10
Xenophon	17
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MANUALS, ETC.	28
BIOGRAPHY	9
CRITICISM AND DISSERTATIONS	29
ANTIQUITIES	36
ART	19
MODERN TRAVELS IN GREECE	35
GEOGRAPHIES OF ANCIENT GREECE	24
HISTORY	
Ancient Greece	46
Greek Revolution	15
	61
EDUCATIONAL BOOKS (GRAMMARS, ETC.)	107
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GRAND TOTAL	741

[Note: This list of books was compiled from the book lists in *The Edinburgh Review* and from *The London Catalogue of Books*, 1814-1834, and from *The English Catalogue of Books*, 1801-1836.]