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The reception of antiquity in nineteenth-century British literature – an attempt at theoretical synthesis

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to make an attempt of theoretical synthesis connected with the idea of reception studies. It presents major aspects which are crucial for understanding the reception studies, especially for the reception of antiquity in Victorian literature (for instance chosen critical approaches to literature, contemporary tools for conducting the research like intertextuality). The paper also presents definitions of classics, classical tradition and reception and tries to explain why Victorian times and literature are a perfect research material to examine the reception of antiquity.

Key words: Reception studies, Reader-Response Criticism, antiquity, classical tradition.

Introduction

Although the reception studies is not a new literary trend, it can be still developed, as the process of reception is still happening, it is vital, active and undergoes constant changes. To approach the study of reception, one should get familiar with its characteristics.

First of all, reception as such is a complex process. It perfectly fits into the Reader-Response Criticism theory, as it assumes that the text and the reader meet. This meeting constitutes the point of reception. The text becomes alive in the form of the reader's consciousness (Batstone, 2006, p. 17). The academic further develops the definition of the point of reception: "Reading then is the complex act of hearing the words of another, which is the complex act of making them fit within the linguistic structure and context (that is, history and genetics) of our own consciousness – it brings new contexts and analogies that are understood by virtue of old contexts and figures. It may uncover ideas that were already ours but of which we were ignorant; it may bring the familiar into unforeseen combinations. It may require the invention of new metaphors or new blindnesses just as it can stir old passions and refigure forgotten stories" (Batstone, 2006, p. 17).

The above definition confirms the possibility of conducting the research with such tools and approaches as intertextuality, Reader-Response Criticism and others. It makes us aware of the complexity and versatility of the subject analysed, as well as of the difficulty of the task.

Classical reception and tradition

Classical reception, or, the reception of the classics is a very complex and multi-dimensional question. To make an analysis of the presence of antiquity in the nineteenth-century English literature, it is crucial to arrange the theory of reception first. To start with, it is worth noticing that classical studies are themselves the form of reception, which is quite ironic, as Porter claims (2008, p. 469).

To clearly understand the idea of reception it is necessary to define the term *classics* or *classical* for the purposes of our understanding of the topic. The opinion of Silk seems to be the accurate one, as it claims that "*the classical* means the world of ancient Greece and Rome and *the classical tradition* means reflexes of, uses of, reconstitutions of, or responses to, the ancient world from the disintegration of the Western Roman Empire to our own day. [These two terms have] always had strongly positive connotations" (2014, p. 4).

There is a difference between perceiving the reception of the classics in the past and nowadays. Porter (2008, p. 470) defines the process of developing the study of classical reception in a following way: "It was once a staple of Classics that it should discuss itself – its history, achievements, failings, directions and so on – in addition to going about its business. That is, the history of classical scholarship (with a strong bias towards philology in the narrow sense) was once a formal element of classical studies and recognized as such. Today this has for the most part changed. Of course, the history of Classics continues, as ever, to be an implicit and ineliminable part of the disciplines that variously make it up: just to analyze the text (for example) is to conjure up the history of that text; a line of commentary can hardly be read without reading up on or about earlier commentaries; footnotes throw slivers of light upon predecessor generations; and in general arguments for novelty stand on the toes of giants, as well as on their shoulders".

So, a scientist should be aware of the constant changes that the reception of antiquity undergoes and pay attention to the whole continuous process of self-evaluation the classics is subjected to. That is why, as the academic further notices, it is impossible to reach the final level of the studies, which are constantly on the move; nevertheless, a scientist should be aware of the fact that he or she is able to conduct the research and get the knowledge which is institutionally, socially and culturally possible – this is the very essence of the history of disciplines (Porter, 2008, p. 471). What is more, a scientist while

conducting a research simultaneously deals with continuous development – but this cannot make the past, being a foundation of European tradition, become doomed (Kucz, 2014, p. 7). It is also crucial to become aware of a significant feature of reception in general: it is the ability of showing the factors that can contribute to the new responses to a given text from the past, because “antiquity and modernity, present and past, are always implicated in each other, always in dialogue – to understand either one, you need to think in terms of the other” (Martindale, 2006, p. 5- 6). That is why, as the academic further adds, the word *reception* is much broader than it seems to be; it replaced the terms: *tradition* and *heritage*, which did not cover the active role of the receivers of the analysed text (2006, p. 11). This active role, which can be defined by dynamism in perceiving the analysed text, constitutes a characteristic element of the reception which is based on either enriching the meaning or liberating it for the particular reader¹; nevertheless, this point of understanding the text evokes further discussion which constitutes the point of reception (Batstone, 2006, p. 14).

Porter pays attention to the important fact of the analogy in developing the reception studies and Graeco-Roman studies (2008, p. 471):



The graph presents the parallel processes of developing in general reception studies as such, and the studies of ancient Greece and Rome; it altogether leads us to the phenomenon that is reception of antiquity within itself. So, as the academic claims, “our sense of the past is shaped by its sense of its own past”. The process of reception of antiquity is characterized by a constant reception which creates a study consisting of numerous layers, similar to the structure of a palimpsest; the texts are transmitted to us by, among others, anthologists, and at the same time the texts are subjected to the process of both transmission and reception, which constitutes a whole (Porter, 2008, p. 471- 473). This is caused, among others, by the fact that people are not the direct inheritors of the classical tradition, they are the witnesses of the process which is based on the connections of different receptions throughout history. Moreover, no one can be sure while analysing the ancient object, whether he or she got rid of all the layers of later influences, and even if one did so, it is not certain that he or she will see a great clear example of antiquity; it would be rather a poor basic representation of what it became later on (Martindale, 2006, p. 4 and 12). Silk (2014) complements the

¹ These ideas of Martindale are supported by Batstone (2006, p. 14).

above idea of reception by claiming that the classical tradition overlaps with the reception of antiquity, but they do not mean the same, classical tradition is a broader term than the reception of antiquity.

The academic further states that we can distinguish different levels of reception; on the basis of Virgil's *Aeneid*, the academic makes an attempt to present them (Silk et al., 2014, p. 4):

1. Virgil's *Aeneid* as the source material to the criticism of his own times.
2. Virgil's *Aeneid* and the response to it, presented in later antiquity.
3. Virgil's *Aeneid* as the subject of criticism of later analysts (e.g. of T. S. Eliot)².

In general, only the third level of reception presented above can be significantly included to the classical tradition as such, which is definitely broader than the idea of the reception of antiquity. This Silk's statement complements the view of Porter with the information that the classical tradition not always means reception: if one considers the Romance and Modern Greek languages, he or she will observe that they are not the reception but they definitely constitute the part of the classical tradition. Furthermore, the academic points to another crucial difference between the classical tradition and the reception studies; while "the classical tradition refers to the consideration of value, the reception studies operate more in a relativistic spirit, generally preferring cultural-historical engagement (...) to critical engagement" (Porter, 2008, p. 4-5).

It is worth emphasizing at this point, what actually the very nature of classical tradition is. Silk et al. (2014, p. 10-11) distinguishes several important features of it, referring them to the notion of tradition (see Table 1).

The comparison in Table 1 shows the outstanding character of the classical tradition and its place among the other types of tradition. It is also worth noticing that "the history of 'the' classical tradition abounds in instances where ancient texts and artefacts, ideas and ideals, have acquired new identities within other cultural traditions (...) – the upshot of which is a panorama of receptions, some of them remote from 'our' tradition altogether" (Silk et al., 2014, p. 12).

In the above-presented view, it is clear that the classical tradition should be perceived as distinct, vast, diversified and individualistic. That is why it is quite difficult to define its time lines. Nevertheless, one can distinguish several crucial moments in history that can be perceived as those which influenced creating the idea of the classical tradition. These, according to Silk et al. (2014, p. 17 - 19), are:

² At this point it is crucial to notice that every time the reception of a particular ancient motif is concerned, it differs from the previous one; as Kucz comments, providing the reader with the observations of Whitehead, you can make a copy of an ancient sculpture, but you cannot make a copy of an ancient state of mind, because there is a difference between modern and ancient reactions to the same stimuli (2014, p. 8).

Tab. 1: Comparison of tradition in general and classical tradition (Silk et al. (2014, p. 10-11))

Tradition in general	Classical tradition
1. Is understood through chronological and geographical terms (e.g. Victorian Britain, German classicism)	1. Covers different nations and ages
2. Concerns particular (e.g. national) groups and their past	2. Does not possess any particular owner due to the fact that there are numerous responses to it, as well as it appears in various versions
3. Is associated with a particular nation and period in history	3. Is diffuse and diversified
4. All the traditions are characterized by: continuity and change, stability and flux, repetition and innovation	

1. An attempt to create a corpus of texts made in the third century BC in Alexandria. Callimachus (among others) tried to approve of some examples of Greek literature and make them model roles for the literature of a new-formed empire of Alexander.
2. The first translation of a Greek text into Latin by Livius Andronicus (the third century BC), which initiated the process of creating the literature of a particular nation on the basis of another literature. This event seems to become a role model to imitate by later writers, as far as their attitude towards the classical canon is concerned.
3. The fall of the Roman Empire on 4 September 476 which can be seen as the moment of the beginning of the classical tradition marked by the end of ancient times.
4. The development of Latin to its classical form as a point of reference (between the lives of Cicero and Ovid) and the establishment of the Attic Greek as 'classical' Greek (of Aristophanes, Plato and Demosthenes), as well as the appearance of the Hellenistic **κοινή** (a common dialect).
5. The mixture of pagan (ancient Latin and Greek) elements with Christian history and culture.

Nevertheless, in the light of the above statements, it should be pointed out that the process of shaping the classical tradition was long and complex, and it is difficult to conclude with certainty which moment or moments in history were determinative. That is why one should be aware of the continuity and dependence of particular events and processes on creating of what we know nowadays as the classical tradition.

All things considered, while discussing the idea of reception studies, one should remember that the final, pure, not contaminated image of it does not exist,

because the process of reception is still active and dynamic. We actively produce the past and receive it in a passive way. The reception studies exploit numerous combinations of intertexts, due to the fact that they deal mainly with the earlier received texts, and the whole process of reception is subjected to constant dynamism (Porter, 2008, p. 474-475). It is the proof that the Western culture is definitely centred on the classical tradition (Silk et al., 2014, p. 51) which, being on the move, creates questions, reflects on itself, and in this way produces other images which constitute the part of reception studies. As Silk et al. (2014, p. 220) summarize, "(...) the boundaries between ancient past, classical tradition, and our own moment in time are now seen to be fluid, not fixed. We now think we understand that our access to Greco-Roman antiquity is necessarily mediated in some degree through the innumerable responses that make up the tradition, which is therefore part of our antiquity, and part of us".

Methodology and research tools

To approach the study of reception it is a good idea to use the complexity of several critical approaches to literature. First of all, the historical and biographical approaches seem to be the ideal sources for presenting the context of ancient times which is used in the works by nineteenth-century writers. Moreover, as antiquity is characterised by seriousness and didacticism, it is essential to exploit both moral and philosophical approaches. The subject itself (antiquity) requires to use mythological and archetypal methodology in the research, as myths are communal and they let the nations find their common features and their identity. Nevertheless, Reader-Response Criticism seems to be the most crucial method to be used in analysing ancient elements in Victorian literature, due to the fact that the reception studies are reader-oriented per se. Finally, Bakhtin's dialogics constitutes an essential tool in the research, as it shows the reception studies in the light of intertextuality; when the traces of a given ancient writer in a nineteenth-century work are analysed, they can be perceived through the multitude of perspectives, so intertextual, as well as intermedial tools may be useful here. It is not surprising, as Witosz claims, that every text is of intertextual character, because it is very difficult, if not impossible, to get rid of influences from other works, cultures and ideologies (1997, p. 53).

Intertextuality can be also associated with the ways antiquity is exploited in Victorian works through the typology of reception by Stabryła (1996). Although he was not the first academic to define the place of antiquity in literature, his idea seems to me the most complex and accurate. Earlier, in the nineteenth century, pursuing antiquity called the study of influence was a popular trend. Stabryła resigned from this and approached to the reception with functionality (1996, p. 5). His idea of processing ancient motives is based on four ways:

1. Revocation – repetitions, imitations and processing of subjects and motives with no essential change of meaning.
2. Reinterpretation – the change of the sense of an ancient motif.
3. Prefiguration – it is a system of analogies between the given work and the ancient motif, which is noticeable while comparing the fates of the protagonists or the structure of the presented world.
4. Incrustation – these are various ornaments (metaphors, allusions, comparisons etc.) characteristic for poetry (Stabryła, 1996, p. 8-9).

The above concept by Stabryła perfectly fits into the general ideas of intertextuality by Genette, which can also constitute the tools for further research. Genette (2014, p. 7 – 11) distinguishes five types of intertextuality, or, transtextuality:

1. Intertextuality (originally created by Kristeva), which means coexistence of two or more texts, the presence of one text in another).
2. Paratext – some additional elements in the surroundings of the major text, for instance: title, introduction, illustrations, etc.
3. Metatext – a kind of critical commentary that links one text to another, not necessarily through quoting it.
4. Hypertextuality – the relation connecting text B (hypertext) with text A (hipotext). Text B is created on the basis of text A with no comment on text A, however, text B cannot exist without text A.
5. Architextuality – it is a wordless relation based on a paratextual reference of a taxonomic character, for instance: *Poems, Essays*, etc.

By applying the above described approaches and tools, the analysis of the presence of antiquity in the nineteenth-century British literature should acquire the complex and versatile character.

Why Victorianism?

It is crucial to state why Victorianism itself is a particular period chosen for the analysis of the ancient reception in British literature. In the nineteenth century classics played an important role in numerous discussions over the condition of the country (Silk et al., 2014, p. 29). What is more, the status of the classics changed significantly, as far as the academic point of view is concerned. The crucial thing here is that the classics has undergone numerous changes, transformations and analyses for ages and it is still subjected to them. As Schaps rightly notices, “with the advent of Christianity, the classics faced attack as something decadent and pagan; now they face competition from cultures that began as their own imitators” (2011, p. 11). That is why the study of antiquity is not the easy one; we should be aware of the fact that it is elusive, prone to changes and analysed from the numerous perspectives. It is true, that in the

nineteenth century science radically broke up with ancient tradition – but not because it was fed up with the classics as such; on the contrary – the academics and artists criticised the way antiquity was used so far: it was filling the literary works with mythological names and terms. They wanted to break up with these schemes and started to look for new sources of inspiration. Both political changes and technological development inspired a new modern style of thinking, there appeared a campaign favouring a new shape of art and there started the change of the whole cultural paradigm (Piętka, 2007, p. 9-10, 12).

It was particularly the nineteenth century when antiquity met with unusual interest; the study of classical world was broadened – it was no longer the study of the languages (Latin and Greek) and the texts created in them, but it attempted at analysing the complete picture of the society (language, culture, history, etc.) (Schaps, 2011, p. 11-12). As the academic further states, that was an essential change of the attitude towards antiquity; another one appeared in the twentieth century and was based no more on producing new approaches to the classics, but rather on employing the approaches created elsewhere to perceive the classics in the new light, for instance: through feminism, structuralism, etc. All in all, the broadening of the study of the classics in the nineteenth century contributed in future to perceiving it as an interdisciplinary field (Schaps, 2011, p. 12).

Another crucial reason for taking up the subject of the reception of antiquity in Victorian Britain is the fact that the classics was then significantly shaped on different levels, for instance the term *classical* itself was established at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Of course, it functioned earlier, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, however, its meaning was not firmly defined then as synonymous to Graeco – Roman antiquity (Schaps, 2011, p. 56).

Antiquity in Victorianism – Reasons for Interest

Antiquity is without doubt the most frequently revived source of culture. Its spatiotemporal range is so wide that all the connections with antiquity may be difficult to be defined (Jatczak, 2010, p. 153). Antiquity and its various motives have become the inexhaustible source of inspiration in the majority of cultures and Great Britain is of no exception. The status of antiquity in Victorianism is worth analysing, as the interest of nineteenth-century people in ancient times grew over particular social, political and cultural conditions.

As Vance claims, Latin and Greek were taught at schools, but with the emphasis on Latin, which had always been more popular than Greek. It was even one of the requirements if one would like to enter the university. Nevertheless, for the students under 13, both classical languages were not known, and the classics itself was usually available (especially for girls) through translation (Vance, 2007, p. 96). According to Ogilvie, teaching classics was one of the major tasks in the Grammar Schools and it was the part of the foundation statutes of

educational institutions (1964, p. 97). With reference to Oxbridge, Latin and Greek were definitely a masculine task; there was a popular postulate, according to which "Latin should be available for all, girls and boys, whereas Greek should be available for all gentlemen" (Stray in Orrels, 2011, p. 141). Apart from the age, it was the social class as well as gender that influenced a person's education in the field of classics: it was definitely the field of study for men of middle and upper classes of society (Silk et al., 2014, p. 35). Haynes's opinion makes this statement complete; the academic claims that the classics played an instrumental role in the process of the elite education between sixteenth and twentieth centuries. Furthermore, the knowledge of Latin and Greek by the nineteenth century became the factor identifying the person as belonging to the middle, professional class and the elite, and in Victorian times it marked the border between the elite and the rest – especially the knowledge of Latin which was known by gentlemen in contrast to English language known by the rest (2006, p. 44). Knowledge of the antiquity was essential in creating national identity as well as it enabled people to gain respect and recognition in the society (Richardson, 2013, p. 14-15). Moreover, classical education helped to maintain cultural authority and became a status marker, for instance, in the case of quoting and alluding to antiquity during the speeches in the Houses of Parliament (Monros-Gaspar, 2015, p. 11). As the century progressed, Greek language and culture started to become more and more popular. Roman culture was still studied, as the effect of the Renaissance programme of humanist education, nevertheless, the rising popularity of the study of Greece and its language could have been the effect of its original character (Turner, 1999, p. 61). The classics became reorientated towards Greek (especially towards the works of Plato and Thucydides) at schools and it met with great approval (Ogilvie, 1964, p. 98). What is more, "To appeal to Rome was to draw upon a line of continuous cultural influence within Europe; to appeal to Greece was to appropriate and domesticate a culture of the past with which there had been, particularly in Britain, a discontinuous relationship. And that very discontinuity may have been part of the attraction for nineteenth-century writers who regarded much of their own experience as discontinuous with the recent past" (Turner, 1999, p. 61).

The reason why British schools tried to put more emphasis on teaching Greek rather than Latin in the second half of the nineteenth century could be the fact that Hellenism could play the new and powerful role in building and sustaining the ideology of the ruling class (Bowen, 1989, p. 162). It is clear that in the nineteenth century the career of teaching classics underwent a significant change and evolved towards more interdisciplinary science; starting from learning ancient languages it acquired the status of the basis for general education combining culture, literature and languages (Silk et al., 2014, p. 36).

According to Vance, the excavations and archaeological research became more and more popular; one of the reasons of conducting them was the construction of the Victorian railroad which enabled to notice the clear evidence of Roman settlement; in Manchester, for instance, while building a railroad viaduct, some parts of the old Roman fort were found. As the construction progressed, there appeared in Britain a sense of connection between antiquity and modernity. The British perceived the Romans as “great civil engineers and improvers, building connecting roads if not railroads throughout the country, attaining new standards of personal comfort with running water, elaborate public baths, and underfloor heating, and developing a well-attested material culture” (Vance, 2007, p. 90-91). As the academic further states, the connection of ancient world with the British one was also strengthened by establishing in 1865 the British Archaeological Society of Rome, as well as British schools in Rome and Athens (Vance, 2007, p. 90). The archaeological studies, as well as Romano-British history, quickly turned from the amateur level into a scientific activity (Vance, 1997, p. 238). Ancient remains in Victorian Britain also concerned religion; in 1852, for instance, the scientists found a chapel of Mithras at Housesteads which was a proof of the *other* (not yet Christian) world present in Britain. Nevertheless, the British found the analogy between the spread of Christianity in Roman Empire and Victorian missionary actions in Africa and India (Vance, 2007, p. 91, 94). Furthermore, Victorians perceived the same Christian faith (for the British and the Romans) as one of the most essential connections between the two nations. The British in the nineteenth century saw the rise of Christian faith in the Roman Empire as a compensation for the fact that the empire started to disappear. In this view, the religious controversies connected with the appearance of Christianity in Rome were seen as parallel to those that occurred in nineteenth-century England (Turner, 1989, p. 173). According to Vance, Greco-Roman world could become for Victorians an alternative for their country’s moral code and orthodox religious views (Vance, 2007, p. 93).

The Romans were seen by the British as very practical; they were perceived as great soldiers, engineers and administrators. Britain could still show the ancient remains of buildings, roads and walls, which were the example of great Roman technological development, as Vance states (Vance, 1997, p. 4). It was one of the reasons of Victorian inspiration with ancient Rome and Greece. Nineteenth-century architecture and art frequently used classical designs, as the academic further claims (Vance, 1997, p. 89). For instance, the Great Exhibition which took part in 1851, shows the inspiration with antiquity; there appeared, among others, souvenir guides with the reproductions of ancient motifs, as well as folding screens with the scenes presenting the story of Cupid and Psyche. Another example of worshipping antiquity was the restoration of Covent Garden

theatre in 1858 – with the appearance of the statues of Aristophanes, Menander, Aeschylus, Bacchus, Minerva and others. It definitely “proved that it was not only the various forms of entertainment but also the very buildings which housed them that evoked a glorious and celebrated foreign but by no means alien past culture” (Monros-Gaspar, 2015, p. 3 and 6). It is worth noticing that the nineteenth century witnessed the appearance of so-called *archaeology of art*. The scientists wanted to reconstruct ancient art by bringing together the analysis of both literary works and monuments. The copies of ancient statues were made simultaneously with reading the texts by ancient writers describing the works of art. The fact that the real nature of ancient art could be found only in the original works made people prefer *genuine* Hellenism to the peripheral Hellenism of Sicily and Magna Graecia (Settis, 2006, p. 28-30). British people wanted to bring the ancient heroes, poets, gods and warriors back to life, that is why reconstructing their statues was a popular activity (Connor, 1989, p. 219).

Except for art, literature, architecture and religion there exists a very popular nineteenth-century idea concerning political, economic and social references to antiquity. First of all, some nineteenth-century expressions connected with politics come directly from the classics, for instance: empire (Latin: imperium, imperii), liberty (Latin: libertas, libertatis), politics (Greek: πόλις, πόλεως = city state), or democracy (Greek: δῆμος, δήμου = people and κρατέω = I rule).

Furthermore, in Vance's opinion, Victorians found numerous analogies between ancient conflicts, wars, figures and events, and those in Great Britain (Vance, 2007, p. 97):

Ancient motifs	Nineteenth-century motifs
The fall of the Roman Empire	Symbol of the fact that the greatest tyrannies come to an end
Conspiracy of Catiline	Civil unrest in the 1820s and 1830s
Roman Corn Laws	Debates on the Corn Laws
The figure of Spartacus	Popular figure among the Chartists

The idea of a great empire became popular in Victorian Britain, especially in terms of comparing the Roman Empire to the British one, and showing the explanation to the way British Empire was run. Nevertheless, as the academic further states, there also existed some criticism of the very idea of an empire, especially with the reference to the collapse of the French Second Empire in 1870, and to the appearance of the cult of art and the aesthetic and decadent movement (Vance, 2007, p. 98). However different the views on the imperial power were, it is still the context of the Roman Empire that predominated in the discussion over British politics of the nineteenth century. In Vance's opinion (1997, p. 198 and 223), the British believed they could become a new and more magnificent Rome, and this idea was a part of the conviction that a process of

national self-identification is being created, although during the discussion about national authority and imperialism in Victorian period, there appeared the arguments both for and against the model of Rome, as it was both rich and unstable.

The idea of comparing Roman and British powers was not the nineteenth-century invention; it could be already noticed in the seventeenth century and it was rather based on the analogy between Britain and the Roman Republic. Moreover, the best resemblance between the two countries can be observed in the idea of the 'mixed constitution', which means sharing power by the king with the representatives of an aristocracy. Another crucial common feature linking the Roman Empire with the British one was, as Vance observes, the fact that Victorian "Britain was now in Rome's position, better than the countries of the Continent at winning and ruling an empire, but inferior to one or the other of them in artistic or intellectual power" (2006, p. 277).

Among the numerous ancient political and military events that were analysed in terms of ancient influences, the Crimean War was one of the most frequent to be recalled. As Richardson (2013), states, generals taking part in the war often tried to compare themselves to the heroes portrayed by Homer and the officers attempted to conduct excavations; moreover, there was popularized the idea that through the conflict Britain helped to bring the ancient past to life again: diaries and memoirs were written down, in which the authors frequently referred to the ancient images and symbols. In general, the idea of the war was good to 'sell' antiquity to people: they should know that the conflict was glorious (2013, p. 75 and 77). Furthermore, the popularization of the war led to the appearance of the idea that nineteenth-century European nations are the descendants of the Greeks and the past should be kept alive. The idea of regenerating the ancient Crimea started to be perceived as a business, as the land was seen as one of the richest in Europe. That is why historians attempted to find a strong connection between ancient Greece and the Crimea. Unfortunately, together with the attempt to bring back the glory of the ancient world, Britain destroyed some of the ancient remains (Richardson, 2013, p. 81 and 100).

Another parallel between the ancient world and Victorian Britain was based on the reference to India as the British colony. British scientists tried to link India with Britain by understanding the relationship of ancient Greece and Rome with the ancient past of India (Mantena, 2010, p. 54). As the academic further adds, the attempt to link the two nations and their history was based on so called 'historical philology'. Through the language analysis the academics tried to prove that India and Britain had some common features in the past: Sanskrit was connected to Greek and Latin on the basis of the membership in the Indo-European language family. But, as the academic rightly pointed out, while analysing the similarities between the languages, the question appeared: why can

the difference between Indian languages and their European counterparts be noticed in terms of the level of development? In response to this question colonial philologists conducted the analysis of literary output of India and Europe. The conclusion they came to was that the ‘underdeveloped’ languages of India should be reformed, basically through the introduction of the English language to India (Mantena, 2010, p. 54 and 56). As Majeed (1999) adds, the comparison of the literary output of India and Europe appeared in Macaulay’s *Minute on Education* (1835). He presented western culture, literature and language as the superior to the Indian achievements (Majeed, 1999, p. 91). As a consequence, English language and culture started to dominate in India and this was the part of the process of colonisation.

The above mentioned process was conducted by Britain with the usage of the idea that Britain’s relationship with imperial Rome is analogous to the British attitude towards India³. The idea linking these two relations was the process of acculturation (Mantena, 2010, p. 57).

The British saw the Roman process of ‘gaining’ new cultures (acculturation) as the one which does not take into consideration the possibility of acquiring independence by the incorporated nations. They interpreted it rather as the process of civilizing India and then, letting it rule itself. A British civil servant Charles Trevelyan noticed a great analogy between the countries that achieved a great success; he compared the achievement of Rome which benefitted from Greece to the position of European countries which by imitating Rome, became successful, and, finally, he claimed that India could “reach the heights of civilisation just as the benefactors of the Roman Empire once did” (Mantena, 2010, p. 58 and 60). However, in the opinion of Majeed, who analyses the views of Lucas and Bryce, a process of assimilation of India to British rules analogous to the process of assimilation of other countries to the Roman Empire was not possible due to the following differences (1999, p. 101):

Rome versus other subjected nations	India versus Britain
Both Rome and the conquered nations formed a unity in terms of religion, patriotism and civilisation.	There is a difference in characters, civilisation, colour and religion between India and Britain.

³ One of the aspects referring to the above relationships is, according to Vance, the way of administration; Roman administration of Britain was perceived as the model of British administration in India (Vance, 1997, p. 238-239).

As the academic further states, in the case of Roman influences on other nations, there was created a uniform civilisation of Greeks and Romans for all, while in the case of Britain it would be difficult to create such a uniformity. That is why the British used comparisons between Rome/ England and England/ India to dispel the doubts concerning political and cultural differences (p. 109). Nevertheless, as Vance claims, the differences had also the attracting power; Victorians liked exoticism, for instance the figure of Cleopatra was as much exotic for the Romans as for the British who watched the Shakespearean play *Cleopatra* in London. This and many other examples of the appearance of exotic elements in Victorian Britain led to the conviction that for Britain, ancient Rome became the model of assimilating the differences: while Rome had its own exotic relationships, Britain also had to cope with its own exoticism – India (Vance, 1997, p. 199).

Except for the comparison of Britain to Rome there also existed the analogy observed by the British in the nineteenth century between Britain and Carthage. Arnold saw Britain as Carthage as far as the naval power is concerned. Although Carthage was a great loser during the Punic Wars (which were compared to the Napoleonic Wars), Arnold noticed its further similarities to Britain: like Carthage, Britain was in need to protect its commercial businesses, mainly in India (Vance, 1997, p. 72). Moreover, as Challis states, both Carthage and Athens already in the eighteenth century became for Britain the alternative option instead of the Roman Empire, as they based their existence mainly on sea and commerce (2010, p. 100). As Challis further underlines, “Britain was the heir of classical Athens and thus the rightful heir of classical antiquities from Athens. (...) the Britons (...) were the true descendants of the ancient Greeks ideologically, culturally and ethnically” (2010, p. 100).

To sum up, as far as the classical heritage is concerned, it is not only the direct Roman influence that shaped British identity; one should analyse the role of the Greek civilisation in the process of creating modern (not ancient) ideas. The concept of Settis seems to be the most accurate here. The academic claims that Greek history is an essential and universal key to understanding the modern world, but only with the participation of the Romans. What is more, one can distinguish two ways of Roman activity mixed together with the Greek one, which gives us the complete image of the classical heritage (2006, p. 10-11):

1	2
Roman expansion of the empire and cultural unification with the Greek elements included.	Greek culture at its peak with the Romans as its first successors and popularizers.

It is clear though, that in nineteenth-century England there existed the tendencies to emphasize and cultivate ancient events and achievements. This has been reflected in the epoch's cultural and literary pieces of art and nowadays it constitutes a great material to be analysed in terms of the study of reception of antiquity.

Conclusion

To sum up, it is worth noticing that the role of the reception studies becomes more and more important in the study of literature. Its unusual character of versatility, changeability and vitality fits perfectly into the popular contemporary approaches to literature, such as Reader-Response Criticism and intertextuality. The reception studies are subjected to constant changes and as such influence the readers' perception of a given literary work. The works resemble a palimpsestic structure and enable the readers to discover their layers. Victorian literature is a milestone in the study, as in nineteenth-century England a great change in the perception of classics took place and nineteenth-century literature is an ideal source material to analyse the traces of antiquity.

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