“Postclassicisms”

A Proposal to the Princeton Global Collaborative Network Fund, Council on International Teaching and Research

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The following proposal outlines a plan to create and sustain a global network entitled “Postclassicisms.” The network would join Princeton to Cambridge University, the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Oxford University, the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa, University College London, University of California, Irvine, and the University of Sydney. It is designed to consolidate the position of Princeton as a significant hub in the rapidly developing intellectual movements that are redefining not just the study of classical antiquity but the historical constructions of classical antiquity and the position of our field—and, indeed, the traditional humanities disciplines more generally—in a pluralistic, interdisciplinary, and post-canonical world. Even more ambitiously, “Postclassicisms” would play an active role in defining the direction of these intellectual movements. It would do so by creating designated arenas for network participants to analyze the implications of historicizing the reception of the classical past both in the West and beyond its conventional borders. Moreover, the proposed network brings together some of the most important new research initiatives and centers for research and training within the hybrid field of what has come to be known as “Reception Studies” while also actively encouraging new collaborative projects informed by the fruits of the intellectual work being supported by the network itself.

“Postclassicisms” would achieve its aims, first, by facilitating long-term intellectual and professional relationships along two axes. It would put faculty members and graduate students at Princeton in contact with the most active and globally influential colleagues in Reception Studies and related movements, while also establishing long-term alliances between Princeton and the institutions that have emerged as the leading centers of these movements. It would also create opportunities for scholars and students in Classics to work together with other scholars at Princeton, especially senior scholars, who have done groundbreaking work on the afterlife of classical antiquity, such as Tony Grafton.
(History), Leonard Barkan (Comparative Literature), Alexander Nehamas (Philosophy), Daniel Heller Roazen (Comparative Literature), and Rachel Bowlby, the new senior hire in Comparative Literature. The network would thus help foster connections within Princeton on a model similar to Princeton's Program in the Ancient World, which supports cross-disciplinary alliances in the field of ancient history, laying the groundwork for a more stable configuration. Second, the resources afforded by the GCNF would enable us to develop a forum for the discussion and encouragement of new research methodologies and approaches in the field through the use of intensive workshops, short-term visits and exchanges involving faculty members and graduate students, and conferences. We are requesting funding for three years, to commence in September 2012.

1. Overview of Field of Study and Intellectual Context

The investigation of the impact of classical culture beyond its own lifetime and the formation of historical and current disciplinary structures for studying Greco-Roman antiquity has been among the fastest-growing trends within Classics in the last ten years. These research programs and intellectual energies have coalesced under the rubric of Reception Studies. Yet the specificity of that term can be misleading. For Reception is not simply a subfield of Classics. The practices and concepts animating it and related intellectual movements were already constituent parts of classical cultures themselves (as a complex “sense of the past”). Nevertheless, despite the fact that this heritage has shaped the intellectual and practical engagement with the ancient world in the West since antiquity, it has often been overlooked in its effect on how we in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have selected and interpreted ancient materials.

Our project therefore suggests nothing short of readjusting the perspective of and on Classics that our discipline inhabits. We aim, ultimately, to move beyond Reception Studies to something that might be called “Postclassicisms,” by which we mean a stance informed by a historicized understanding of the discipline of Classics and mindful of its present and future. Such a stance would incorporate the critique of the classical canon undertaken over the past few decades. But it would also insist on the inextricable role of classical antiquity in informing the present and the importance of the study of antiquity for the practice of history and the humanities themselves in a technologically advanced, rapidly changing, globalized world.

Until recently, the focus of research in Reception Studies has been on the reception of individual literary texts and works of art in later periods, and especially by creative artists. While methodological models such as reception aesthetics and reader-response criticism, familiar from modern literary studies, have been able to cater well for such instances, Reception Studies as a field has reached a point where new methodological
stimulus is needed to ask whether the reception of classical Greek and Roman materials specifically has created practices that need to be reflected theoretically. In short, we have reached a stage where, instead of building up more case studies, we need to formulate new methodological directions for how classical receptions relate to other forms of artistic and intellectual response and the creation and interpretation of knowledge. Precisely because of the success of Reception Studies in Britain, there is a sense, especially strong among our generation of early and mid-career scholars who came to this area of intellectual inquiry from early on, that the search for new theoretical foundations and models, timely after its first wave of success, would particularly benefit from international exchanges and ambitious methodological reflection. That the field of Reception Studies stands at a moment where greater theoretical and methodological development is needed creates a unique opportunity for researchers at Princeton, especially rising scholars, to help define the terms of future debate and discussion.

Intellectual and scholarly work, which is itself our subject of research, has been shaped explicitly and even more often implicitly by different national traditions. To bring together and to examine critically forms of thinking from a range of institutional and national cultures seems therefore all the more necessary to sharpen our understanding of how we understand classical and post-classical antiquity. In doing so, we are confronting head-on a structural paradox that has been with the discipline of Classics for a long time: while classicists believe that the study of the ancient world can and should fit a universal framework, in practice all scholarship has been shaped by local, national and individual environments. The paradox is neatly summed up by any number of edited volumes produced by classicists and ancient historians each year. The table of contents will show an impressive range of national affiliations. And yet, the cross-pollinations one might expect from such proximities are rarely realized. The paradox holds true even for recent work in Reception Studies, even as it has successfully demonstrated the presence of local (geographical, but also disciplinary) environments and detailed their effects. The next step, so we believe, is to move beyond those individual strands and ask what a term like “Postclassicism” means in a global world and how internationalized perspectives can challenge deep-seated assumptions within national traditions of studying classical antiquity. It is only by acknowledging the fissures within a universalizing idea of Classics and reclaiming them as sites of opportunity that we can exploit the radical promise of Reception Studies and related movements. “Postclassicisms” would position Princeton as a significant player in realizing these opportunities.

Moreover, it is necessary at this moment in the field’s evolution to conceptualize the ancient Greco-Roman world more ambitiously by embracing a cross-disciplinary perspective. Research in Reception Studies has privileged literature and works of art at the expense of, for example, ancient philosophy and science. One reason for this is
structural: much work in the field has grown out of the traditional disciplines of classical philology as it has been practiced in Anglophone countries over the past few decades (i.e., with a heavy focus on literature) and art history. Yet there is enormous potential to challenge and expand the very terms of reception by bringing philosophy and science more firmly into the conversations underway in Reception Studies. The critical work being undertaken in the name of reception, in turn, offers myriad strategies for repositioning the ancient world and the premodern within the fields of Philosophy and the History of Science (which has traditionally marginalized the premodern). Several of the proposed participants, especially Tony Grafton, Jim Porter, and Glenn Most, have already taken significant steps towards integrating philosophy and science more fully into Reception Studies, and one of the PIs, Brooke Holmes, a specialist in ancient medicine, science, and philosophy, has also been especially active in this regard. Another such focus of research would be the history of classical scholarship, which has been a long-standing interest of those same scholars, as well as a main research interest of the other PI, Constanze Güthenke. By virtue of incorporating the historical formations of classical scholarship and other modalities of reception as general topics of analysis, the network will encourage bridge-building between Classics and other departments in the humanities, especially History and departments of modern literature.

By encouraging internationalization and interdisciplinary expansion, the network will enable and encourage participants to examine the historical practices through which we as classicists have acquired, defined, and charted our knowledge of antiquity. As we have already emphasized, the recording of antiquity, the formation of the canon and the definition of “the classical” began already in antiquity. The post-classical, then, is not so much a recent discovery of classicists seeking to extend the reach of a traditional field. Instead, it is at the very core of how a traditional field came to be. In this sense, we are as interested in examining the frameworks of studying antiquity that have prevailed as we are in giving new attention to the roads not taken, to the practices and approaches that we might from our disciplinary standpoint want to consider “mis-receptions.” Our interest lies in teasing out the choices that have yielded disciplinary standards and ways of reading and conceptualizing classical literature and questioning the self-evidently correct insights those choices have produced. We envision using the network to find strategies for extending the initial inquiries and methods of Reception Studies beyond reception narrowly understood to a broader inquiry into our own disciplinary practices and to situate those practices in more ambitious transnational and interdisciplinary configurations.

2. Academic Partners in the Network
“Postclassicisms” would embed Princeton in a network joining Cambridge University, the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Oxford University, the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa, University College London, the University of California, Irvine, and the University of Sydney. Such a network would put Princeton scholars and students in contact with the senior scholars who have most significantly shaped the field of Reception Studies and continue to be most active in defining future directions. At the same time, it would establish grounds for long-term partnerships with the most influential rising scholars and institutional centers. The network would link Princeton to existing institutional programs in the field and large-scale international grants. The proposed contacts are also involved in the journals, edited volumes, and book series that are redefining the field of Classics. As the letters included as supporting documents attest, there is extraordinary enthusiasm among our proposed network partners for the kind of international intellectual community that “Postclassicisms” would create.

British scholars have dominated the forefront of Reception Studies in the last twenty years, and personal networks have, in their wake, also led to the institutional changes that have helped to establish the field. Many of the most important younger scholars trained at Cambridge, and the university boasts a number of active researchers in the field. Dr. Simon Goldhill, in particular, has been instrumental over the past decades in developing Reception Studies through his own research and through several cross-disciplinary and high profile research projects funded by national grants, most recently a large-scale project on “The Bible and Classical Antiquity in the Nineteenth Century.” Dr. Goldhill is also currently Director of the Cambridge Centre for Research in Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH), making him an ideal node for interdisciplinary relationships at Cambridge. He has longstanding ties with Princeton and was a long-term visitor in the Council for the Humanities in 2007.

Also in the UK, Miriam Leonard (UCL) has been collaborating for some time already with the Princeton investigators. UCL itself has been a pioneering center of research in Reception Studies: its department head, Maria Wyke, has helped shape the field from early on, and the department offers one of the few taught MA courses in Reception Studies currently available, which is directed by Dr. Leonard. Dr. Leonard has also begun working together with another network contact, Dr. Tim Whitmarsh at Oxford, particularly in a series of innovative research workshops that have attracted and created a network between Oxford, Cambridge, and London (helped by geographical proximity). Oxford itself has been instrumental in giving institutional platforms to Postclassicisms. The Archive for the Performance of Greek and Roman Drama (APGRD) has produced significant research on performance history; it has been awarded major grants from the Mellon Foundation, the Leverhulme Trust, and the Onassis Foundation. Its director, Fiona MacIntosh, has been appointed directly in the field of Reception. The Faculty has
included new options in its graduate courses (the MSt in Greek and Latin literature now includes Reception components), has held conferences and workshops on Reception, and with the founding of the Oxford Centre for Late Antiquity, is prompting new graduate and faculty liaisons across periods and disciplines. There is a long history of collaboration between the Faculty and the Department of Classics at Princeton in ancient history—sustained by a yearly graduate student mini-conference—and Professors Holmes and Güthenke have been working together with Dr. Whitmarsh to develop a similar alliance in the fields of literature and Reception Studies.

Another Cambridge alumnus is Dr. Alastair Blanshard, now at the University of Sydney, who is, like Constanze Güthenke, one of the Associate Editors of the *Classical Receptions Journal* and also one of the editors of a new series on “Antiquity after Antiquity” with Cambridge University Press. The University of Sydney, moreover, is currently the center of the Australasian Classical Reception Studies Network.

Among classicists in the United States, Professor Jim Porter has been the most active and influential global player in Reception Studies. He is a co-editor of the foundational “Classical Presences” series at Oxford University Press and a steering group member (and co-founder) of the Classical Receptions Studies Network (as well as the institutional contact between the US and the UK). He has longstanding ties to the field of Comparative Literature (holding a joint appointment in Irvine). He is also involved in two Excellence Clusters in Germany, including “Asia and Europe in a Global Context: Modernity’s Classics” at Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg. Professor Porter was an Old Dominion Fellow in the Council of the Humanities at Princeton in Fall 2004.

Professor Glenn Most of the Scuola Normale Superiore at Pisa and with a joint part-time appointment at the University of Chicago is and has been a well-known interlocutor for all network partners, especially those at Princeton. He is also an External Scientific Member of the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science (MPIWG) in Berlin, a research institution that has run collaborative exchange programs especially involving graduate students and young faculty. He had published and lectured widely on the reception of the ancient world both in the Anglophone world and on the Continent. Professor Most is preparing to direct a project entitled “Learned Practices of Canonical Texts” with our Princeton colleague Tony Grafton at the MPIWG. Lorraine Daston, the Director of the MPIWG, and her colleagues have expressed interest in building on this collaborative relationship towards other forms of collaboration between Princeton and the MPIWG.

### 3. Situating Princeton Scholars and Career Enhancement
The network directors at Princeton, Constanze Güthenke and Brooke Holmes, are well-positioned to facilitate the creation and the flourishing of the proposed network. Brooke Holmes was trained in Comparative Literature (at Princeton) and has interests in the reception of ancient literature, science, and philosophy. She is on the Executive Committee of the new IHUM (Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program in the Humanities) program at Princeton and is an affiliated faculty member of the Program in Gender and Sexuality Studies. Constanze Güthenke, jointly appointed between Classics and Hellenic Studies, is covering the reception of classical antiquity in the context of modern cultural and literary history, including the history of disciplines. She is an Associate Editor of the relatively new Classical Receptions Journal, published by Oxford University Press, and she has most recently co-taught a graduate seminar with Anthony Grafton in History.

We have approached or intend to approach other junior colleagues at Princeton to be involved in the project, including our new hire in post-classical antiquity and Byzantine literature, Emmanuel Bourbouhakis, and Nathan Arrington in Art & Archaeology, who, as a classical archaeologist, also has a strong interest in the history of archaeology and the discipline. Furthermore, one important aspect of the network, as noted above, would be to involve senior colleagues outside the Department of Classics at Princeton as well, creating opportunities for collaboration within the University (e.g., between Classics and History, History of Science, Art & Archaeology, Comparative Literature, Philosophy, German, the Program in Translation, the Program in Hellenic Studies, and so on). This is especially important as there is no existing institutional structure to support avenues of collaboration in the field of reception.

Finally, “Postclassicisms” is designed to involve graduate students and, where appropriate, post-doctoral scholars and undergraduate students, at every level. Princeton is already attracting top graduate students with research interests in Reception Studies, and our current cohort has already found ways to further these interests informally (e.g., through the new Classical Receptions Reading Group, open to both undergraduate and graduate students). We have a strong interest in helping students working at the cutting edge of Classics and related disciplines build the professional and intellectual networks necessary to succeeding in what remains a highly conservative field. One focus of the workshops to be convened under the auspices of the network will be on the training of students within Reception Studies and the fields that are emerging out of it. These will also be opportunities for Princeton faculty to think about how to train students with an interdisciplinary interest in the study of classical antiquity at Princeton itself.

“Postclassicisms” is designed in such a way as to balance the aim of career development and professional advancement against the need for genuinely free intellectual work and experimentation. Indeed, we envision the latter as absolutely crucial to ensuring the
long-term benefits of the network for the careers of those involved and the field of Reception Studies itself and its future incarnations.

By putting Princeton scholars, especially junior faculty, and students into sustained and collaborative contact with the most important international colleagues in Reception Studies, “Postclassicisms” by its very nature ensures their involvement in the defining activities of the field and exposes them to its most active and original minds. We also aim to promote what might be called exponential network building. Evolving cross-disciplinary and transnational alliances have been one of the benefits of research in Reception Studies. The network would capitalize on the alliances—both formal and informal—that our colleagues have developed through the discipline-expanding nature of their own research. It would thus put Princeton faculty and students in contact with an ever expanding network of scholars and researchers in the UK, on the Continent, and in Australia. One way of doing this would be to invite scholars in related fields already working with network members to participate in workshop and conference events, particularly in capacities that encourage debate and dialogue (e.g., as respondents to position papers or as “ambassadors” relaying intellectual developments from related disciplines). Moreover, a number of the proposed partners also hold significant positions on editorial boards, serve as series editors, and have taken the lead in organizing conferences and workshops. The network would put students and junior faculty in contact with those figures responsible for disseminating new research in the field.

At the same time, we are cautious about promoting precocious or hyperactive professionalization, especially among the more junior members and students. Many of the most important conferences in Classics come with publication expectations. Such publications, which often involve important senior scholars and bear the imprint of prestigious presses, hold obvious advantages for junior researchers. Yet there is also the risk that research is rushed into print without being adequately developed; risk-taking itself is sometimes curtailed out of fear that the results will not merit publication. One of the most important aims of “Postclassicisms” will be, primarily through the use of workshops and seminars, to create opportunities for dialogue and the testing of ideas that do not necessarily lead to immediate publication. We want to encourage participants to reflect on the research that they are doing, on the intersections between their work and that of others, on the methodological assumptions that motivate their research, and on the implications of their research on a grand scale. The network in this respect does not aim to reproduce a professional circuit but, in some sense, to work alongside it to ensure that the structured encounters between scholars that it makes possible are genuine laboratories for innovation. The benefits for individual (and again, especially junior) researchers are thus both short-term and long-term. We want to encourage truly intellectually rigorous
work that has a better chance of changing the parameters of the fields on which it touches: their topics, methods, and discourses.

6. Internationalization of Princeton Institutions

As we have already demonstrated, “Postclassicisms” would embed Princeton in a global network of scholars and institutions. It would enable junior scholars and graduate students to build long-term international contacts, ensuring their mobility in a globalized intellectual economy. In seeking to involve advanced undergraduate students in the workshops and seminars sponsored, we would not only internationalize their own experience at Princeton but encourage them to develop a more sophisticated appreciation of the complex and contested meaning of classical antiquity as it has been historically constructed and appropriated both in the West and beyond its borders. These students would, as a result, be in a position to promote a pluralistic, globalized, and creative concept of “the Classics” in their own professional lives (whether as classicists or in other fields).

7. Plan for Operation

We propose as the core of the network activities a series of workshops, short-term faculty and graduate student exchanges, and conferences. These are designed to promote the exchange of ideas generated by the evolving field of Reception Studies but also conducive to expanding its parameters towards what we suggested above might be designated “Postclassicism.” In devising this plan we have taken some inspiration from the model elaborated by the “Cooperative Research Network in Analytic Philosophy,” which was awarded GCNF support in the previous application cycle. A steering committee comprising members from the participating institutions would help coordinate the core events. Both faculty and students will be involved in identifying target topics and questions for the workshops and conferences.

The workshops would have two primary aims. They would, first, facilitate discussion and debate about the methodologies and parameters of Reception Studies and its relationship to the study of classical antiquity and intellectual history as those fields have been more traditionally understood. They would also create opportunities for faculty members to explore strategies for training students in the field and otherwise building the institutional structures most conducive to harnessing intellectual energies in the field. They would, in addition, allow students themselves to debate routes forward and targets.

We therefore envision convening workshops that would have two parts: a joint faculty-student meeting involving presentation of position papers, most ideally collaboratively;
and separate faculty and student sessions focusing on intellectual and institutional strategies. We hope to convene one such workshop each year at Princeton (approximately three days in duration); we also hope to send Princeton faculty and students to similar (but not necessarily identical) workshops convened at partner institutions (such as one organized last year on “Classics and Theory” in Oxford by Professors Whitmarsh and Leonard). As mentioned above, we would include faculty members not directly affiliated with the network (primarily in other disciplines at Princeton and partner institutions, but also scholars not connected to the network by their own institution). The cost-sharing that we expect from partner institutions will help fund these invitations.

The workshops present an opportunity for collaboration sustained beyond the confines of the workshop itself. Participants would be invited to collaborate on position papers in the period leading up to the workshop itself, either with colleagues at their own institution or with colleagues at partner institutions. One of the PIs (Güthenke) has already experimented with new collaborative models for research and writing in the seminar on the Classical Tradition that she co-taught with Tony Grafton. Strategies for collaborative research and writing are also a specific aim of the new Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program in the Humanities (on whose Executive Committee Holmes sits).

We also see the need to convene a follow-up meeting one to two weeks after the workshop. We would accomplish this by taking advantage of the teleconferencing facilities presently available via OIT (such as iLinc) and any new developments in telepresencing that become available. The purpose of virtual follow-up meeting is twofold. First, it is often the case that exciting meetings produce a flurry of ideas that then dissipate when individual members return to their own institutions and research agendas. At the same time, some of the best ideas emerge after the effects of the intellectual exchanges have had time to settle. The virtual follow-up meetings would allow participants to share any new thoughts they had in the wake of the workshop with other members while also encouraging them to implement and pursue ideas generated by the workshop itself. We expect that these structured virtual meetings would encourage more informal exchanges via such technologies as SharePoint and Skype.

The second component of the network would be short-term exchanges of faculty and graduate students. The faculty traveling to Princeton would offer intensive seminars (of approximately one-week), supplemented by one-on-one meetings, small-scale brainstorming sessions, and informal talks. We expect that faculty traveling to partner institutions would be involved in a similarly intensive program. One model here would be the recent visits by Simon Goldhill and Tim Whitmarsh to Princeton under the auspices of the Onassis Foundation. But whereas the focus of those visits was a public
lecture (supplemented by the activities outlined above), we would privilege the seminar as the venue most suited to the network’s aims. For graduate student exchanges, we hope to develop a model for both short-term visits and longer-term visits like those currently supported under the Princeton-Oxford initiative. We have sent a number of our students to Oxford on this program, and they have benefited enormously from the opportunities afforded to them by the experience. We have not, however, factored specific costs in for graduate exchanges. While we are expecting partner institutions to contribute to hosting costs, we have factored travel expenses into our three-year budget; it is likely that some of these expenses will be assumed by other institutions, freeing up funds to pursue graduate exchanges. We will at the same pursue other sources of funding for exchanges.

Finally, we foresee convening at least two conferences, one at the close of the first year of the grant, the second in the fall or winter of the third year. These conferences would be designed to allow participants to get feedback on their own efforts to translate the work being fostered by the network into tangible research projects. These would involve the presentation of papers, as at a traditional conference, but also respondents and ample time for discussion and debate. Here, too, we imagine inviting scholars not directly involved in the network to participate. We would not pursue publication of the initial conference proceedings (but would leave open a publication in the final year of the grant gathering the work pursued in the workshops). The nature of the network, however, would allow us to shepherd younger scholars interested in publication towards the venues most suited to disseminating their work. The conference, insofar as it would support more formal presentations, would also help graduate students acclimatize to the give and take of a professional meeting. One such model here is the “CorHaLi” conferences that have been held on topics in archaic and classical Greek literature every other year at Princeton and four partner institutions (Cornell, Harvard, Lille, and Lausanne).

These activities would be primarily supported by the grant from the GCNF. We do expect, however, to receive some financial support from the Magie Fund within the Department of Classics: forums for group intellectual exchange have recently been designated a high funding priority within the Department. The Director of the Program in Hellenic Studies, Dimitri Gondicas, has also indicated interest in funding travel related to the study of Greece and which as special interest in questions of the reception of classical Greece. Our partner institutions have been enthusiastic about the network, and we expect support with hosting and travel costs for partner faculty and students.

8. Conclusion
“Postclassicisms” would meet the following goals. It would a) help ensure the position of Princeton as a global leader in not only the study of classical antiquity but also of the historical formation of Classics, its foundational role in the emergence of the humanities,
and the discipline’s position in the twenty-first century; b) enhance the intellectual environments of the Department of Classics and related departments and programs by exposing scholars and students to new international perspectives; allowing them to solicit feedback on their own ideas and scholarship; and strengthening extracurricular intellectual relationships within the University, especially between faculty members and graduate students and between junior and senior faculty members; c) advance the careers of junior and recently tenured faculty members and graduate students by supporting their development as leaders in an important new interdisciplinary field, generating contacts for them in the larger international community, and raising their global profiles; d) build a long-term intellectual and professional community that will serve as a laboratory of sorts for developing new modes of collaborative inquiry sustainable beyond the initial period of the grant.

In sum, “Postclassicisms” would connect Princeton scholars and students to the major sites and scholars now shaping Reception Studies. At the same time, it would embed them as active leaders in the collaborative structures needed to capitalize on the field’s transformative potential for the study of how classical antiquity has shaped the manifold cultures that have engaged with it over two millennia—including our own culture—on a transnational and cross-disciplinary scale.