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*The*  
CLASSICAL  
LEGACY  
*of*  
GILBERT  
HIGHET

*An In-Depth  
Retrospect*

Robert J. Ball

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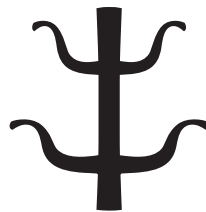


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# THE CLASSICAL LEGACY OF GILBERT HIGHET: AN IN-DEPTH RETROSPECT

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## Dedication

For Gilbert Highet (*in memoriam*),  
For his son Keith (*in memoriam*),  
For his grandson Ian, and  
For his great-grandson Gilbert (aka Gil)

\* \* \*

*et quasi cursores vitae lampada tradunt.*  
And like runners, they pass on the torch of life.  
—Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* 2.79

*Degno di tanta reverenza in vista ...*  
His bearing filled me with such reverence ...  
—Dante, *Purgatorio* 1.32

**And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche.**  
And gladly would he learn and gladly teach.  
—Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, *General Prologue* 308



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## PREFACE

What will you think about me when I die,  
Helen? There won't be an official life—  
a paragraph at most ...

—Gilbert Highet, "Post-Obit" (undated),  
final entry for Highet, G. in Works Cited

A few years ago, I began to think about the self-effacing statement (quoted above) with which classicist Gilbert Highet began a poem he had addressed to his wife, the novelist Helen MacInnes. He wrote that poem toward the end of his life, when he apparently believed (one cannot know how strongly) that, in spite of everything he had achieved, he would not be remembered in any substantial way.

Although many tributes and testimonials about Highet (including my own) appeared after his death, nothing was ever published that one could regard by any stretch of the imagination as "an official life." An official life should not only contain facts about and memories of the subject but also demonstrate broad-based research, steeped in considerable detail and documentation, while treating controversial issues objectively. Advances in electronic technology, which evolved during the more than forty years since Highet's death, have enabled me to extract much useful information from a variety of databases critical for this biographical undertaking. These advances have also enabled me to incorporate in this undertaking updated bibliographies of publications by and about Highet, in which regard publications about him or referring to him have more than doubled since his passing.

This fully documented examination of Highet's life, teaching, and scholarship, enhanced by fully updated bibliographies of publications by and about him, should (I hope) fill in the gap for an official life. Highet, a unique and towering figure in Classics in the mid-twentieth century, whom I had the great fortune of having as my mentor during my doctoral studies at Columbia University, deserves nothing less.

Robert J. Ball  
Professor Emeritus of Classics  
University of Hawaii



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank the following individuals for helping me bring this project to a successful conclusion:

Ian Highet, representing the Gilbert Highet Estate, for encouraging me to pursue this biographical retrospect about his grandfather and for authorizing me to reproduce several unpublished documents written by and about him;

Robert Scott, former head, Digital Humanities Center at Columbia University, for introducing me to a variety of databases critical for this biographical undertaking and for helping me locate a number of elusive publications;

Jocelyn Wilk, university archivist at Columbia University, for directing me to unpublished material about Highet not located in the Gilbert Highet Papers but in other holdings of Columbia's Rare Book and Manuscript Library;

Billie Jean Collins, director of Lockwood Press and a well-published Hittitologist, for being "intrigued" by my manuscript from the time I first approached her and for enabling me to produce the kind of memorial volume I envisioned;

Judith Hallett, professor emerita of Classics at the University of Maryland, for reading a draft of my book, for offering incisive comments, and for regarding Highet as one of very few classicists worthy of a retrospective monograph;

Matthew Santirocco, professor of Classics at New York University, for reading a draft of my book, for providing valuable suggestions, and for supporting my view that in his day Highet was the most celebrated classical scholar in America.



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## ABBREVIATIONS

For Classics and Classics-friendly journals cited in the bibliographies at the end of this retrospect, I have used the abbreviations in *L'Année Philologique*, which I have also listed below with their full titles (multiword where applicable). For journals and periodicals not indexed in *L'Année Philologique*, directed primarily at a general audience and containing information important for this undertaking, I have listed their titles in full in the bibliographies at the end of this retrospect.

<i>AJPh</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
<i>Arion</i>	<i>Arion</i>
<i>C&amp;M</i>	<i>Classica et Mediaevalia</i>
<i>CB</i>	<i>Classical Bulletin</i>
<i>CHum</i>	<i>Computers and the Humanities</i>
<i>CJ</i>	<i>Classical Journal</i>
<i>ClAnt</i>	<i>Classical Antiquity</i>
<i>CO</i>	<i>Classical Outlook</i>
<i>CPh</i>	<i>Classical Philology</i>
<i>CQ</i>	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
<i>CR</i>	<i>Classical Review</i>
<i>CW</i>	<i>Classical World</i>
<i>G&amp;R</i>	<i>Greece &amp; Rome</i>
<i>Gnomon</i>	<i>Gnomon</i>
<i>GRBS</i>	<i>Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies</i>
<i>Hermes</i>	<i>Hermes</i>
<i>HSPh</i>	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
<i>ICS</i>	<i>Illinois Classical Studies</i>
<i>IJCT</i>	<i>International Journal of the Classical Tradition</i>
<i>JHI</i>	<i>Journal of the History of Ideas</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>MD</i>	<i>Materiali e discussioni per l'analisi dei testi classici</i>
<i>PAPHS</i>	<i>Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society</i>
<i>Phoenix</i>	<i>Phoenix</i>
<i>PVS</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Virgil Society</i>
<i>QS</i>	<i>Quaderni di storia</i>
<i>SO</i>	<i>Symbolae Osloenses</i>



<i>SyllClass</i>	<i>Syllecta Classica</i>
<i>TAPA</i>	<i>Transactions of the American Philological Association*</i>
<i>TLS</i>	<i>Times Literary Supplement</i>
<i>Vergilius</i>	<i>Vergilius</i>

\* The full title of this journal applies to articles published in it until 2014, when the American Philological Association became the Society for Classical Studies.

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