"BENEFITS OF A CLASSICAL EDUCATION": THE DYNAMICS OF CLASSICAL ALLUSION IN ABC'S *REVENGE*

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INTRODUCTION

This essay explores the social dynamics of classical allusion on the American television series, *Revenge* (ABC Television Studios, 2011–2015), a prime-time soap opera conceived in the wake of the Great Recession of 2007 and beyond.[1] These allusions, which conflate classicism and classism, function as cultural capital for the show's most elite characters, the Grayson family.

To pave the way for our discussion, let us take a passing glance at a classical allusion from the movie *Die Hard* (Twentieth Century Fox, 1988), which lends this essay its title. The first installment of the long-running film series starring Bruce Willis, *Die Hard* is notable for popularizing the location-specific action movie — the location in this case being the high-rise Los Angeles headquarters of the fictional Nakatomi Corporation. The film is also notable for the breakout performance of Alan Rickman as Hans Gruber, a terrorist (so he seems at first) who hijacks Nakatomi Plaza on Christmas Eve. In an early scene, Gruber saunters through a miniature gallery of the corporation's building projects, humming nonchalantly and appraising each model in passing. Gruber pauses before a replica of the plaza itself, which prompts him to quote from memory. "'And when Alexander saw the breadth of his domain,'" he intones, "'he wept, for there were no more worlds to conquer.'" As he speaks, Nakatomi CEO Joseph Takagi (James Shigeta) is led into frame at gunpoint. Gruber chuckles to himself, then confesses to Takagi, "Benefits of a classical education."[2]

Gruber's anecdote is self-consciously erudite, and it dovetails with his well-dressed and well-spoken demeanor. Gruber stands in marked contrast not only with Willis' all-American John McClane (and his brash, "Yippie ki-yay" attitude), but also with his own accomplices, none of whom is his equal. It is eventually revealed that Gruber has hijacked the plaza in order to steal U.S. Bearer Bonds worth millions of dollars. In response to being labeled "a common thief," he snaps, "I am an exceptional thief!"[3] — and his classical learning is part of what makes him so. However, more important than the learning itself is putting it on public display. It does not even matter that Gruber's anecdote is a corruption of Plutarch;[4] what matters is vaunting his classical education and marking himself as its beneficiary.

Similarly, characters on *Revenge* engage in verbal and visual displays of classical erudition in order to shore up their own sense of exceptionalism. Often that sense manifests in the intersection of particular identities: wealthy, conservative, white, male, and villainous. Furthermore, the knowledge and appreciation of antiquity fits a wider pattern of privileged access to high culture, in the form of artistic and literary works both derived from classical material and ranging widely beyond it — not unlike the Great Books programs of U.S. universities, which move outwards from antiquity towards modern day through an established canon of literary worth.[5] *Revenge* constructs an elite persona through familiarity with the canons of past and present — a persona deployed effortlessly to its own advantage.

Let us now turn to the series and consider its relationship to its source material. As we will see, this material lends *Revenge* not only its overall storyline, but also its conceit of venerating the Classics at the highest levels of society

REVENGE: CLASSICISM AND CLASSISM

Created by writer-producer Mike Kelly for ABC television Studios, *Revenge* ran four full seasons on that network, from September 2011 to May 2015. As its title makes abundantly clear, the show was preoccupied with the attainment of vengeance. In particular, Kelly was inspired by *The Count of Monte*

Cristo by Alexandre Dumas (1844), and he endeavored to translate the novel's intrigues from Napoleonic Paris to the post-recession Hamptons of Long Island, New York.

In Dumas' novel, a naive merchant sailor, Edmond Dantès, is falsely denounced by jealous enemies as a Bonapartist conspirator and imprisoned by a corrupt magistrate in the dread and impregnable Chateau d'If. After languishing there for 14 years, Edmond manages to escape, discover a secret Papal treasure, and reinvent himself as the mysterious and wealthy Count of Monte Cristo — under which guise he brings personal, social, and financial ruin to those who had wronged him. For *Revenge,* Kelly took a feminist tack. The protagonist is the mysterious and wealthy Emily Thorne, a.k.a. Amanda Clarke (played by Emily VanCamp), who enacts a long vendetta against the socialite Victoria Grayson (Madeleine Stowe). Years earlier, Victoria and her husband, Conrad (Henry Czerny), conspired to imprison and murder David Clarke (James Tupper), Emily/Amanda's father, when she was a child. David was framed for an act of domestic terrorism: the downing of Flight 197 (airline unspecified) and the resulting deaths of all 247 passengers and personnel. His conviction meant that Emily/Amanda was shuttled through the foster care system, where she endured years of physical and psychological abuse, and later into the juvenile corrections system. Murdered in prison, David bequeathed his journals to his daughter, along with an enormous fortune, which she has used to reinvent herself as glamorous Emily Thorne and to seek retribution.

In terms of genre, *Revenge* is a canny blend of espionage thriller and soap opera. On the thriller side, Emily Thorne is perpetually engaged in acts of surveillance and sabotage. Like Edmond Dantès, who was educated by the Abbé Faria while imprisoned, she has her own teacher, a Japanese Sensei named Takeda, whose training in the art of vengeance has endowed Emily with the ninja-like skills necessary to realize her agenda. On the soap-opera side, *Revenge* revels in family drama, beautiful people, corporate takeovers, luxurious homes, class conflict, catfights, sex — all staples of prime-time soaps like *Dallas* (Lorimar Productions, 1978–1991; Warner Horizon Television, 2012–2014), which is arguably the most famous exemplar of the genre. Just as *Dallas* was set in lucrative Texas oil country*,* the ultra-wealthy Hamptons of *Revenge* are a fertile backdrop for all of the above motifs.[6] The show's status as soap-opera is worth emphasizing, because genre is where *Revenge* is most faithful to *Monte Cristo*, which originally ran as a serial in French newspapers. Edmond's vengeance requires that his fantastic *alter ego* infiltrate the most exclusive circles of Parisian society and exploit his enemies' loves and hates, successes and failures. Hence family drama, corporate intrigue, class conflict, and all the rest are plentiful, if not the reason for the novel itself, and they translate readily into prime-time soap opera of the 21st-century.[7]

Revenge also inherits from *Monte Cristo* the intersection of classicism and classism. Although it opens many doors, the seemingly unlimited wealth of Dumas' hero goes only so far. To pass as an aristocrat, Edmond must also exhibit the classical erudition to which his affluence would have entitled him. Such erudition abides at the very pinnacle of French aristocracy, in the philological passions of King Louis XVIII. In chapter 10, a courtier comes to Tuileries Palace to warn the king of the imminent Bonapartist insurrection that will lead to the Hundred Days of Napoleon's return from exile. Louis, however, is shown hard at work reading Horace's *Odes* in the original Latin and making meticulous marginal annotations on poem 1.15 (the Paris and Helen ode). This task occupies his full attention, such that he defers the courtier's news until he can complete his "delightful note" on the poem. Moreover, even as Louis hears the report, he interrupts with snippets of Horatian verse, as well as allusions to Vergil's *Aeneid* and Plutarch's *Life of Scipio*.[8] Dumas' monarch is a consummate scholar, leading a life of (in ancient Greek) *scholé*, the leisure or opportunity that makes possible sustained intellectual pursuits.

Although Louis is an extreme case, his erudition suggests not only the cachet of classical learning among the aristocracy, but also the resources necessary to acquire it. Fortunately, Edmond has vast resources and, as he demonstrates, considerable aptitude as well. In chapter 64, he entertains his friends and enemies with fish imported simultaneously from St. Petersburg and Naples. To justify this extravagance, the Count compares himself to the general and gastronome, Lucius Licinius Lucullus, as well as to one of Rome's most notorious emperors: "I am like Nero," he says, "*cupitor impossibilium*" (one who desires the impossible).[9] Furthermore, he regales his guests with an account of the dying mullet — how it changes colors in a dazzling array of hues, a phenomenon described in both Seneca and Pliny,[10] the latter of whom the Count references by name.[11] Edmond's dinner and repartee recall the opulent feast of Trimalchio, the outrageously rich freedman of Petronius' *Satyricon*.[12] But while Trimalchio's ignorance

betrays his pretensions to sophistication — he claims, for example, to have read Homer and yet offers a wildly untraditional account of the Trojan Horse involving Daedalus and Niobe[13] — Edmond exhibits refinement born of discipline and study. "It is a fine thing to be rich," observes a guest. "And to have ideas," adds another.[14]

On *Revenge*, the value the Graysons attach to the Classics takes various forms, not least of which is their predilection for collecting and displaying ancient sculpture. Their home, Grayson Manor, is a virtual gallery of high-quality Greco-Roman replicas. Examples include a bust of Hygeia near the dining room (Figure A);[15] a bust of Thalia in a sitting room (Figure B);[16] and a kneeling nymph in the foyer (Figure C).[17] Although typically relegated to the background, such pieces nevertheless portray the Graysons as connoisseurs of classical art — especially Victoria, whose backstory includes a scholarship to L'École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, and who is frequently shown overseeing the house's decor. Along with these examples of classical femininity, Grayson Manor is replete with phallic Egyptian obelisks, which are routinely displayed in Conrad's offices and suit the conventionally masculine and hegemonic world of finance. Conrad also has a bust of Eros Centocelle, which looms in the foreground as he fires one of his mentees, Tyler Barrol (Ashton Holmes), for blackmailing a client (Figure D).[18] The placement of Eros here might be viewed as ironic: Tyler has used a sex tape to win the client's account, and Conrad himself is a serial philanderer.

Beyond appreciation for antique material culture, the Graysons' attention to education, particularly that of their children, also sets them apart from the rest of the show's cast, villains and heroes alike. Their son, Daniel (Josh Bowman), studied Latin before enrolling at Harvard.[19] Their daughter, Charlotte (Christa B. Allen), attends a prestigious high school in seasons 1 and 2, Collins Prep, where she receives exposure to ancient and modern classics, such as *Paradise Lost*.[20] This investment in expensive education is yet another index of how *Revenge* correlates classical learning with wealth and privilege.

CONRAD GRAYSON, CLASSICIST

Of all the Graysons, Conrad has derived the most benefit from his classical education. A magnate of the finance industry, he has made erudition a cornerstone of his refined persona, and he moves with great facility from classical literature to literary classics inspired by antiquity. Among Conrad's prized possessions are his first editions, including Poe's *Tamerlane*, which he bequeaths to Emily in Season 3.(Figure E).[21] Here one might recall Jay Gatsby's ornamental library in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925), which like *Revenge* depicts the extravagance of Long-Island elite in the surrogate Hamptons of West and East Egg. Gatsby has, behind "an important-looking door," "a high Gothic library, panelled with carved English oak." The books on the shelves are real, but Gatsby has never read them: as the party guest called Owl Eyes observes, the pages would have been cut apart if he had.[22] Like Trimalchio before him, Gatsby traffics in expensive pleasures and the attendant trappings of high culture.[23] Yet Conrad Grayson is neither a Trimalchio nor a Gatsby, and his first editions transcend mere ornamentation. Rather, in the manner of Edmond Dantès, he has read his books and given them serious contemplation. His lecture to Emily on the meaning of *Tamerlane* demonstrates his air of superiority towards those with a lesser level of education and, consequently, lesser familiarity with classics of world literature.

Season 3 features another example of Conrad's didactic tendencies. Convinced by Emily that he is dying of Huntington's Disease and has only a short time to live, Conrad turns a surreptitious country drive into an opportunity to quote Shakespeare to Victoria and her long-lost son, Patrick (Justin Hartley):

> *[VICTORIA and PATRICK are unpacking her personal art collection in the foyer of Grayson Manor. The revving of an engine is heard, and CONRAD enters from outside, a red sports car visible in the open doorway.]*
>
> VICTORIA *[to CONRAD]*: You fool! You do remember that the doctors revoked your license?
>
> CONRAD: That Testarossa represents my salad days.

> *[VICTORIA rolls her eyes and mutters.]*
>
> CONRAD: Do you know what that means, Patrick? I trust they had Shakespeare in Cleveland.
>
> PATRICK *[genuinely perplexed]*: Did he play for the Indians?
>
> CONRAD *[quoting]*: "My salad days / When I was green in judgment" and "cold in blood" — something with which I'm sure you are…familiar. *[To VICTORIA, and gesturing at the car]* Now feel free to sell it along with the rest of my happiness. Not that my happiness has ever been worth anything to you.[24]

By quoting from *Antony and Cleopatra* (1.5.88–89), Conrad suggests that the end of his life — a life of grandiose ambition and appetite — is nothing less than tragic, with Victoria playing an indifferent Cleopatra to his dying Antony. Above all, his Shakespearean remembrance affords him leverage over Patrick, whom he condescendingly and contemptuously educates.

When not using classical antiquity, or material derived from it, to score forceful rhetorical points, Conrad also alludes more generally to elements of classical mythology in the form of offhand quips. For example, this response to an angry look from Victoria, who refuses to cooperate with the media during her husband's ill-fated run for Governor of New York:

> VICTORIA *[seeing the CAMERA CREW that CONRAD has invited to Grayson Manor]*: Conrad, what is this?
>
> CONRAD: The full-access tour for the *Nightline* audience. *[To the CREW]* Would you mind if we take a few minutes before Miss Chang's arrival?
>
> *[The CREW disperses. VICTORIA glowers.]*
>
> CONRAD *[to VICTORIA]*: Now, now, now. Before you turn me to stone with that look, you left me with little choice, my dear.[25]

Or his observation on finding vases of dead flowers in the arboretum of Grayson Manor:

> CONRAD *[to VICTORIA, who appears in frame, background]*: Your hydrangeas are dead. Time was, you cared for them like they were gifts from Chloris herself.[26]

Mythical allusions like these — comparing his wife to a Gorgon or referencing the Greek goddess of flowers — occur across the series' run and are typical of Conrad's casual banter. Erudition meets wit as the Grayson patriarch spars with friends and foes alike.

RECALLING MOMUS / AVOIDING BLAME

(CONTENT ADVISORY: The following section discusses the prosecution of a rape.)

The parochial depiction of classical learning on *Revenge*, despite the pronounced lack of diversity among its adherents, largely smacks of quaintness. It is altogether tempting to dismiss Conrad Grayson's allusions to the Classics, much like Hans Gruber's Alexander reference in *Die Hard* or Louis' philological pastimes in *Monte Cristo*, as charming affectation or even fatuousness. Even on those occasions where Conrad's allusions rise, like the dinner-party lectures of Edmond Dantès, to the level of the didactic, they seem little more than upper-class ostentation: helpful for locating his character within an exclusive matrix of identities, but incidental to the plot.

A crucial exception comes in season 4, where Conrad mobilizes classical allusion to help his son, Daniel, resolve a moral dilemma. Although he was murdered at the end of season 3, Conrad makes a one-off guest appearance in the middle of the next season via the venerable soap-opera device of the flashback. As Daniel reflects on the wreckage of his life, he recalls two conversations with his father dating to his

time at Harvard. While attending a college party, Daniel had witnessed a wealthy fraternity brother, Drew Anderson, sexually assaulting a young woman named Gina, and he resolved to testify on her behalf. In the first flashback, Conrad declares that he has "called in a favor" and has had Daniel expunged from the witness list, in order to discourage him from incriminating Drew and, by extension, his powerful family. Against Daniel's protests, Conrad offers wisdom passed down from his own father: "This world we've created is made up of gods and insects… Don't concern yourself with the well-being of ants, son."[27] His rhetoric, while not purely classical, nevertheless evokes the imbalance of power between omnipotent gods and helpless mortals in countless Greco-Roman myths.

Conrad's ruthless advocacy of patriarchy and fraternity do not sit well with the idealistic Daniel. In the second flashback, after writing his father a letter declaring his intention to testify, Daniel finds himself mere steps from the Suffolk County Courthouse — when Conrad's limousine pulls up behind him. It is here that Conrad makes the most sustained and pointed classical allusion of the entire series:

> CONRAD *[from the back seat]*: I received your letter. A beautifully penned suicide note.
>
> DANIEL: Please don't try to stop me, Dad.
>
> CONRAD *[getting out of the car]*: I won't. Forget it. You're a man now, facing the first real choice of your adult life. I simply want you to be aware of its implications. *[After a pause]* So, do you remember the fable of Momus?
>
> DANIEL: Yeah, the god of writers and poets. He criticized his fellow gods for their shortcomings.
>
> CONRAD: And how was he rewarded for his honesty?
>
> DANIEL: They banished him from Olympus.
>
> *[CONRAD nods.]*
>
> DANIEL: So that's why you're here — to threaten me?
>
> CONRAD: No. No, no, I'm here to warn you, son. Look, siding with that girl, wronged as she may be, sends a message to your peers. These are the same people who may one day hold your future in their hands. Now, you do this today, and they will turn their backs on you just as surely as the gods banished Momus.
>
> DANIEL: Yeah, well, I guess I'll have to make it on my own.
>
> *[He turns to enter the courthouse. CONRAD restrains him.]*
>
> CONRAD: Daniel, I beg you to consider what that means. I mean, do you really believe that you can still succeed out here, in the real world, based on your own ingenuity and talent? Because I couldn't — and that's not easy for me to admit, but that's the truth. Luckily, we were both born with a great advantage: our family legacy. I mean, do you really want to throw that precious gift away on this? Ask yourself: Is this the cause you want to risk everything on?
>
> *[DANIEL hesitates, then grabs the letter from CONRAD. He enters the limo with a rueful glance at the courthouse. CONRAD seats himself next to him. DANIEL raises the car's tinted window.]*[28]

Momus, the deified persona of blame or censure, has a long legacy, from Hesiod (*Theogony* 214), to Aesop (*Fables* 518), to Lucian (*Deorum concilium*), to Giordano Bruno (*The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*, 1584) and beyond. Although the god was not widely associated with literary endeavors, such as satire, until the post-classical period, Conrad's labeling of his story as a "fable" clearly points to the Aesopic tradition, where Momus critiques the work of Zeus and others:

> The story goes that Zeus, Poseidon, and Athena were arguing about who could make something truly good. Zeus made the most excellent of all animals, man, while Athena made a house for people to live in, and, when it was his turn, Poseidon made a bull. Momus was selected to judge the competition, for he was still living among the gods at that time. Given that Momus was inclined to dislike them all, he immediately started to criticize the bull for not having eyes under his horns to let him take aim when he gored something; he criticized man for not having been given a window into his heart so that his neighbor could see what he was planning; and he criticized the house because it had not been made with iron wheels at its base, which would have made it possible for the owners of the house to move it from place to place when they went travelling.[29]

As striking as it is to see Aesop's fable incorporated into prime-time soap opera, even more remarkable, if not unsettling, is the use to which it is put. First, the story of Momus provides a shared context for contemplating Daniel's dilemma, a convenient shorthand between a pair of highly educated aristocrats. For once, the conversation is two-sided: Conrad introduces the myth knowing full well that Daniel will both recognize it and grasp its implications without need of further glossing or explanation. This is sound strategy on Conrad's part. If his objective is to awaken his son's sense of privilege, then the story itself — familiarity with which is a mark of privilege — serves to remind Daniel of all he stands to lose by testifying.

Second, Momus provides an opportunity to moralize, in keeping with both the tradition of Aesopic fables and the didactic nature of Conrad himself. Aesop's morals are either embedded in the actual narratives (as *endomythia*) or appended to the endings (*epimythia*). In *Fables* 518, an *epimythium* advises the reader to persist in the face of criticism: "Try to make something, and do not let envy pass judgment on it. Nothing is satisfying to someone who is a Momus."[30] But Conrad sees a wholly different moral, in the same vein of identifying with gods and safeguarding Daniel from losing his own divine station — even if the result is the perversion of justice. All told, the fable of Momus is a fitting epilogue for Henry Czerny's character, a final opportunity for Conrad to reference classical material. And not only to reference, but also, for the first and only time on *Revenge*, to leverage it toward exerting profound influence on the narrative.

Conclusion: Taking (stock of) *Revenge*

Revenge offers the viewing public a model of classical learning set squarely in the domain of the wealthy, conservative elite. In this, and in its narrative focus on vengeance, the show follows the model established by Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*. However, unlike Edmond Dantès, the protagonist of the nineteenth-century novel, Emily Thorne does not use classical erudition to infiltrate her enemies and enact her revenge. Instead, such erudition becomes the preserve of the villainous Grayson family, who misuse it not only to show their superiority, but also to foster contempt for social accountability. Conrad, the Grayson patriarch, is particularly disposed toward this tactic. By advocating a corrupt version of ancient *paideia*, or civic education, Conrad weaponizes the Classics and contravenes the public good that is their ostensible outcome.

What might actual classicists — teachers, students, and other practitioners of the discipline — make of this? On one hand, Conrad's underhanded moralizing comes by way of a prime-time soap opera, whose primary goal is to entertain. On the other hand, there might well be uncomfortable lessons to derive from how *Revenge* and other products of popular culture depict classical learning and its role — that is, its benefits — in society.[31]

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FIGURES

FIGURE A. Bust of Hygeia near the Graysons' dining room. Madeleine Stowe/Victoria Grayson.
(Episode 2.21, "Truth: Part 1," 13:44.)

FIGURE B. Bust of Thalia in the Graysons' sitting room. Roger Bart/Mason Treadwell.
(Episode 1.12, "Infamy," 30:47.)

FIGURE C. Statue of a kneeling nymph in the Graysons' foyer.
Emily VanCamp/Emily Thorne; Josh Bowman/Daniel Grayson. (Episode 3.4, "Mercy," 36:14.)

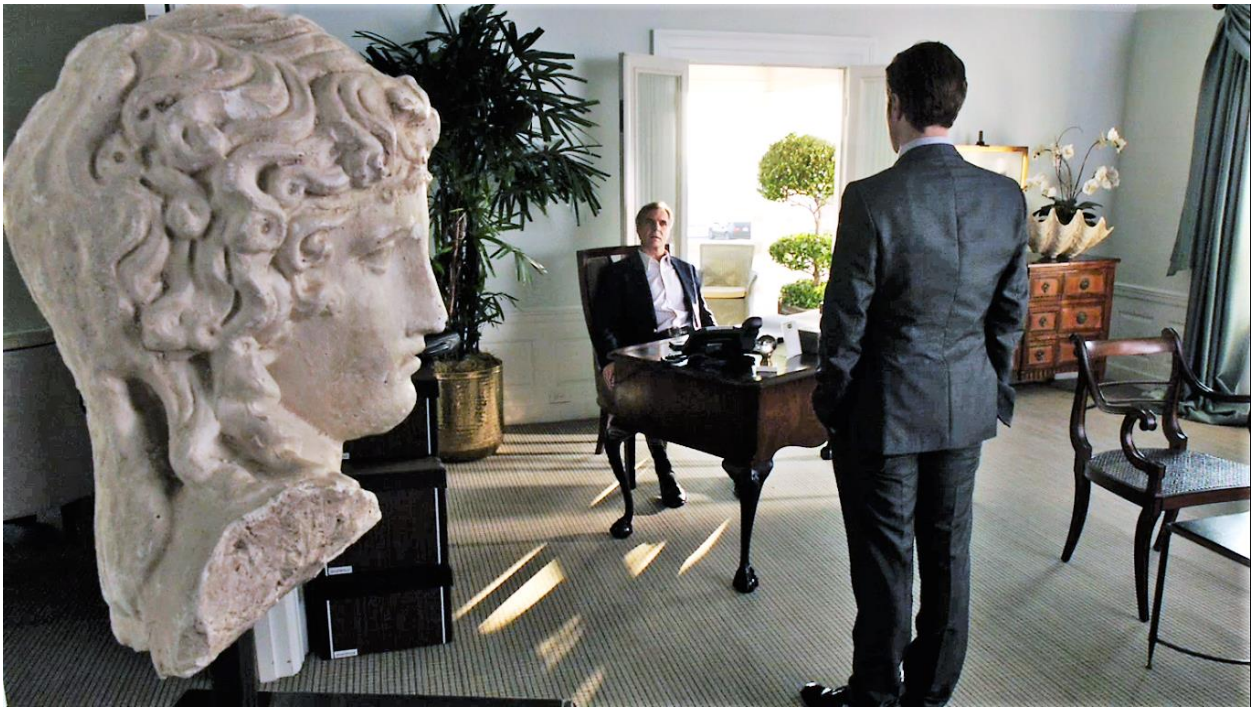

FIGURE D. Bust of Eros Centocelle looming in Conrad's office.
Henry Czerny/Conrad Grayson; Ashton Holmes/Tyler Barrol. (Episode 1.10, "Loyalty," 26:38.)

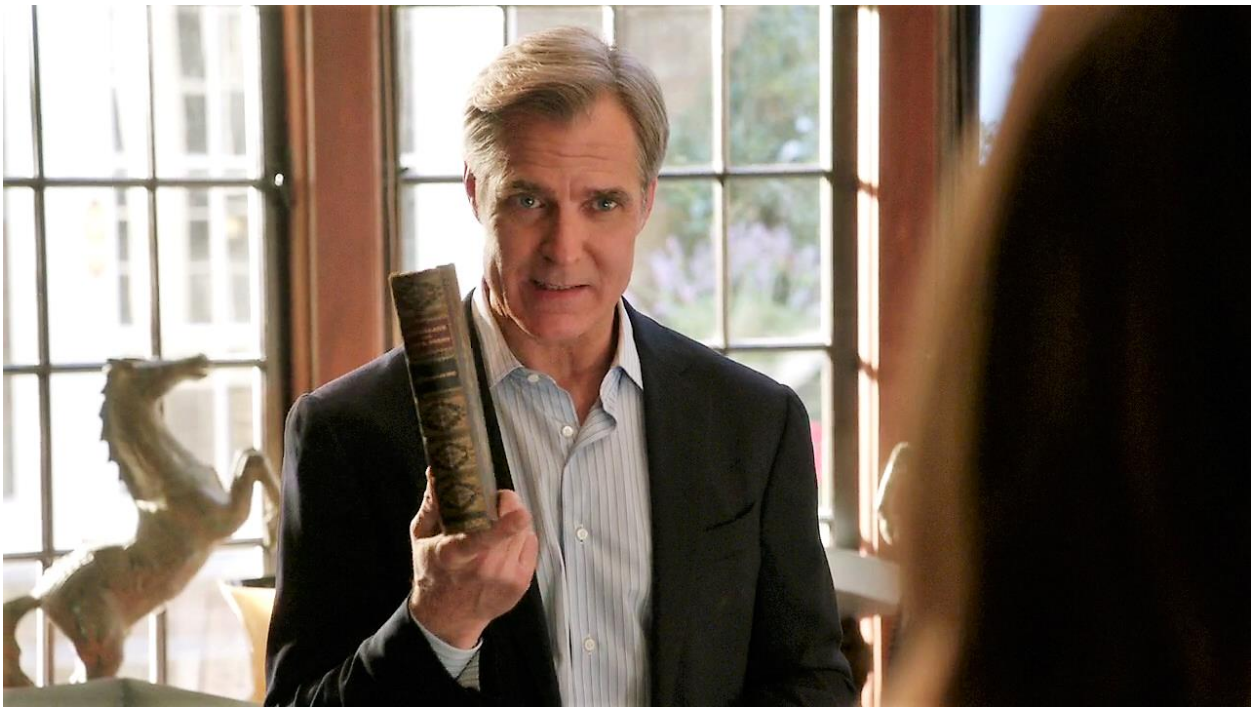

FIGURE E. Conrad presenting Emily with his first edition of Poe's *Tamerlane*.
Henry Czerny/Conrad Grayson; Emily VanCamp/Emily Thorne. (Episode 3.13, "Hatred", 6:55.)

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Dallas. 1978–1991. Lorimar Productions. 2012–2014. Warner Horizon Television.

Die Hard. 1988. Directed by John McTiernan. Twentieth Century Fox.

Revenge. 2011–2015. ABC Television Studios.

ENDNOTES

[1] Great Recession: The financial crisis originating in the U.S. with global repercussions. See Duignan 2019.

[2] *Die Hard*, 27:33–28:00.

[3] *Die Hard*, 01:52:36–01:53:03.

[4] Compare Plutarch, *De tranquilitate animi* 4: "Alexander wept when he heard from Anaxarchus that there was an infinite number of worlds. When his friends asked him what was the matter, he replied, 'Do not you think it worthy of tears that, when there is such a vast multitude of worlds, we have not yet conquered one?'" (translation: Goodwin 1874, modified for clarity). Although Plutarch's Alexander weeps over the prospect of conquering worlds, he has no hope of achieving complete dominion. Gruber's Alexander, however, has achieved total dominion and laments the impossibility of achieving more.

[5] Great Books: A curriculum established at American universities in the early 20th century and epitomized at the University of Chicago in the 1930s and beyond; see Adler 2016, 67–72. Hampel 2017, 46–49, describes the commercialization of the Great Books canon and its predecessor, the Harvard Classics, with complete libraries sold door-to-door throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

[6] *Revenge* even pays homage to *Dallas*: the local inn is called The South Fork, which, in addition to being the Long Island peninsula that includes the Hamptons, also recalls the original Texas ranch, The Southfork.

[7] On the poetics of contemporary prime-time soap operas see Mittell 2015, chapter 7 ("Serial Melodrama").

[8] "Delightful note": Dumas 1996/1844,102. Horatian snippets: *mala ducis avi domum* (*Odes* 1.15.5), 103; *molli fugies* [sic] *anhelitu* (1.15.31), 107. Vergil: *bella, horrida bella* (*Aeneid* 6.86), 103. Plutarch: "The greatest captains of antiquity recreated themselves by throwing pebbles into the ocean: see Plutarch's life of Scipio Africanus," 104. Note, however, that the *Life of Scipio* is lost, though this no more prevents Dumas' monarch from recommending it than a corruption of Plutarch prevents Hans Gruber from recalling Alexander the Great in *Die Hard*. The source of Louis' recollection might be Lempriére 1835, 615, who describes a retired Scipio and his friend Laelius "on the seashore, picking up light pebbles and throwing them on the smooth surface of the waters," perhaps in imitation of Cicero, *de Senectute* 2.22.

[9] Lucullus: Dumas 1996/1844, 856; Nero: 855.

[10] Seneca, *Naturales Quaestiones* 3.18.1; Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 9.66.

[11] Dumas 1996/1844, 856.

[12] *Satyricon* 26–78.

[13] Trimalchio's claims: *Satyricon* 48.7. Trimalchio's "Trojan Horse": 52.2. His pretensions have long been noted in the scholarship. For example, Smith 1975, 134, comments on Trimalchio's "pretensions to good

taste." Boyce 1991, 102, finds his speech "an improbable compound of fancy, social pretension, and earthy reality." Connors 1998, 21, notes how Trimalchio's misunderstandings about Corinthian bronze (*Satyricon* 50.5–6) reveal his "foolish and ignorant pretensions."

[14] Dumas 1996/1844, 856.

[15] Episode 2.21 ("Truth: Part 1"), 13:44. Hygeia (350–325 BCE): Athens 3602.

[16] Episode 1.12 ("Infamy"), 30:47. Thalia (2nd century CE): Vatican Museums, Museo Gregoriano Profano.

[17] Episode 3.4 ("Mercy"), 36:14. Nymph (1st–2nd century CE): British Museum 1805,0703.13.

[18] Episode 1.10 ("Loyalty"), 26:38. Eros Centocelle (1st century CE): Vatican Museums, Galleria delle Statue 250.

[19] Daniel's ninth-grade Latin teacher makes a brief, mostly off-screen appearance at a party celebrating his engagement to Emily: episode 3.8 ("Secrecy"), 25:50–26:01.

[20] *Paradise Lost*: Episode 1.12 ("Infamy"), especially 23:57–24:37.

[21] Episode 3.13 ("Hatred"), 6:23–7:21.

[22] Description of Gatsby's library: Fitzgerald 1925/2004, 45. Owl Eyes and uncut pages: 46.

[23] The working title of Fitzgerald's novel was, at one point, *Trimalchio*: MacKendrick 1950, 1.

[24] Episode 3.3 ("Confession"), 8:50–9:19.

[25] Episode 2.19 ("Identity"), 21:25–21:45.

[26] Episode 3.19 ("Allegiance"), 10:35–10:45.

[27] Episode 4.10 ("Atonement"), 8:26–9:53 (excerpted).

[28] Episode 4.10 ("Atonement"), 28:00–30:19.

[29] Aesop, *Fables* 518. Translation: Gibbs 2008. 239.

[30] Aesop, *Fables* 518. Translation: Gibbs 2008, 239.

[31] A footnote to begin the conversation. *Revenge* uses the Classics to mark, among other identities, whiteness. Of the show's few non-white characters, none engage in the classical allusions reserved for the white elite — not even Emily/Amanda's foster brother, Eli James (Collins Pennie), an ersatz seller of rare books; or Ashley Davenport (Ashley Madekwe), a Grayson employee with a master's degree in art history. The exclusion of black characters from classical discourse in popular culture might call to mind the appropriation of the Classics by white supremacist groups in the name of Western cultural patrimony and racial purity. Bond 2017, for example, links popular misconceptions about white marble statuary with contemporary ideologies of white male superiority. For the resulting backlash against Bond in conservative publications, as well as death threats from alt-right groups, see Quintana 2017. See also McCoskey 2018 on classical (mis)appropriations at the August 2017 "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. Another example: The documented experiences of people of color from within classical studies, which point to systemic bias on the part of white classicists, from microaggressions to acts of outright gatekeeping; see Chae 2018.