

The Classical Tradition

Art, Literature,
Thought

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Sustaining the Tradition

Classics and Education

In 1720, Antoine Coypel, history painter in the grand manner, delivered an address to the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in Paris in which he expounded the requirements for practising artists, and specifically their need for a broad base of knowledge. The areas of expertise specified include various technical matters, including perspective and proportion, but it is the broadly cultural and less specifically painterly items that predominate: poetry and philosophy; history, 'sacred, profane, or fabulous'; rhetoric (because, like the orator, the painter must 'teach, please, and touch the heart'); and opening the list, and evidently a prerequisite of the list as a whole, 'a thorough acquaintance with the humanities'.¹

Coypel's prescription is striking in that it seems to assume a direct relationship between creative outcomes and formal classical education (where else would the artist get his 'thorough acquaintance with the humanities', quite apart from full access to rhetoric or to 'fabulous' – meaning mythological – history?). That assumption is not necessarily unusual, over the centuries, even if it is not always quite so obvious. A century later, the painter Ingres can be heard proclaiming that any suggestion of an artist getting by 'without studying antiquity and the classics' is either 'madness or laziness',² while extensive classical learning underlies the observations (as well as the artistic practice) of leading figures, from the humanist architect

¹ 'une grande teinture des humanités': H. Jouin, *Conférences de l'académie royale de peinture et de sculpture* (1883), p. 277.

² Recorded by Ingres's friend the Vicomte Henri Delaborde, in his *Ingres, sa vie, ses travaux, sa doctrine* (1890), p. 138.

Alberti in the fifteenth century to the 'peintre philosophe' Poussin in the seventeenth.³

But what is much more profusely attested in the published thoughts of artists is debate over the pros and cons (and after Poussin's century, increasingly the cons) of a technical upbringing centred on learning to draw from classical models. For many artists, the value of such a training had once been axiomatic, as it was for Poussin's older contemporary, Guido Reni:

Once asked by a pupil which exemplars he drew [his] noble forms and fair faces from . . . he showed him a few common plaster heads cast from antique statues – the Niobe, the Medici Venus and others – and replied: 'These are my teachers'.⁴

From the eighteenth century onwards, such practices are increasingly called into question. Witness this, from Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin to the admission jury of the Paris Academy in 1765:

When we are seven or eight years old, a pencil is put in our hands. We start drawing from the cast . . . Our backs have long been bent over our boards, when we are put in front of a Hercules or an antique torso, and you have not been a witness to the tears that the Satyr, the Gladiator, the Venus de' Medici, the Antaeus, have caused to flow . . . After withering for days and nights . . . we are presented with living nature, and suddenly all the years gone by seem wasted.⁵

The relevance of these modes of technical training to the classical tradition is self-evident. Equally, though, they have only a tangential connection to classical education as such – in obvious contrast to the observations of Ingres or, especially, Coppel. We begin our overview of classical education with this contrast for two reasons: to make it clear that in certain respects the visual arts have their own story (§11), which means that, for the moment, it is 'literature' and 'thought' that take centre stage; but conversely to note how pervasive the demand for 'acquaintance with the humanities' was, in what can properly be called the classicizing age.

Traditions depend on a continual investment in cultural practices; and the classical tradition, however eccentric in other ways, is a case in point. Such practices are often organized by specially trained 'priests of meaning', men (they have been, usually, men) who do their work of cultivation within specific institutional contexts for specific social groups with a vested interest in sustaining their activities. Across the world's cultures, these cultivators have included Brahmins and mandarins,

³ Alberti: §§11, 30. Poussin: cf. the observations published by his biographer, G. P. Bellori, *Le vite de' pittori, scultori, ed architetti moderni* (1672), pp. 460–2, though the actual phrase 'philosopher-painter' seems to be late-XVIII: Blunt (1967), 3. 160.

⁴ Bellori, *Le vite* (1672), p. 6.

⁵ Recorded by Diderot in his review of the Salon of 1765, and quoted by the brothers Goncourt, *L'art du XVIII^e siècle* (1873–4), 1. 130–1. A similar debate is still exercising the late-XIX British art world: Barrow (2007) 102–3.

rabbis and mullahs, monks and theologians, scribes and scholars, and – our special concern here – schoolmasters and planners and overseers of education.⁶ And the formal cultivation of Greco-Roman antiquity, after its actual demise, is conducted largely by such men, within such institutional contexts. These contexts are realities, as much as the individuals who belong to them. And no less a reality is the fact that, within its educational contexts (and like many ‘traditions’, again), the classical tradition has, for long periods, been sustained by a nexus of power and knowledge, and by mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, disenfranchisement and privilege.

From antiquity until fairly recently, an education rooted in the learning of Latin (and, at various times, Greek) and the study of the Latin classics (with or without their Greek counterparts) has served powerful segments of successive populations: top people in the court and the Church; emperors interested in imperial bureaucracies; rising nation-states concerned to unify their citizens through a prestigious and coherent cultural prospectus; empire builders bent on training an elite to rule the world.⁷ And in Britain, for instance, one can easily trace the correlations, over the centuries, between a traditional, language-centred, classical education and a class system based on land and wealth, then between the weakening of the class system at large, during the twentieth century, and the displacement and attenuation of that version of classical education, in favour of the natural sciences, on the one hand, and modern languages and literatures, on the other.

The opening section of a much-loved comic history of England, first published in 1930, and epitomizing what was once known as ‘public-school humour’, makes explicit (with considerable self-deprecating irony) the correlation of classics and class that was already – not that the humour hints at it – fatally undermined. From its premise of shared familiarity with school-classics topoi (variously abbreviated, parodied, or inverted) to a choice acknowledgement of the norms of class/colonial superiority at the end, the passage sums up a whole era of exclusive educational provision:

The first date in English History is 55 BC, in which year Julius Caesar (the *memorable* Roman Emperor) landed, like all other successful invaders of these islands, at Thanet. This was in the Olden Days, when the Romans were top nation on account of their classical education . . . [Having already] defeated the Ancient Britons by unfair means . . . [Caesar] set the memorable Latin sentence ‘Veni, Vidi, Vici,’ which the Romans, who were all very well educated, construed correctly. The Britons, however, who of course still used the old pronunciation, understanding him to have called them ‘Weeny, Weedy and Weak’, lost heart and gave up the struggle, thinking that he had already divided them into Three Parts . . . The Roman Conquest was, however, a *Good Thing*, since the Britons were only natives at that time.⁸

⁶ Cf. Assmann and Assmann (1987) 12–13. Scholars: §16.

⁷ Empire builders: see e.g. Vasunia (2011).

⁸ W. C. Sellar and R. J. Yeatman, *1066 and All That* (1930), ch. 1. The book was published on 16 October 1930, and by December was already on its eighth printing.

Investment in classical learning as an exclusive undertaking has entailed discrimination, not only on the basis of social class, but also of gender. The remarkable, and traditionally male, activity of composing Latin verses in classical metres is paradigmatic here. Such composition has rarely been 'a mark of personal literary ambition', but rather 'a defining ability of the educated elite from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century'; and 'any woman who has left an oeuvre of Latin verse, whatever its poetic merit, was by definition occupying a space normally regarded as belonging entirely to men.'⁹

The history of classical education is thus, in part, a history of struggle between the defenders of privilege and excluded groups anxious to get a share of it. In eighteenth-century England, Samuel Johnson's accomplished friend Mrs Carter 'could make a pudding as well as translate Epictetus';¹⁰ around 1500, Cassandra Fedele was even invited to deliver a Latin address in praise of literature, to the Doge and Senate of Venice, in which (courtesy of the humanist Giorgio Valla) she proposed to 'seek immortality' through learned study;¹¹ but until recent generations, formal opportunities for women to make progress in the classical domain, alongside the culinary, have been few.¹² In 1399, towards the end of the French Middle Ages, Europe's first professional woman writer, Christine de Pizan, composed a verse critique of the thirteenth-century *Romance of the Rose* and its apparent sexism (much of it introduced by the learned Jean de Meun, translator of Boethius' Latin *Consolatio* into French prose). Her response to the work was at the same time a challenge to a male monopoly on writing and learning – Latin learning – from which women in general were excluded.¹³ A hundred years earlier still, in his 'Banquet', Dante is explicit in assuming that, even among the nobility, most women will know no Latin.¹⁴ *Plus ça change* . . . In sixteenth-century France, the great humorist François Rabelais floats the whimsical thought that 'even women and girls have come to aspire to the glorious celestial manna of sound [i.e. classical] learning'.¹⁵ His compatriot Michel de Montaigne, more soberly, notes that 'except for education and custom, the difference between [male and female] is not great';¹⁶ and as recently as the early twentieth century, the novelist Virginia Woolf is found lamenting her inferior instruction in the Greek language, which, she evidently supposes, prevents her from fully partaking in the ultimate cultural source of human wholeness.¹⁷

⁹ Stevenson (2005) 20–1. At the Canterbury school founded by Theodore and Hadrian, Latin verse composition was taught as early as VII (e.g. to Aldhelm): Lapidge (1979) 211.

¹⁰ Johnson's own words: G. B. Hill, *Johnsonian Miscellanies* (1897), 2. 11.

¹¹ Robin (2000) 159–62. Other women humanists: King and Rabil (1983).

¹² In modern times, Jane Harrison is the first big success-story: Beard (2000), Robinson (2002). Cf. n. 52 below.

¹³ Gaunt (1989), Solterer (1995).

¹⁴ *Convivio* (c. 1305), 1. 9.

¹⁵ Gargantua's letter to Pantagruel: *Pantagruel* (1532), ch. 8.

¹⁶ *Essais*, 3. 5 (closing sentences: our emphasis).

¹⁷ Goldhill (2002) 234; generally, Waquet (2001), Winterer (2007).

In classics teaching over the centuries, there have been striking differences between educational systems in different countries (even those as geographically close as England and Scotland);¹⁸ likewise between different systems in any one era (since World War II, practices in the English-speaking world have diverged sharply from those in Continental Europe); likewise, also, *within* any one system in a given era (the differences between Oxford and Cambridge in the eighteenth century are a case in point).¹⁹ Even so, over the millennium and a half of the classical tradition there has been a clear trajectory in the rationale of a classical education and the rationale of the classical within education overall. Three main phases are distinguishable: the classical as a vocational, practical, even technical guide; the classical as the basis for an elite 'humane' education; and the classical as one basis for general education, but an academic specialism among others. In terms of eras, the first corresponds roughly to the Middle Ages, but continues beyond; the second runs from the end of the fifteenth century to (depending on which culture and which level of educational provision one has in mind) somewhere around the end of the nineteenth; the third to the modern period since then. In terms of focus, the first centres on the learning of medieval or scholastic Latin, *lingua franca* of the medieval world; the second on the acquisition of classical Latin, with or without Greek; the third on exposure to Greek and Roman literature, thought, and civilization, with or without significant reference to the ancient languages – in the English-speaking world, increasingly, and at all levels, *without*.

That last development, a departure from the most venerable of educational practices, can be read in different ways – perhaps as a demographic breakthrough, with the hitherto underprivileged at last granted access to educational resources once available only to the social elite. The most striking instance here is the GI bill enacted in the USA in the wake of World War II, which rendered a university education affordable to those who had paid their dues in the armed services. For the first time, university education meant 'mass education', and institutions of higher learning had to adjust to an influx of students from families with little exposure to high culture. One of these adjustments (in line with the already established American tradition of 'great books' teaching)²⁰ was to teach 'classics in translation' – a practice subsequently adopted across the British educational systems too.

Alternatively, the fact of – perhaps especially the symbolism of – such delinguifying can be seen as a symptom and instrument of decline: part of the levelling down that passes for progress in the modern world. 'In the 1920s,' a Canadian scholar recalled, decades later, 'the mere thought of ancient literature in translation would have been as repellent as . . . allowing women to smoke in public – wearing trousers.'²¹ Contemplating an earlier stage of this democratizing process in England,

¹⁸ Clarke (1959) 133–59.

¹⁹ Ibid. 61–73: in XVIII, Cambridge (but not Oxford) 'abandoned the ancient authorities and took Newton and Locke as her masters' (ibid. 68).

²⁰ Pioneered in 1919 at Columbia University by John Erskine under a 'General Honors' rubric.

²¹ Quoted by Hall (2008c) 319.

mindful of the rise of the 'average man' in America,²² mindful too of recent and impending provision of school-level state education on the British side of the Atlantic,²³ Matthew Arnold (himself a schools inspector, as well as literary and cultural critic) proposed a radical solution: students must continue to encounter the classical, but rather than having it mediated by reading ancient texts in English translation, their engagement with the classical could take place through the immediacy of the classics of English literature that themselves embody the classical. Above all, Arnold was exercised by the difficulty of translating poetry – especially poetry in the 'great style' – and here he looked instead to the poetry of Milton:

The verse of the poets of Greece and Rome no translation can adequately reproduce . . . In our race are thousands of readers, presently there will be millions, who know not a word of Greek and Latin, and will never learn these languages. If this host of readers are ever to gain any sense of the power and charm of the great poets of antiquity, their way to gain it is not through translations of the ancients, but through the original poetry of Milton, who has the like power and charm, because he has the like great style.²⁴

Since Arnold's day, the study of English literature in the educational systems of the English-speaking world (and likewise the study of other native literatures in other nations) has indeed assumed a prominent, and often dominant, position within what is still labelled 'the humanities'²⁵ – but seldom with Arnold's particular agenda in mind.

Ironically enough, Arnold's century, in England and elsewhere, is in some ways not one of attrition, as far as formal classical education is concerned, but the opposite. Here, one can point to reforms and revivals within the British public schools, which led to something of a reassertion of language-based classics for the rising bourgeoisie,²⁶ but especially to the new system of secondary education – the 'humanistische Gymnasium' – inaugurated in 1809/10 by Wilhelm von Humboldt in Germany. As Prussian minister of education, Humboldt had a unique opportunity to put a neo-humanist vision into practice; and though the challenge to develop a new system was created, no doubt, by external factors (a climate of revolution, a drive for modern nationhood, the separation of Church and state), and though the

²² A development presciently read by Nietzsche, around the same time, as a mark of 'democratic' (yes-we-can) self-confidence akin to that of the Periclean Age. In ancient Athens, and now in modern America, individuals feel 'they can do just about anything': *Fröhliche Wissenschaft* (2nd edn, 1887), section 356.

²³ The Education Acts of 1870 and 1902 instituted state education at primary and secondary levels respectively.

²⁴ 'Milton' (in *Essays in Criticism*, second series), 1888.

²⁵ In restricted educational contexts, the label retains its old connection with Greek and (esp.) Latin: §16 n. 24.

²⁶ Or 'grammar schools', of which 'public schools' were a subsection. At the end of XVIII, Eton, even, 'was only the largest and most important of the grammar schools': Clarke (1959) 74. The distinction (eventually one of status) is originally a matter of catchment area: 'public' schools took pupils from far and wide. See generally *ibid.* 74–97, Stray (1998) 30–45.

choice of classics was partly pragmatic (as a convenient *rite de passage* for a new, secular, and not exclusively aristocratic, ruling class) – even so, it was still Humboldt's initiative, as 'theorist' of the 'true, new Hellenism' of his age,²⁷ to install the ancient languages, 'Hellenic' and Roman, too, at the centre of elite education for a century and more.²⁸ In re-emergent Italy, the *liceo classico* was created in 1859 on comparable lines – though without quite the same visionary aspiration – while the original model for all such outcomes was the Napoleonic *lycée* in France, instituted in 1802 and centred (in accordance with the prevailing inclinations of French classicism) on Latin. Across the four nations, these institutional developments had something of a nationalistic impetus; in the next century this was to become most marked in Italy, where the *liceo classico* was especially privileged.²⁹

Against this background, the recent innovations in educational practice, throughout the English-speaking world, take on a special significance, in contrast to a reluctance to innovate elsewhere. To this day, Continental Europe, by and large, has been unable or unwilling to take the decisive step of divorcing study of the ancient world from tuition in Latin and Greek, or of providing for both – however limiting, in a mass-democratic age, a continuing association between language-based classics, on the one hand, and socially and politically conservative elites, on the other. In the French student demonstrations of the late 1960s, "Down with Latin" became one of the reformers' rallying cries, while, 'when the Italian parliament debated keeping Latin in the middle-class *liceo* but not in the socially inferior *scuola media* in 1962–3, the argument proceeded along party lines: the Christian Democrats defended Latin and the Socialists and Communists opposed it.'³⁰ In Britain, with much of the old association with privilege gone (and decades after symptomatic egalitarian developments like the abolition of Greek and Latin as general entry requirements for admission to Oxford and Cambridge),³¹ there are, currently, active initiatives for the teaching of classical languages in inner-city schools,³² while in the state secondary sector the demand for Latin teachers now exceeds the supply.³³

²⁷ Pfeiffer (1976) 170. Humboldt: Benner (2003), Menze (1975).

²⁸ Despite much criticism ('we should be raising young Germans, not young Greeks and Romans' – this, from Kaiser Wilhelm II, recalling his own traumatic experience of classical-language learning, in a speech of 4 December 1890 – Röhl 2001: 431), the humanist *Gymnasium* retained its position until reforms in the 1960s significantly reduced hours of tuition in the classical languages. Meanwhile it had become a model for educational institutions elsewhere, from Greece to the USA.

²⁹ Until 1969, only graduates from the *liceo classico* had access to all forms of higher education. The classicism of all these various institutions is enshrined in their names: *Gymnasium* and Italian *ginnasio* look back to educational centres in ancient Greece (*gymnasia*), as *lycée/liceo* does to Aristotle's school in the Lyceum in Athens – and as 'Academy' (intermittent designation of schools and other educational institutions in many countries) does to the site of Plato's school, in Athens again.

³⁰ Kallendorf (2010) 298.

³¹ In 1920 (Greek) and 1960 (Latin).

³² Notably London's Iris project; the Bronx Latin School in New York has the same rationale. The West London Free School, a 'free' state school set up in 2011 by British journalist Toby Young, is (its mission statement declares) 'a school with a classical curriculum'.

³³ Cf. Chris Arnot, 'A Classic Case of Undersupply', *The Guardian*, 5 February 2008.

Old associations, of course, linger on. In some educated versions of the British popular mind, 'classics' still means 'ruling classes'. 'Unfortunately, the UK, possibly as a legacy of our colonial past, is [sic] run largely by classicists': this, from a Professor of Engineering in 2009.³⁴ His tone of weary outrage, it may be, was influenced by the recent election of an Oxford classics graduate, Boris Johnson, as Mayor of London in 2008, and a speech the new incumbent gave at his first press conference at City Hall, where he floated the thought that promoting classical (and other) language-learning in state schools might help to divert young people from the path of crime. Reactions to that speech included a revealing headline in Britain's mass-circulation daily, *The Sun*: 'Make Yobs Learn Latin.'³⁵ The headline, purporting amused surprise as if to some challenge to the existing order, relies on the same association as that activating the outraged engineer.

But popular associations are based on something, and in this case on what was once, in the not-too-distant past, a pervasive fact of cultural-educational life, in Britain and elsewhere. As the Western nations industrialized and prepared for world war during the nineteenth century and the early twentieth; as new science and new technology generated motorized travel on land, sea, and air, new means of communication and new modes of creative and commercial expression (photography, telephone, skyscraper, cinema, radio); as art recentred itself, in swift succession, on realism, on impressionism, on a series of new movements all the way to cubism and beyond; as literature, on a related trajectory, recentred itself on the realist novel and symbolist poetics; as long-standing habits of thought were challenged by Darwin and Einstein, by Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud – throughout these momentous developments, formal educational institutions (German *Gymnasium*, French *lycée*, Italian *liceo*, British public school and grammar school, American high school) all kept Greek and Latin embedded firmly and prominently in their curricula. The products of such an education duly staffed the professions, administered the apparatus of the state, became propagators of the classics in schools and universities in their turn. Whatever else it may have achieved, a classical education served, not least, to consolidate the social identity of the elite; its rationale, in this sense, was to enforce, within each nation, coherence and conformity.

That said, the effect of a training in the ancient languages on the individual, especially the imaginative individual, has always been unpredictable. It is easy to point to great creative figures with, seemingly, a less than comprehensive upbringing in the classics, who nevertheless bulk large within the classical tradition as elsewhere: Shakespeare, with his 'small Latin and less Greek', is one obvious example.³⁶ On the other side, we have those whose classical training, at notable institutions, impacted demonstrably and decisively on their later careers: Milton and Dryden at

³⁴ R. G. Austin, in a letter to *The Times* (London), 26 February 2009.

³⁵ *The Sun*, 5 June 2008.

³⁶ Ben Jonson's elegy 'To the Memory of . . . Shakespeare' (1623); his comment assumes the perspective of the linguistically qualified. Shakespeare's classical training is (still) variously estimated: Burrow (2004).

the public schools of St Paul's and Westminster; Racine at the Jansenist abbey of Port-Royal; Nietzsche at the boarding school (also once an abbey) of Pforta.³⁷ But then again, as far as conformity – social, institutional, intellectual – is concerned, no-one could be much less conformist than Nietzsche in the Humboldtian nineteenth century, or indeed than Milton in the neoclassical seventeenth.

The creative role of the individual (to restate the point) is as important as the determinative force of context, and in the educational sphere as much as anywhere else. Contrary to the simplistic assumptions of some cultural historians (and the academician Coppel), it is rarely possible to identify *necessary* connections between an institutional apparatus and human outcomes. Preoccupation with the classical has not disappeared in our time, despite a widespread absence of institutional support for it. Conversely, suppose one looks back – without any knowledge of historical context – to the creative *oeuvres* of Wordsworth or Stendhal, Caspar David Friedrich or Giuseppe Verdi or David Hume: one would hardly suspect, most of the time, that all these considerable figures lived in an age when the primacy of the classical was, broadly speaking, institutionalized across the Western world.³⁸ Conversely again, the triumph of vernacular literature that begins with Dante's *Commedia* (completed c. 1318) anticipates by around six hundred years the privileged place eventually occupied by vernacular languages and literatures within the educational systems of the West.

Clearly, the characteristic possibilities in any era are influenced by institutional norms – more or less – while the opportunity for individuals to transcend, or subvert, those norms may be imponderable. Clearly again, a tradition sustained makes unforeseen applications possible which might otherwise remain un(fore) seen. Yet if, beyond these generalities, there is one stretch of time within which a direct correlation between institutions and outcomes is broadly apparent, it must be the Middle Ages and the ensuing classical age, up to (roughly) the later seventeenth century: a period when Latin, in one or other version, is the international language (§13), and, in particular, when negotiations between the pagan classics and the Christian establishment often take centre stage. The developments in this period call for a more detailed examination.

The first Christian emperor, Constantine, already realized that religious scruples should not be allowed to get in the way of a training in the classics, making sure to assign to his three sons 'the most accomplished teachers of secular learning';³⁹ and training in grammar and approved texts, as a means of attaining facility in correct language, written or spoken, remained an important prerequisite for members of the imperial elite.⁴⁰ After the fall of the Western Empire, virtually all Greek learning,

³⁷ An equally impressive series of big names within the classical tradition were pupils of the Jesuits, from Tasso to Molière to James Joyce.

³⁸ It is true, but not the point, that (e.g.) Wordsworth knew and admired Latin poetry (Bush 1932/3) and that some of Hume's minor essays are classically focused (cf. Baumstark 2010).

³⁹ Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, 4. 51. Cf. Downey (1955) 57.

⁴⁰ See e.g. Matthews (1975), Kaster (1988).

and teaching, was confined to the Greek East, and it was left to monks and monasteries in the West to maintain the continuity of pedagogical or scholarly assimilation of classical – now meaning Latin – materials. In the sixth century, the senator Aurelius Cassiodorus established a syllabus, in his *Institutiones*, consisting of Christian and pagan texts: *divinae litterae* (Book 1) and *saeculares litterae* (Book 2). The latter he subdivided into what would become the seven liberal arts: grammar, rhetoric, dialectic, arithmetic, music, geometry, astronomy (subsequently grouped into sets of three and four, the elementary *trivium* and the advanced *quadrivium*).⁴¹

Given that the sacred texts of the Western Church were in Latin, the Christian establishment soon realized that it made sense to provide training for their priests in Latin grammar, and looked to canonical classical sources, in the shape of Aelius Donatus, most famous of the late-antique grammarians. Some, indeed, worried that the Latin (Vulgate) Bible itself did not always conform to the highest standards of good style.⁴² And who knew how God might assess a baptism that used a semi-literate formula like *Baptizo te in nomine Patria et Filia et Spiritu sancta*?⁴³ Virgil of Salzburg thought the sacrament must be valid and received the support of Pope Zachary. St Boniface disagreed: suppose the Lord were a stickler for correct Latin usage, howlers like this could well consign an unfortunate child to eternal damnation.⁴⁴

In the seventh and eighth centuries, relief for a war-torn continent came from the British Isles and the missionary zeal of Irish monks, who exported their standards of literacy and learning to England and beyond. When Charlemagne wished to corroborate his imperial sway with a cultural politics (later known as the Carolingian Renaissance), one of his most famous recruits was Alcuin of York, prolific writer of textbooks that spanned both the liberal arts and Biblical exegesis, and one of the brains behind the *Admonitio generalis* (789), which laid down stipulations for new schools as well as regulations for a new curriculum.⁴⁵ In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, these institutions evolved into the medieval universities (the first formal foundation was at Bologna in 1088),⁴⁶ in which the students could pursue more advanced studies in law, medicine, and theology, once they had mastered the

⁴¹ The system was immortalized by a verse mnemonic: 'GRAMM loquitur, DIA vera docet, RHET verba colorat, | MUS canit, AR numerat, GEO ponderat, AST colit astra': 'Gramm(ar) talks, dia(lectic) teaches truth, rhet(oric) gives colour to words, mus(ic) sings, ar(ithmetic) counts, geo(metry) weighs [sic], ast(ronomy) studies the stars': Sandys (1921) 670, Stroh (2007) 138.

⁴² Vulgate: §13 n. 5.

⁴³ Literally, 'I baptize you in the name fatherland and daughter and by the Holy Spirit': *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Epistolae Merovingici et Karolini Aevi*, vol. 1, ed. Dümmler (1892), p. 336. Linguistic perspective: Lepschy (2009).

⁴⁴ Letter of Zachary to Boniface, c. 746.

⁴⁵ Bullough (2004).

⁴⁶ Other early foundations (XII/XIII) include Paris, Vicenza, Oxford, Cambridge, Arezzo, Montpellier, Salamanca, Seville. In Central Europe, several notable universities were founded in XIV, including Prague, Cracow, Vienna, Heidelberg. Some seats of higher learning existed, often on a specialist basis, long before their formal recognition: Salerno in Italy was known as a school of medicine as early as IX.

seven liberal arts.⁴⁷ These higher branches of learning, severely practical in outlook, all had classical points of reference: the teaching of law was influenced by the rediscovery of Justinian's codification in the eleventh century; medicine looked in part to Arabic and, thereby, Greek sources;⁴⁸ and the scholastic theology of the medieval universities (especially the University of Paris)⁴⁹ was strongly influenced by Aristotelian philosophy, with this particular Christian-Aristotelian synthesis receiving its definitive treatment in the *Summa theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas (completed in 1273).⁵⁰

Over the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, medieval scholasticism, in Italy first and foremost, largely gave way to significant developments in educational practice. These included a new, classicizing anthropology, a renewed commitment to classical Latinity, a revival of Greek studies and (following the revolutionary invention of the printing press, by Gutenberg, in Germany) the first mechanical standardizing of texts and textbooks in Western history. Initially, humanist ideas on education revolved around the integration, but eventually the separation, of classical culture and Christian religion. A spate of treatises contributed to a decisive reorientation which has continued to define secondary schooling across the West up until the present day: Maffeo Vegio's *On the Education of Children and Their Moral Foundations*, Piér Paolo Vergerio's *The Character and Studies that Befit a Free-Born Youth*, Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini's *The Education of Boys*, Battista Guarino's *A Programme of Teaching and Learning*.⁵¹ The common element was wide reading and self-improvement for young men.⁵² Leonardo Bruni summed up the new educational orientation with the phrase 'humane studies' ('studia humanitatis'), which would both 'finish' ('perficiant') and 'embellish' ('exornent') the chosen few.⁵³ The syllabus of the humanists (*humanistae*)⁵⁴ was broad. It included a range of classical texts, from moral philosophy to oratory, historiography, and poetry, and was designed to achieve verbal fluency and polish, as well as moral improvement

⁴⁷ Ferruolo (1998), Haskins (1972), Rashdall (1936).

⁴⁸ As early as VII, Arab scholars began to seek out and study a wide range of Greek materials, esp. scientific, medical, and philosophical prose: summary in El-Abbadi (2004) 174–81; see generally Cameron (1997) 4–18, Cotton *et al.* (2009), Gutas (1998), Makdisi (1989), Walzer (1958).

⁴⁹ Cf. n. 83 below.

⁵⁰ Aristotle was read in Latin translations – some late-antique (e.g. by Boethius), others via Arabic: summaries in Bolgar (1954) 153, 161–2, 172–3.

⁵¹ Kallendorf (2002).

⁵² And occasionally for noblewomen. Thus, Bruni's *Study of Literature* (*De studiis et litteris*, c. 1420? – Cox 2009: 47) is addressed to the Lady Battista Malatesta of Montefeltro. Significantly, Bruni (*De studiis*, 14–15) insists that the benefits his addressee is to draw from her education are spiritual and philosophical, and unrelated to public speaking; likewise, Fedele (p. 35 above) indicates that women should study 'literature', not for public 'honours', but for its own sake.

⁵³ Bruni, *ibid.*: cf. Grendler (1989), (1995). 'Studia humanitatis': §3 n. 32.

⁵⁴ The word 'humanist' derives from '(h)umanista', the accepted name of the early modern Italian scholar, but 'humanism' from German 'Humanismus', a back-formation coined as late as 1808 by F. J. Niethammer: Kristeller (1956) 572–4, Reynolds and Wilson (1991) 270. The modern (anti-religion) sense of 'humanist' is only distantly related: cf. §27.

and practical wisdom. But the ultimate logic of all this ‘finishing’ and ‘embellishing’ – not always laid bare by its enthusiastic promoters – was a new ideal of individual value (§8), of moral and intellectual freedom; and though the era was, and remained, centred on Latin, one factor that undoubtedly helped to stimulate the development of this ideal was access to the Greek experience as embodied in classic texts, from Homer to Plato to Plutarch and beyond.

In the medieval West, knowledge of Greek was exceptional,⁵⁵ and an institutional apparatus for its propagation non-existent. From around 1400, under the stimulus of itinerant scholars from Byzantium, the systematic teaching and learning of Greek was revived in Italy, especially in Florence and Venice, and the first steps were taken in the collection of manuscripts and the formation of libraries, some of them substantial.⁵⁶ Petrarch’s desire to interact with Greek authors had been limited to having their manuscripts in his library (those of Homer and Plato were his special pride), but Boccaccio, at Petrarch’s suggestion, actually learned the language.⁵⁷ Knowledge of Greek rapidly became a mark of scholarly distinction, with genealogies of tuition spreading across Europe. Thus, around the end of the fourteenth century, the Greek Manuel Chrysoloras taught the language to a series of receptive pupils, several of whom became distinguished scholars (Bruni among them). Another Greek, Georgios Hermonymos, moved to Paris in the 1470s to pass on his knowledge to Reuchlin from Germany, to Erasmus from the Low Countries, to Budé from France. The capture of Constantinople by the Ottomans in 1453 marked the end of the Eastern Roman Empire which had preserved, and in some areas developed, a version of Greco-Roman antiquity for a millennium.⁵⁸ This cataclysmic event only accelerated the migration of Greek scholars (and their manuscripts) to Italy, and thus the spread of Greek studies across the West.⁵⁹

Printing revolutionized schooling in the classics. The availability of textbook material in print made possible a systematic approach to instruction in the language, no longer dependent on the presence of single personalities. Incongruously enough, the transposition of Greek literature from manuscript to print began with the printing of a parody of Homeric epic, the (Hellenistic?) *Battle of the Frogs and Mice* (Brescia, c. 1474), as a text suitable for language beginners.⁶⁰ A pioneer in the printing of teaching material was Bonaccorso Pisano, who drew on his network of acquaintances with Greek scholars to reprint the Greek grammar of Constantine

⁵⁵ For the ‘exceptions’ (like William of Moerbeke: §15), see Berschin (1988).

⁵⁶ The statistics are remarkable. Thus, when Giovanni Aurispa reached Venice from a trip to Constantinople in 1423, he brought with him a cargo of 238 Greek ‘books’: Sandys (1908), 2. 36.

⁵⁷ From Leonzio Pilato.

⁵⁸ See variously Holmes and Waring (2002), Kaldellis (2008), Mullett and Scott (1981), Wilson (1983).

⁵⁹ Along with Chrysoloras, the leading figure was Georgios Gemistos Plethon; their successors included some who became establishment figures in the West, notably Bessarion, who became a Cardinal in 1439; Wilson (1992).

⁶⁰ This had been a school text in Byzantium; to that extent, the choice of the poem for a primer reflected recent Greek practice.

Lascaris with a facing Latin translation, along with a Greek–Latin dictionary and introductory readings that included Aesop’s *Fables* and a bilingual Psalter (Milan: 1476–81).⁶¹ The first classical texts to become available in print were in Latin: this honour went to Cicero’s *De Officiis* and *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, which appeared in Mainz in 1465. Initially lagging behind Latin literature, which saw print runs of all the major authors by the 1490s, the publication of Greek literature acquired new momentum when Aldus Manutius set up his press in Venice around 1495, despite the technical difficulties involved.⁶² In 1500 Manutius founded an academy, designed to publish in print a ‘good [meaning *classical*] author’ every month. The constitution of the academy was written in Greek, and discussions in any other language were punishable.⁶³ A quarter of a century after *Frogs and Mice*, Manutius’ systematic transposition of manuscript texts into printed editions produced the *editio princeps* of Sophocles (1502), soon followed by those of his fellow-dramatists Euripides and Aristophanes, and, in 1518, three years after his death, the first edition of Aeschylus. Other authors and genres were similarly favoured. In Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516), the traveller Raphael Hythlodæus already carries Aldine editions in his suitcase.

Alongside changes in pedagogy and media, old institutions of learning evolved and new ones developed. Across the disciplines taught in the universities, doctrines and teaching methods inherited from the Middle Ages made way for ‘new’, classically inspired, ideas. Academies began to flourish, most notably one sponsored by the Medici in fifteenth-century Florence.⁶⁴ Its first head, Marsilio Ficino, authored the first complete translation of Plato into Latin (1484: the Greek *editio princeps* would not appear until 1513), and, together with his pupil Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, gave a definitive shape to an influential version of Neoplatonism, combining Christian doctrine with pagan wisdom and a search for mystical insight. Both the system of thought and the institution travelled north. In 1495, on the Florentine model, a group of German humanists including Conrad Celtis and Johann Reuchlin founded the Academia Platonica, which devoted most of its energies to the printing and dissemination of classical texts. The high status of all such ventures – even in the largely unreceptive German territories – is indicated by the contribution of Albrecht Dürer, the most notable German artist of his day, to the illumination of the Aldine editions.⁶⁵ Germany remained unreceptive, however, especially after the Reformation, itself a German movement in the first instance. Symptomatically, the representative German humanist of the age, Philipp Melancthon, focused his energies on a new Christian humanism: ‘his mind was the meeting-place of three traditions, the medieval, the humanist and the protestant.’⁶⁶ As Nietzsche was later

⁶¹ Botley (2002).

⁶² Proctor (1900).

⁶³ Ciccolella (2007), Lowry (1979).

⁶⁴ Renaissance Academies: Pade (2011). Florentine Academy: Hankins (1991).

⁶⁵ Though Dürer was hardly a straightforward proponent of art ‘in the antique manner’ (his own phrase: letter to Wilibald Pirckheimer, 1506).

⁶⁶ Bolgar (1954) 346.

to remark, on Luther and the Reformation: 'a German monk . . . against the Renaissance . . . Oh, those Germans, what they have cost us!'⁶⁷

In England, and especially in France, humanist ideals took deeper root and more substantial institutional structures were soon in place. The establishment of Greek teaching posts at Oxford (1516) and Cambridge (1518),⁶⁸ and of comparable positions in the classical languages at what would become the Collège Royal in Paris (early 1530s), are significant moments. Significantly, too, both sets of appointments (especially those in Greek) aroused immediate opposition from groups suspicious of 'modern' secular learning: in England, from a party of self-styled 'Trojans';⁶⁹ in France, from the spokesmen for medieval scholasticism at the Sorbonne.⁷⁰ Within a generation, however, the humanist foundations of Paris had generated the two great poet-representatives of the French Pléiade, Pierre de Ronsard and Joachim Du Bellay, while by the 1540s Cambridge, in particular, had become a flourishing centre for the reading of Greek authors, from Sophocles to Plato, along with (in the admiring words of the scholar Roger Ascham) 'the best authors who flourished in the golden age' of Rome.⁷¹

For all such talk of the 'best authors', it may, with hindsight, seem revealing that the whole process of dissemination on which the new structures largely depended should have begun with the printing of a Greek grammar, a dictionary, and inconsequential bits of ancient literature (Aesop's *Fables* and the *Frogs and Mice*). Even though the premise of the new learning and the education associated with it was indeed access to classical texts, the fact is that in much educational practice the texts were studied as an aid to learning the two languages, and not *vice versa*. Sometimes this was even made into an explicit objective, especially for Latin, and especially when humanist goals were adjusted to those of the Reformation or reactions to it. For the most distinguished educational theorist of the age, the great Dutch humanist Desiderius Erasmus, writing in the second decade of the sixteenth century, ancient authors were never to be studied simply for 'unusual words' and the like, but at least deserved a second reading 'for content'.⁷² By contrast, the emphasis of Calvin's teacher, the French scholar Mathurin Cordier, was summed up in the title of his Latin treatise on correct Latin, *De corrupti sermonis emendatione* ('On the Improvement of Defective Speech', 1530). For the Jesuits, 'literature was studied for the sake of composition and for no other reason'; in the official manual (*Ratio studiorum*) of 1591, an appendix 'warns the teacher against digressions into history or antiquities: his task is to teach the use of words'.⁷³ In England, Cardinal Wolsey's letter to the masters of Ipswich School in 1528 prescribes Latin authors on purely

⁶⁷ *Antichrist* (1888), section 61.

⁶⁸ St Paul's School had already been founded on a humanist basis, embracing Greek and Latin, by John Colet in 1509.

⁶⁹ Bolgar (1954) 313.

⁷⁰ Stevens (1950).

⁷¹ 'Latinos . . . optimos quosque et saeculo illo aureo florentes': letter to Brondesby, 1542/3.

⁷² Bolgar (1954) 339; Erasmus, *De ratione studii* (1512) (opening section).

⁷³ Bolgar (1954) 359.

linguistic grounds: 'of those authors who contribute much towards a pure, terse or finished conversational speech, is any wittier than Aesop or more useful than Terence?'⁷⁴

These teaching practices continued for hundreds of years, on and off, attaining their celebrated *reductio* in the welcoming words of a nineteenth-century English headmaster to his pupils: 'Boys, this term you are to have the privilege of reading the *Oedipus Coloneus* of Sophocles, a veritable treasure-house of grammatical peculiarities.'⁷⁵ Such a *milieu* might induce (almost by accident) an interest in antiquity or a love of literature; the outcome might well be the opposite. Reviewing his own, unusual, upbringing in 1580, the 'great sage'⁷⁶ Montaigne rejoices that he did not 'leave school hating books the way most French aristocrats do'.⁷⁷

In the Renaissance and beyond, the methods employed in the teaching of the languages themselves varied greatly, from a grammar-centred regime⁷⁸ to the learning of passages from approved authors,⁷⁹ from translation and retranslation of classical authors⁸⁰ to simultaneous translation from one ancient language into the other.⁸¹ In some centres, like the Collegium Trilingue at Louvain (from its foundation in 1517) and Westminster School (from the seventeenth century), the teaching of the two languages went hand in hand with the teaching of Hebrew.⁸² In the richly inventive narratives of Rabelais from the 1530s, the giant Gargantua, in a letter to his son Pantagruel, even acclaims the conjunction of Hebrew and the two classical languages as an organic element of Renaissance culture – printing, learning and all. In his youth (Gargantua recalls), the world was still 'dark' ('ténébreux'); that was still the bad old world of 'the Goths', whereas now –

Now all branches of learning ['disciplines'] have been restored, all languages revived; Greek, without which it is a disgrace for anyone to call himself a man of learning ['savant'], Hebrew, Chaldean, Latin. The technique of printing, truly elegant and accurate, was invented in my time by divine inspiration.⁸³

⁷⁴ Quoted by Clarke (1959) 9.

⁷⁵ Bowra (1945) 10; ascribed to Samuel Butler when Headmaster of Shrewsbury (1798–1836) by Leedham-Green (1996) 30.

⁷⁶ Screech (2003) xiii.

⁷⁷ *Essais*, 1. 26. His upbringing involved learning Latin as his first language: 'I was six years old before I knew French' (ibid.). His classical education was at the Collège de Guyenne in Bordeaux.

⁷⁸ Already criticised by Ascham, *The Schoolmaster* (1570), 1.

⁷⁹ See e.g. Woodward (1897) 45, 164, 169.

⁸⁰ Advocated by Ascham: *The Schoolmaster*, 1.

⁸¹ Practised at Pforta: Wilamowitz (1928) 79.

⁸² Esp. common in Reformation circles, where the ability to read the Bible in the original meant access to divine truth unmediated by the Catholic Church. Collegium Trilingue (where Erasmus was an important figure): de Vocht (1951). Hebrew at Westminster: Leach (1911) 513. The pioneer in the introduction of Hebrew into English schools was Archbishop Holgate (mid-XVI): Clarke (1959) 190.

⁸³ *Pantagruel* (1532), ch. 8. Except for 'Chaldean' (Syriac or Aramaic), the list of languages alludes to chairs founded in Paris in the early 1530s (partly at Budé's instigation), at what became the Collège Royal, against opposition from the anti-humanist, scholastic-minded, Sorbonne. The scholastics are famously satirized in Rabelais's books; in return, the Sorbonne banned them.

To a modern, and perhaps also a Renaissance, ear, the solemn appeal to inspiration, and the quaint-sounding addition of 'Chaldean' to the short list, may well seem to invest this summary of educational realities with some irony. Yet, essentially, these are still the realities.

One other notable feature of classical language teaching, in both languages, was composition, in prose and in verse. For centuries, as we have noted, Latin verse composition enjoyed a special status. An accomplishment of Renaissance poets, from Petrarch in fourteenth-century Italy, to Du Bellay in sixteenth-century France, to Milton in seventeenth-century England, composition in (meaning, usually, translation into) classical Latin, and in canonical Latin verse-forms, becomes a staple of classics teaching in England's public schools and ancient universities, and generally remains so – for boys, at least – until the last third of the twentieth century. As a specialized and sophisticated establishment practice, verse composition generated a series of arguments about its value and rationale.⁸⁴ Ridiculed by the nineteenth-century public-school reformer Thomas Arnold (father of Matthew) as 'a contemptible prettiness of the understanding', it was defended in 1911 by A. E. Housman, classical scholar and poet, not as an educational resource, in the ordinary sense, at all, but as a minor art-form ('a fine art . . . not one of the great arts, but . . . no mere handicraft either').⁸⁵ The habit of verse composition helps to explain how it could come about that some – greater – poets (notably Milton) could reach the stage of effectively transposing Latin verse phraseology into poetry in their own language (§35).⁸⁶ At the same time, Housman's defence presents a provoking unconcern that talent sufficient to sustain a 'fine art' should be devoted to what – in terms of creative usage and living communication – could only ever be a marginal activity.

A century before Housman, Coleridge had deplored 'the custom of writing Latin verses and the great importance attached to these exercises in our public schools' – adding, pointedly: 'Whatever might have been the case in the fifteenth century, when the use of the Latin tongue was so general among learned men that Erasmus is said to have forgotten his native language, yet in the present day it is not to be supposed that a youth can think in Latin.'⁸⁷ Housman's defence inhabits the age ('belongs to' seems inappropriate) soon to be graced by modernist artists, writers, and thinkers like Picasso and Stravinsky, Eliot, Joyce, and Pound, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Martin Heidegger – all deeply implicated in the classical tradition, and all in different degrees cultivating a restricted public – yet all preoccupied, in different ways, with the problematic of communication in the modern world. It is the total absence of that concern on Housman's part – his unworldly defence of verse composition, as much as the phenomenon itself – that raises questions.

⁸⁴ See e.g. Stray (1998) 68–74.

⁸⁵ Housman's Cambridge Inaugural: Ricks (1988) 298, Arnold: Clarke (1959) 79.

⁸⁶ Among the classically trained poets of Milton's era, contrast e.g. Ben Jonson: Moul (2010).

⁸⁷ *Biographia Literaria* (1817), ch. 1. Cf. Herder: 'A true poet must write in his own language' ('Ein wahrer Dichter muss in seiner Sprache schreiben'): *Über die neuere deutsche Literatur*, 3 (1767).

In Housman's time (it is hardly irrelevant to note) unworldliness is increasingly associated, in popular perception, with those tasked with the transmission of classical learning.⁸⁸ One thinks of the 'etiolated' Edward Casaubon in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871–2)⁸⁹ – and then of the Bergsonian inflexibility of the classics masters depicted in popular fictions from the first half of the twentieth century: *The Blue Angel*; *Goodbye, Mr Chips*; *The Browning Version*.⁹⁰ And looking back to the mid-nineteenth century, one ponders the description of Pforta, by its Rector Kirchner in 1843, as a scholastic institution dedicated to 'the serious study of classics and other kindred subjects, divorced from all contact with the distractions of urban life':⁹¹ a true *reductio* of the Humboldtian ideal.

In the age of Coleridge, meanwhile, the Humboldtian project itself did more than institutionalize classical education in emergent Germany. It also helped to foster a new educational focus on the study of 'the ancient world' in the round, on its history, culture, customs, structures, artefacts (§16); and classical studies in this enlarged, and newly professionalized, sense eventually becomes the international norm. By the second half of the twentieth century, university 'classics' in particular reflects this reorientation, across the Western world; and today there is probably no classical teaching anywhere, at school or university level, that is unaffected by it – while today's 'classics in translation',⁹² though no part of Humboldt's vision, has paradoxically become the plausible corollary of its outcomes. Study of the ancient world in the round is more or less convertible to study 'in translation', in a way that, by definition, a language-based curriculum is not.

At the same time, language-based learning continues to epitomize a classical education; it is certainly what most of those professionally involved in education (classical or other) understand by 'Classics' with a capital 'C'; and the cachet of a 'disciplined' training in the ancient languages continues to impress beneficiaries and outside onlookers alike. However, beneficiaries, in particular, may be impressed in more than one way. Three contrasting examples from twentieth-century Britain make the point. For the literary critic F. R. Leavis in 1948, looking back, in part, to his own schooldays, the 'developed disciplines' of a classical education were an undoubted strength – but also promoted a damaging sense of 'language divorced from experience'.⁹³ For the anti-authoritarian George Orwell in 1947, recalling his

⁸⁸ As far as the *products* of a classical education are concerned, however, the converse is more common. Cf. the oft-quoted words of Thomas Gaisford, Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, in his Christmas Day sermon of 1831, commending 'the study of Greek literature, which not only elevates above the vulgar herd, but leads not infrequently to positions of considerable emolument': Tuckwell (1907) 124.

⁸⁹ Jenkins (1980) 128; cf. Nuttall (2003). Casaubon: §16 n. 112.

⁹⁰ *Der blaue Engel*: film (dir. von Sternberg, 1930), based on Heinrich Mann's novel, *Professor Unrat* (1905). *Goodbye, Mr Chips*: novel by James Hilton, 1933–4, first filmed in 1939. *The Browning Version*: play by Terence Rattigan, first filmed in 1951 (dir. Anthony Asquith).

⁹¹ 'aus dem von aller Berührung mit städtischen Zerstreuungen geschiedenen Ernst der klassischen und diesen verwandten Studien': quoted by Förster-Nietzsche (1912) 83.

⁹² Often implicit in courses on 'classical studies' or 'classical civilization': cf. §15.

⁹³ Leavis (1948) 38–9, 134–5 (the latter passage originally part of a 1933 pamphlet, *How to Teach Reading*).

experiences at prep school, the 'discipline' encompassed not only the precision of teaching and learning, but the dismal inevitability of physical chastisement: 'I doubt whether classical education ever has been or can be successfully carried on without corporal punishment.'⁹⁴ More positive than either is the testimony of the novelist-philosopher Iris Murdoch – or the male narrator of her 1975 novel, *A Word Child*: 'I began to learn . . . An ability to write correct Latin prose began to offer me an escape from . . . the prison house, began in time to show me vistas headier and more glorious than any I had ever before known how to dream of . . . *Amo, amas, amat* was my open sesame, "Learn these verbs by Friday" the essence of my education.'⁹⁵

In ideological terms, the now venerable practice of verse composition occupies the opposite pole from the more recent phenomenon of 'classics in translation'; but if the older, elite practice raises questions, so too does the newer, egalitarian one. At the deepest level, questions can be raised about all the world's educational practices, including, indeed, that whole cultural-educational continuum that lies between, and behind, our two poles.

In a classic (and classical-oriented) work of modernist poetry, *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* (1920), written within a few years of Housman's refined *obiter dicta*, Ezra Pound, American poet resident in Europe, offers a sharply relevant presentation of the continuum as an agonizing cultural-existential conundrum. From the land of the 'average man' (as Matthew Arnold had called it; a 'half-savage country' is Pound's own label),⁹⁶ the American poet and his part-surrogate Mauberley find in the European heartland of the West nothing but ironies and betrayals. In the wake of World War I and profound cultural disillusion, Pound invokes, as simultaneously true ideal and false ideal, *both* the world of publicly available classics now⁹⁷ *and* the physical remains of antiquity that activated the humanist Renaissance at its outset. Pound's first target, however, is the modern age, in ironic (almost Byronic) juxtaposition to the ancient world, which for the moment means ancient Greece:

The age demanded an image
Of its accelerated grimace,
Something for the modern stage,
Not, at any rate, an Attic grace;

Not, not certainly, the obscure reveries
Of the inward gaze –

This 'inward' implies 'unworldly', perhaps, but not in Housmanic terms, because Pound's 'obscure' evidently points to the necessary complexity of cultural-intellectual advance. The critique resumes:

⁹⁴ In 'Such, Such Were the Joys', an essay first published in *Partisan Review* in 1952. On Orwell, cf. Burton (2005). In earlier centuries, corporal punishment in classical education is criticised by e.g. Montaigne (*Essays*, I. 26), following Quintilian.

⁹⁵ *A Word Child*, 'Thursday (first week)'.

⁹⁶ In 'E. P. Ode pour l'élection de son sépulcre', with which *Mauberley* begins.

⁹⁷ Given the poem's date, there is something prescient about Pound's reading of this public availability: cf. Arnold's 'presently . . . millions' (p. 37 above).

Better mendacities –

‘Old men’s lies’, Pound goes on to call them: ‘old lies and new infamy’; but –

Better mendacities
Than the classics in paraphrase!

This ‘classics in paraphrase’ is both a positive (antithetical to the lies: ‘mendacities’ are preferred to *even* the . . .) and a negative: ‘paraphrase’ is surely less authentic, and presumably more ephemeral, than ‘the classics’ proper.

Soon, though, Pound’s focus shifts to the more direct displacement of the classical in favour of the multifarious ephemerality of contemporary life. This is seen as sheer loss, suitably ironized:

The tea-rose tea-gown, etc.
Supplants the mousseline of Cos,
The pianola ‘replaces’
Sappho’s barbitos.

And the irony in the po-faced (un)punctuation and the ‘etc.’ of the first line, and in those inverted commas in the third line, reaches its peak with a quotation from the poet Pindar and a masterfully sardonic pun:

O bright Apollo,
τίν’ ἄνδρα, τίν’ ἥρωα, τίνα θεόν,⁹⁸
What god, man, or hero
Shall I place a tin wreath upon!

That ‘wreath’ (in Pindar, the victor’s laurel crown) and that ‘tin’ (‘tin hat’: a soldier’s helmet) prepare the way for a lament for the war-dead (and more ironic allusions, this time to patriotic Latin mottoes from Horace) – the dead, who died (in a classically evocative ‘myriad’) *for what?*:

There died a myriad,
And of the best, among them,
For an old bitch gone in the teeth,
For a botched civilization.

Charm, smiling at the good mouth,
Quick eyes gone under earth’s lid –

This ‘botched civilization’ (which is all we are and all we have) is botched not least, one infers, because (unlike the ‘organic’ world of antiquity?) it is all in bits, in frag-

⁹⁸ *tin’ andra, tin’ hêrôa, tina theon* (a reshuffled version of Pindar, *Olympian*, 2. 2), ‘which man, which hero, which god [shall we celebrate today]?’ The diacritics in the Greek above are corrected from the version printed in editions of Pound’s poem.

ments (Pound's friend Eliot will shortly develop this same image in *The Waste Land*, as Du Bellay already had, over three centuries before)⁹⁹ – but now in a climactic, devastating move, these bits are suddenly identified with the bits of antiquity (visual and verbal) that actually inspired the Renaissance:

For two gross of broken statues –

Statues of 'bright Apollo', among others, no doubt: statues, anyhow, that inspired Guido Reni and his age; meanwhile a 'gross' (twelve dozen: a prosaic commercial measure) is a suitably decreative measure of what purports to be creative civilization –

For a few thousand battered books.

The whole continuum of Western culture as we know it is seen to be centred on the classical tradition; and that culture, and that tradition, with all the educational apparatus that sustained it (all the way from 'paraphrase' to the 'battered books'), has never been more harshly interrogated by one of its own.¹⁰⁰ Not the least impressive feature of the classical tradition is its capacity to generate questions that go beyond itself, even in stark defiance of its own rationale.

⁹⁹ Du Bellay: 'Nouveau venu . . .' (1558): §25. Eliot: §35.

¹⁰⁰ Unlike Adorno's anxieties about writing poetry 'after Auschwitz' (§34), Pound's critique does not, at least, seem to pass judgement on new poetry like his own. *Maunderley* is not yet itself a 'battered book' – though as a representative of the continuum, perhaps it too is not exempt.