

## INTRODUCTION

This introduction has been given its final touches as Covid-19 rages throughout the globe, forcing lockdown on much of the planet in a manner that is unprecedented, at least in living memory. Many universities and schools have resorted to remote teaching, and as physical national borders have closed, virtual international ones have expanded. The classical community has responded to this admirably, sharing resources, information, and aid through social media and other forms of online collaboration. Such cooperation is very much in the spirit of the *Our Mythical Childhood* project, of which the present volume is a component, and whose brief is specifically *The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*. It is possible that the present challenge is the greatest ever faced; yet it is also connecting educators and scholars the world over, who have united in the dual intentions of disseminating the works of classical Greece and Rome and continuing in their educational missions. In this way, they have been providing, what seems to many, a beacon of hope in the current darkness.

### **I. Our Mythical Education: Rationale and Overview of the Project**

Through such ideas and practices, the teaching of classical myth continues on paths that are very well established, in the sense that myth has constantly been consciously utilized for specific aims, in order to put across ideological messages. It is accepted that children's literature, often the first meeting point with the worlds of Ancient Greece and Rome, is an important element in the formation of perceptions of that culture, but, since any book that is written for or given to children involves by definition an element of ideology, these perceptions are far from free of ideological implications. As Peter Hunt puts it:

It is arguably impossible for a children's book [...] not to be educational or influential in some way; it cannot help but reflect an ideology and, by extension, didacticism [...]. Children's writers are in a position of singular responsibility in transmitting cultural values.<sup>1</sup>

If this can be stated regarding children's literature, how much more must it be stressed with regard to actual educational curricula and materials, which are explicitly selected and developed for particular ideological and/or didactic aims? It is true that methods of educating and pedagogical practices may vary.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, all elements of a planned educational curriculum must by their very nature have a didactic component, in the sense that they are included for their supposed value in teaching something. What is taught is not necessarily information or skills, and may include less concrete elements, such as values or codes of behaviour; but that educational constituent is still thought to be present. No text, subject, syllabus, or other educational material is ever selected randomly (although the amount of thought and intention devoted to the choice does, of course, vary).<sup>3</sup> Naturally it is the case that curricula do not always achieve their aims, and may on occasion in fact promote, consciously or subconsciously, values their proponents ostensibly oppose.<sup>4</sup> In general, however, educational systems reflect and are shaped by ideological and organizational processes at a number of levels (individual, local, national, societal, global, etc.), all of which are influenced by wider concerns and challenges.<sup>5</sup> Recent research has attempted to assess the character and change in these ideological processes by examining the formally stated aims of education in countries throughout the world in the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Hunt, *An Introduction to Children's Literature*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, 3.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Geraint Johnes, "Didacticism and Educational Outcomes", *Educational Research and Reviews* 1.2 (2006), 23–28.

<sup>3</sup> For an overview of the two major transnational curriculum theories and practices, the Anglo-American curriculum and the European-Scandinavian *Bildung-Didaktik*, and the changes in recent years, see Tero Autio, "The Internationalization of Curriculum Research", in William F. Pinar, ed., *International Handbook of Curriculum Research*, 2nd ed., New York, NY and London: Routledge, 2014 (ed. pr. 2003), 17–31.

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., Kenneth T. Henson, *Curriculum Planning: Integrating Multiculturalism, Constructivism, and Education Reform*, 5th ed., Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2015 (ed. pr. 2000), 1–40.

<sup>5</sup> See *ibidem*, 41–141.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Fiala, "Educational Ideology and the School Curriculum", in Aaron Benavot, Cecilia Braslavsky, and Nhung Truong, eds., *School Knowledge in Comparative and Historical Perspective*, CERC Studies in Comparative Education 18, Dordrecht: Springer, 2007, 15–34.

When talking about classical studies, the question of curriculum becomes even more loaded than it does with many other subjects. Debates about the role of Classics – whether arguing the necessity or the irrelevance of such subjects – are so charged with history and ideology, particularly in the post-modern environment of debates around issues such as colonialism, class, and gender, that they take on a fervour that is rarely seen in many other areas.<sup>7</sup> The historically central place of Classics within the education systems of many countries (not least as a result of colonialism and imperialism), and its gradual marginalization, has been the subject of academic scholarship and wider public debate over recent decades, and many countries provide their own individual perspectives on the issue.<sup>8</sup> To provide only a single example from Europe, one of the most influential works on the subject in Britain was Christopher Stray's *Classics Transformed*, a work published twenty years ago, that was groundbreaking for its study of "school and university curricula, teaching, and textbooks; with the content, institutional forms, and

<sup>7</sup> Some of the most important works focusing on the United States and Britain are: Phyllis Culham and Lowell Edmunds, eds., *Classics: A Discipline and Profession in Crisis?*, Lanham, MD and London: University Press of America, 1989; Christopher Stray, *Classics Transformed*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998; Barbara Goff, ed., *Classics and Colonialism*, London: Duckworth, 2005; Lorna Hardwick and Carol Gillespie, eds., *Classics in Post-Colonial Worlds*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199296101.001.0001>; Mark Bradley, ed., *Classics and Imperialism in the British Empire*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010; Lorna Hardwick and Stephen Harrison, eds., *Classics in the Modern World: A Democratic Turn?*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013; Henry Stead and Edith Hall, *Greek and Roman Classics in the British Struggle for Social Reform*, London: Bloomsbury, 2015; Eric Adler, *Classics, the Culture Wars, and Beyond*, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2016; Christopher Stray, *Classics in Britain*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018; Edith Hall and Henry Stead, *A People's History of Classics: Class and Greco-Roman Antiquity in Britain and Ireland 1689 to 1939*, London: Routledge, 2020.

<sup>8</sup> For the cases of Britain and the United States, see, e.g., Martin Lowther Clarke, *Classical Education in Britain 1500–1900*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959; Stray, *Classics Transformed*; John Roach, *Secondary Education in England 1870–1902: Public Activity and Private Enterprise*, London and New York, NY: Routledge, 1991. For France, see, e.g., Eric Verdier, "La France a-t-elle changé de régime d'éducation et de formation?", *Formation emploi* 76.1 (2001), 11–34, and Pierre Duroisin, "Rosa, rosa, rosam... Les Enjeux de la querelle du latin", *Cahiers du Centre Jean Gol* 3 (2007), 527–553. For Germany, see, e.g., Hans-Joachim Glücklich, *Lateinunterricht. Didaktik und Methodik*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993. For a broader European perspective, see Freddy Decreus, *New Classics for a New Century?*, *Didactica Classica Gandensia* 42, Gent: RUG Seminarie voor bijzondere methodiek van de oude talen, 2002; Bob Lister, ed., *Meeting the Challenge: International Perspectives on the Teaching of Latin*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008; Evelien Bracke, "Bringing Ancient Languages into a Modern Classroom: Some Reflections", *Journal of Classics Teaching* 16.32 (2015), 35–39, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S2058631015000185>. Space does not permit further examples, but similar arguments and works can be found globally, and especially throughout Europe, in a number of languages.

definition of scholarship; and with the social bases, location, and organization of classical knowledge".<sup>9</sup> This work opened up the debate on the role and evolution of Classics within British formal education from the Victorian era to the early 1960s. Since Stray's authoritative work, the research in recent years by other scholars has continued to shine the spotlight on the role of Classics within British education and society.

Similarly, in the United States, books such as Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* and Victor Davis Hanson and John Heath's *Who Killed Homer? The Demise of Classical Education and the Recovery of Greek Wisdom* stimulated debate and concern about the changing role and use of the traditional great works of Western heritage, including those in the classical languages.<sup>10</sup> Such works led to talk about a "crisis" within Classics in America, resulting in a number of articles and books on the role of the Greek and Roman Classics in American education overall.<sup>11</sup> More recently, Caroline Winterer, concentrating on examining university rather than school curricula, demonstrated how Classics was transformed from a narrow, language-based subject to a broader study of civilization that influenced both the rise of the American university and modern notions of selfhood and knowledge.<sup>12</sup>

## 2. Aims and Scope

Almost all of the emphasis in these studies of Classics in education is on the study of the ancient languages. Yet, as we are all aware, not only is Classics far broader than just the languages of the ancient world, but it is found much more commonly within other areas of the school curriculum. In the United Kingdom, for example, the Greeks and Romans are commonly encountered within history lessons, while in the United States they appear as part of social studies curricula. Nevertheless, it is the case that not only are children

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<sup>9</sup> Stray, *Classics Transformed*, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Victor Davis Hanson and John Heath, *Who Killed Homer? The Demise of Classical Education and the Recovery of Greek Wisdom*, New York, NY: Encounter Books, 2001 (ed. pr. 1998).

<sup>11</sup> Edward Phinney, "The Classics in American Education", in Phyllis Culham and Lowell Edmunds, eds., *Classics: A Discipline and Profession in Crisis?*, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989, 77–87; Lee T. Percy, *The Grammar of Our Civility: Classical Education in America*, Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005; Daniel Walker Howe, "Classical Education in America", *The Wilson Quarterly* 35.2 (2011), 31–36.

<sup>12</sup> Caroline Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism: Ancient Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life, 1780–1910*, Baltimore, MD and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004.

more likely to be introduced to myth than history via other media, such as books and films, but that one of the most common ways in which Classics is encountered within school curricula is through classical myth.

Clearly, wherever myth forms part of an educational syllabus, value judgements have been made by those who chose the texts, with regard to content, approach, usage, emphases, purpose, and many other elements. The present volume looks at these myriad factors, in an attempt to untangle which elements of classical myth have been selected and adapted, and how and why these choices have been made. Through this analysis, light is shed on some underlying ideas and beliefs, regarding both conceptions and manipulations (whether conscious or subconscious) of the ancient world, and of the adapting society.

This volume is a product of the five-year European Research Council-funded project, *Our Mythical Childhood*, headed by Katarzyna Marciniak, which is examining the reception of classical mythology in children's culture worldwide (<http://www.omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/>). As part of this investigation, the present volume examines the reception of such myth within formal education in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, over a wide geographical area. It focuses for the most part on school education, but with forays into post-high school where relevant, and includes a wide geographical and chronological range. With regard to the latter limitations, the general emphasis is on modern day and the current situation, but as a result of individual historical circumstances in each example. The complexity of such traditions has led to summaries that reach rather further back in history in some cases;<sup>13</sup> this was unavoidable since comprehensiveness in both chronological and geographical terms for the volume would have resulted in hundreds of contributions, an obviously impossible undertaking.

In place of a narrow delineation of a time period, the decision was made to focus on geographical breadth, even at the expense of temporal cohesion as a result of individual circumstances in each case. Unlike many works on reception, which focus on Europe or North America, the volume covers Eastern and Western Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas (including Canada, the USA, and South America), and both Australia and New Zealand. While the book cannot hope to be exhaustive, it is truly global in its approach, and

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<sup>13</sup> See, e.g., Markus Janka and Michael Stierstorfer's chapter which traces developments as far back as the twelfth century.