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Yale Classical Studies: Volume XXXVII

Edited by Elizabeth P. Archibald, William Brockliss and Jonathan Gnoza

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CHAPTER I

Introduction: “Learning me your language”

Elizabeth P. Archibald, William Brockliss, Jonathan Gnoza

You taught me language, and my profit on't
Is I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
For learning me your language!

(*Tempest* 1.ii.364–6)

Caliban’s memorable rant against Prospero in Shakespeare’s *Tempest* introduces a number of issues pertinent to a history of second language instruction: the differing motivations of pupil and master, the various uses to which the acquired language might be put (in Caliban’s case, “to curse”), and the renegotiations of existing power structures that result from such education – whether through the teacher’s empowerment of the pupil or the pupil’s subversion of the master’s authority. These and other sources of “profit” for master and pupil characterize the history of second language instruction. Instructors might seek to consolidate control over their pupils, drawing on language as an instrument of “civilization,” or they might teach for more altruistic purposes. Students of second languages might expect to gain increased social standing, intellectual respect, or spiritual virtue – or, like Caliban, they might harness their “profit” for rebellion.

The present volume, which emerged from a conference held at Yale University in March 2009 entitled “Learning Me Your Language,” seeks to explore such themes over a broad historical, geographical, and social range: it considers the teaching and learning of Latin and Greek as second languages from antiquity to the present day, elucidating both the techniques of Latin and Greek instruction across time and place, and the contrasting socio-political circumstances that contributed to and resulted from this remarkably enduring field of study. Throughout this broad historical range the papers explore dialogues between center and periphery, between pedagogical conservatism and societal change, between government and the governed.

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These dialogues result from the fact that the acquisition of a second language, unlike mastery of a native tongue, is always the result of a decision, whether on the part of the learner or an authority figure – and while the end result may remain the same, the forces behind this decision can change radically. The papers in this volume interrogate these forces in diverse contexts, where the learning of these languages served very different purposes. Latin and Greek offer particularly promising material for such studies: they have had unusually enduring influence as “second languages” – that is, languages that are learned by a person already proficient in another language.

Consideration of the history of Latin and Greek as second languages has the potential to enrich several areas of scholarly discourse. Firstly, such a history promises both to complement and profitably to recalibrate the perspectives offered by current research into second language acquisition. Recent SLA studies have explored a number of the themes to be addressed by this volume – the mechanics of learning (conscious and subconscious learning;¹ teaching in the target language or the native language²) and the broader social aspects of language study (the interplay of language, power, and status;³ the role of gender in language study⁴); however, the historical context that could have been provided by the history of education in the classical languages has not entered into these conversations. The long context offered by this volume promises to enrich investigations of second language acquisition and the cultural issues associated with it, through explorations of questions such as: Who has access to second language study? Is such access earned despite restrictions or imposed despite reluctance? What circumstances create “secondary” learners of languages, who are assigned a subordinate position within linguistic hierarchies?⁵ What is the ultimate goal of second-language study, and how much mastery is enough?

Secondly, within the humanities we lack studies that offer an overview of the complete histories of education in Latin and Greek. Scholars have previously examined the nature of instruction in the two languages, together with themes such as the multiple identities of the second language learner,⁶ the interaction between Christianity and pagan learning,⁷ the

¹ Cf. Krashen 1981. ² Cf. Johnson and Swain 1997.

³ Cf. Tollefson 1995, Slade and Möllering 2010. ⁴ Chavez 2001.

⁵ On “secondary” learners, see p. 8 below, and Greenwood in this volume.

⁶ Adams (2003a), for instance, has explored how the subjects of the Roman Empire used their native language alongside Latin to negotiate their complex identities.

⁷ Cf. Contreni 1980 and Sullivan 1995.

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evolution of pedagogical styles as the two languages encountered new educational contexts,⁸ the decline in classical learning,⁹ and recent attempts to revive it¹⁰ – all areas that are further explored in this volume. Such scholarship, however, has been restricted to specific time-periods, entailing a disconnect between their various perspectives on education in the languages. No study has yet examined the history of instruction in Latin and Greek over time, as it responded to changing social, political, linguistic, and religious factors.¹¹ The essays in this volume promise to achieve just that: they span two millennia of instruction, bringing into focus both shifts and continuities in Latin and Greek pedagogy.

Lastly, as a study of second- rather than first-language speakers, this volume covers an unusually large range of places, peoples, and social groups, and thus encompasses the complete breadth of the histories of Latin and Greek. As Joseph Farrell has shown, Latin has consistently been identified with the culturally normative – with those in political power, with the masculine gender.¹² Similar observations might be made regarding Greek, the language of the eastern Roman Empire and subsequently of the Byzantine Empire. If we gain, however, a proper appreciation of engagement with the classical languages not only by privileged learners but also by marginalized groups, we have the chance to rewrite the traditional narrative of the languages' histories.

The education of women forms a central thematic strand to this volume, challenging the patriarchal bias that has until recently characterized studies

⁸ Recent research on Latin and Greek education in the Middle Ages has focused on issues such as the methods of Latin pedagogy, particularly in Germanic speaking regions: cf. Grotans 2006 on the development of bilingual pedagogy around the year 1000. The essays in Corso and Pecere 2010 elucidate pedagogy in many learning contexts before the Renaissance. Grafton and Jardine (1986) analyze the emergence of humanist education in its social and political context. Black (2001) and Rizzo (2002) have emphasized continuities between the educational methodologies of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Other important studies of changing educational contexts and pedagogical techniques for the study of Latin and, to a lesser extent, Greek include Hunt 1991, Law 1997, Lanham 2002, Law 2003, Orme 2006, and Cannon, Copeland, and Zeeman 2009.

⁹ Françoise Waquet (1998), for example, has explored the failures of Latin pedagogy from the Enlightenment to the mid-twentieth century.

¹⁰ Two volumes that appeared either side of the millennium, LaFleur 1998 and Morwood 2003, assessed the current state and possible future developments of Latin education in the English-speaking world. See further Lister 2008, which also embraces non-Anglophone countries.

¹¹ Too and Livingstone 1998 might appear an exception to this rule, but is avowedly ahistorical. Although it covers a broad historical range, its arrangement in reverse temporal order was explicitly chosen to disrupt any sense of historical progression from antiquity to the present (see "Introduction").

¹² Farrell 2001. See pp. 1ff. and 123ff. on the association of Latin and power, and pp. 52–83 for a discussion of the perceived masculinity of Latin.

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of education in the classical languages.¹³ Ann Hanson, for instance, examines the use made of acquired Latin and Greek by women in ancient Egypt; Françoise Waquet considers French debates over the place of Latin in the education of girls; Fiona Cox sees a future for Latin freed from traditional, patriarchal power structures and dominated instead by female learners and scholars.

The study of second-language learners in this volume also serves to challenge traditional focuses on the political center as opposed to the margins of empire, of rulers as opposed to subjects.¹⁴ The papers cover an extraordinarily wide geographical range, and address learning contexts not often juxtaposed such as Roman Egypt and sixteenth-century Mexico. Such studies offer the opportunity to view similarities – including the continued use of the classical languages by those attempting to gain access to political elites – but also to explore the full diversity of the experiences of peoples on the periphery of Latin and Greek culture – the imperial subjects not only of ancient Rome but also of colonial Spain. At the same time, the essays recast the discourse of rulers and ruled within those areas by giving voice to groups that would normally be silenced. Kenneth Kitchell's paper, for instance, considers the complex relationship of American slaves and their descendants with the classical languages – and Shakespeare's Caliban, as Kitchell notes, is himself a slave, forced to learn what purports to be a language of civilization.

The history of Latin and Greek presented by this volume can be imagined in terms of the competing claims of elites who would see the two languages as their own possession – originally as first languages or, later, as if they were such – and of those who saw them as second languages – as a possession of none but a potential resource for all, or as a desirable but hardly attainable goal. This relationship, as will be made clear, altered over time: a survey of the history of education in Latin and Greek reveals the increasing distance of the learner from the two languages, the eventual readiness with which they were acknowledged as second languages, and the changing educational techniques and philosophies that responded to these shifting perceptions.

¹³ It is only in recent decades that serious attempts have been made to address this deficiency, but these attempts have been restricted to particular time periods. On the ancient world, cf. Criboire 2001, pp. 74–101. Important studies of women's education in the Middle Ages include McKitterick 1994, Clanchy 1984, and Desmond 1994. For the Renaissance, cf. Stevenson 1998.

¹⁴ In addressing such themes, this volume follows on from Adams 2007, in which he finds some evidence for influence of local languages on the varieties of sub-elite provincial Latin. Adams' volume, however, considers only the ancient world.

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In the Roman Empire Latin and Greek were languages of power and prestige. In both the west and the east the acquisition and demonstration of knowledge of the languages was essential for local populations in their attempts to negotiate their place in imperial power structures. Ann Hanson's examination of the role of Greek in the discourse of power in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt draws on two archives of papyri from the Arsinoite nome to illustrate the strategies employed by villagers to acquire the language and particular idioms of their conquerors, a process that was often laborious. These papyri demonstrate the pressure felt by speakers of non-prestige, parochial languages of the empire to learn Greek. On the other hand, Eleanor Dickey shows that, contrary to the beliefs of many scholars, Greeks in the Roman Empire also sought to learn Latin, both informally and through organized classes. The texts with which they acquired their knowledge of the language (bilingual phrase books, elementary dialogues, a copy of Virgil for learners of Latin) exemplify the beginnings of Latin pedagogy.

After the fall of the Roman Empire, a situation of diglossia gradually developed in western Europe: Latin and, to a lesser degree, Greek became second languages devoted specifically to learning and culture. Late antique classrooms in the west engaged with Greek as well as Latin; however, Félix Racine argues that school texts like Servius sought to equip students with the ability to allude authoritatively to Greek language and lore, rather than seeking to impart real mastery of the language. By the early Middle Ages, knowledge of Greek was such a rarity that scholars with even the shakiest grasp of the language could flaunt it as an exotic achievement, though it also served as a point of access to the prestige of the classical past and as a means of following in the footsteps of the church fathers. Michael Herren demonstrates that, despite the scarcity of Greek learning in the early medieval west, the enthusiasm of scholars who coined neologisms and composed the occasional Greek verse demonstrates that their study was not motivated solely by a desire to better understand scripture. Rather, they studied Greek for the fun of it, and used it to show off their erudition.

Meanwhile, the changing relationship of Latin and the vernaculars led to new styles of Latin pedagogy. Places where Germanic languages were spoken saw the earliest development of bilingual education in the Middle Ages.¹⁵ Jay Fisher clarifies the ways in which the *Excerptiones de arte grammatica Anglice* of the Anglo-Saxon scholar Aelfric sought to bridge

¹⁵ Cf. Law 1984; for a later example of bilingual Latin pedagogy in Romance-speaking regions, see Merrilees 1987.

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the pedagogical gap between the world of the sixth-century grammarian Priscian (a pagan whose pedagogy was designed for native Greek speakers) and his own world of Christian Anglo-Saxons. In response to this pedagogical challenge, Aelfric pioneered techniques of bilingual grammatical pedagogy, deftly navigating the differences between the two languages and thus setting the stage for a new pedagogical relationship with Latin even among Romance speakers.

As Latin and Romance drifted farther apart, new theoretical models emerged for Latin pedagogy, and for the cultural and intellectual role of the language. Though it was clearly no longer a native tongue, Latin was regarded as synonymous with grammar, an analytical and instructional system for teaching generalized concepts of language and literacy.¹⁶ Indeed Latin became so entrenched in the educational systems of medieval and Renaissance Italy that, until the eighteenth century, students were taught reading through the medium of the language; an example of this practice is offered by Robert Black, who elucidates the mechanics of the process by which young students became literate in Renaissance Italy. The well-established tradition of acquiring literacy and Latinity together was also exported from Europe to the New World. Andrew Laird examines this phenomenon in the context of Latin study among native Nahuas in Mexico in the decades after the Spanish conquest. Franciscan missionaries brought with them well-established pedagogical traditions and the idea of Latin as *grammatica* – the proper tool for understanding generalized concepts of language and literacy. Ultimately, this complex educational initiative resulted not only in native Nahuatl-speaking nobility acquiring enough Latin to read, converse, and compose elegant letters and verse, but also in the preservation and creation of literature in Nahuatl.

The persistent identification of Latin with *grammatica* itself gave it a status even beyond a privileged second language – not exactly a mother tongue, but the mother of tongues, and a kind of first language in the context of an elite intellectual class. However, the language could only be regarded as a quasi-first language by expert teachers and scholars:¹⁷ the experience of the learner, by contrast, was increasingly one of alienation and mental struggle. As Kenneth Kitchell notes, Enlightenment thinkers came to question the value of education in a dead language and the elitist attitudes of its champions. On the other hand, this recognition of the

¹⁶ On the centrality of *grammatica* to literary culture in this period, cf. Irvine 2006. On the grammatical underpinnings of medieval philosophy, see for example Kelly 2002. Voigts (1996) examines the respective roles of Latin and English in late-medieval bilingualism. For assessments of the social role of grammar, see also Gehl 1993 and 1994 on trecento Tuscany.

¹⁷ For the attitudes of such experts prior to the twentieth century, cf. Stray 1998, pp. 1–82.

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otherness of Latin meant that the mental anguish of the learner could be recast as a virtue, and pedagogy accordingly as an act of discipline.¹⁸ In her essay on nineteenth- and early twentieth-century French debates about the place of Latin in the education of girls, Françoise Waquet chronicles the remarkable arguments of educationalists who proposed that the female Latin student's feelings of "perpetual, painful inadequacy" would inculcate the modesty appropriate to her future place in society. In France, then, some teachers saw Latin as a means to promote docility in their female charges, providing a stark contrast to the missionaries studied by Laird: they had taught young Nahua men the classical languages in the hopes of forming a new patriarchal, "gubernatorial class."

Whether in spite of or because of such attempts to defend Latin education, the language proceeded to lose its place at the center of the western curriculum and its elite status in western culture. In the late twentieth century, even experts could no longer claim to have Latin as a first language.¹⁹ Both Latin and Greek had acquired an aura of otherness; nowadays, all who approach the languages do so from the alienated position of the second-language learner.

The alienation of learners, however, has had the welcome consequence of relaxing the control of elites who traditionally controlled classical education and of opening up the languages to previously marginalized groups. Bob Lister notes that champions of classical education in Britain saw opportunity in the reassessment of the status of the languages. They had been the preserve of elite social classes, but now that they were no longer the possession of any one group they could be made available "exclusively for everyone." Moreover, as educational contexts became more inclusive, female students have increasingly adopted Latin and Greek. Fiona Cox argues that, whereas educated nineteenth-century women tended to regard the male world of Latin and Greek with wistfulness or frustration, the gradual opening of educational opportunities to women paved the way for a new era of classical reception in the twentieth century, this one defined largely by female authors mapping the classics onto female experience for the first time. As the study of Latin and Greek undergoes new transformations in the twenty-first century, women are playing an instrumental role in determining the future shape of the classics.²⁰

¹⁸ Cf. Stray 1998, chs. 9 and 10 on the "Indian Summer" of classical education in Britain, during which the learning of Latin was recast as a mental discipline.

¹⁹ Cf. Clarke 2010, pp. 120ff.

²⁰ Cf. Farrell 2001, pp. 97ff. on the "feminization of Latin studies" in the twentieth century.

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This constitutes a significant change in attitudes to the classics but not, as Emily Greenwood notes in her epilogue, in the true nature of the relationship of learners to the languages. Despite the belief of elites that their privileged knowledge amounted to a first-language acquaintance with Latin or Greek, this has never truly been the case in the post-antique world. Rather, a distinction has existed between insiders who have jealously guarded their (imperfect) knowledge of the languages, and those whom they have regarded as “secondary” users of what is for all a second language – Greenwood offers the figure of Caliban as an example of the latter group. A recent reassessment of the status of the languages offers a more accurate perspective on classical education, promising a “shift away from classics as an inherited tradition towards an understanding of the different political, social and cultural factors that have shaped the teaching and study of Greek and Latin.” The present volume continues that movement: it challenges the claims of elite, supposed first-language speakers by recasting the histories of the two languages in terms of second language acquisition.

Alongside the changing attitudes of learners to Latin and Greek, the essays of this volume present continuities in classical education from antiquity to the present, particularly in pedagogical techniques and in social attitudes to the two languages at the margins of classical culture. In countries outside what was the Roman Empire Latin and Greek could never be regarded as first languages, and served instead as symbols of western European civilization. Complementing Judith Kalb’s recent study of the notion of the Third Rome in late imperial and early Soviet literature,²¹ Victor Bers surveys the history of classical education in Russia, where the languages and their attendant cultures were a reference point in debates between westernizers and Slavophiles, and in the political discourse of Czarists, Bolsheviks, and their respective critics. In the United States, as Kenneth Kitchell shows, some revolutionary leaders were suspicious of Latin and Greek for their aura of European elitism; bearing out the fears of those men, the languages came to represent educational and social privileges from which certain groups, such as African-Americans, were excluded.

In every age, however, alongside those experts who seemed more eager to assert their own superiority, there have been innovative teachers and writers who have attempted to ease the painful journey of the second-language learner. Bilingual texts helped the Greek speakers of the Roman Empire to learn their Latin (Dickey), and scholars of the medieval west to

²¹ Kalb 2008.

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learn Greek (Herren). Learning manuals have shown an awareness of the needs of younger learners. Aelfric, for instance, conscious of his young readership, appears to have incorporated elements of child-directed speech into his grammar (Fisher).²² Recently, the writers of the *Cambridge Latin Course* have attempted to accommodate the needs of children more effectively by focusing on child-centered, inductive methods of learning, where grammatical rules are at first intuited rather than learnt by rote (Lister).

Together, these case studies outline a new narrative that focuses on classics not as a pure and unchanging tradition but as a complex matrix of political, social, and cultural influences, shaped and reshaped by these forces. The history of Latin and Greek as second languages emerges as a dynamic network of tensions: between native speakers, those casting themselves as native speakers, and secondary learners; between center and periphery; between pagan traditions and Christian receptions; between Caliban and Prospero; between *auctoritas* and innovation.

And perhaps by recognizing the dynamic tensions surrounding Latin and Greek, we come closer to a new kind of dialogue in which the languages emerge as a center of gravity for connections between times, places, and disciplines. Expertise in Latin and Greek might then, rather than operating as a means to exclude, serve to open up opportunities for interdisciplinary scholarly collaborations that would not be possible through the study of other tongues. We hope that the current volume will be seen as a move in that direction.

²² Cf. Kitchell 1998, pp. 6ff. Kitchell argues that Aelfric’s book anticipated the emphasis of recent Latin courses on fluency rather than grammatical correctness, and also modern pedagogical techniques such as substitution.

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CHAPTER 2

*Papyri and efforts by adults in Egyptian villages to write Greek**Ann Ellis Hanson*

Homer's Menelaus spent time in Egypt on his way home to Mycenae after the Greeks sacked Troy, and the king of Egyptian Thebes gave him glorious gifts as he departed, including a silver weaving basket for his wife and a golden distaff. Helen kept Egyptian medicaments and anodynes among her possessions, for Homer pictured Egypt a country of fabulous wealth, a treasure trove of the wisdom of the ancients, and, as he had done with the Trojans, he imagined no language barrier to prevent his Greeks from communicating with Egyptians. In the seventh century BCE trade flourished in and around Naucratis, a Greek enclave on the Canopic branch of the Nile, and by the time of the historian Herodotus' visit in the mid-fifth century Egypt had been absorbed into the aggressively expanding Persian Empire. Two centuries later Alexander the Great and his Macedonians arrived in Egypt as welcome conquerors of the unpopular Persian king and they became the country's masters, gradually opening up fertile areas to exploitation by fellow Greeks and building the cosmopolitan city on the Mediterranean coast whose outlines Alexander had merely sketched out before his departure for conquests further east. He never revisited this Alexandria again while still alive. Hellenophones from the islands and the littoral of the eastern Mediterranean eagerly immigrated into Egypt: many stayed near the coast in the first years, as Alexandria developed into a commercial hub that linked the Nile valley and eastern emporia on the Red Sea and beyond to the Mediterranean. A dazzling intellectual and cultural capital came into existence and it speedily eclipsed the glories of Athens. By the middle of the third century BCE improved irrigation encouraged settlements into the country districts and small villages of the Delta and further south into the large oasis called the Arsinoite nome.

Ptolemaic monarchs encouraged Egyptians of the wealthier strata to learn the language of their conquerors, and in the cities and larger towns Greek was the language most often heard on the boulevards and colonnaded streets, although the Egyptian language remained dominant in the