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NOTE

This contribution is the response piece to a larger dialogue of three articles that form the current issue of *JOLCEL*. The other contributions are “Controversial Topics in Literature and Education: Hrotswitha and Donatus on Terence’s Rapes” by Chrysanthi Demetriou (pp. 2–22), “The Meaning and Use of *fabula* in the *Dialogus creaturarum moralizatus*” by Brian Møller Jensen (pp. 24–41) and “*Introite, pueri!* The School-Room Performance of George Buchanan’s Latin *Medea* in Bordeaux” by Lucy C.M.M. Jackson (pp. 43–61).

Latin Education and Classical Reception: the Minor Genres

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The story of Latin education shares much common ground with classical reception. The two are not interchangeable, and Latin education covers a broader field than classical reception. Classical reception is certainly broad on its own terms: it concerns the assimilation and transformation of ancient Greek and Latin texts and cultural knowledge (here including art, architecture, philosophy, political thought, and natural sciences). But Latin education in the West from late antiquity through the early modern period (and beyond) was the foundation on which reception could be built. Latin education encompassed far more than classicism: theology, the production of new literature, new scientific and philosophical thought, and networks of civil bureaucracy and ecclesiastical administration. Until the middle of the twentieth century and Vatican II, Latin continued to ground theological education long after its role in other fields had faded in favor of modern languages. For more than a millennium Latin was the common linguistic vehicle of post-classical European culture.

Thus classical reception represents only one aspect of Latin education. Schools in the Christian West did not educate students into Latinity in order that they might read the Latin classics, but rather that they might command a scriptural, exegetical, and liturgical inheritance. Yet classical culture was nearly unavoidable. For example, medieval students would have been inducted into Latinity through Donatus' grammar, with its Virgilian and Ciceronian examples, through late antique Bible epics that imitate Virgilian form, and through general moralizing works like the *Disticha Catonis*. Masters during the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance were to rewrite the basic introductory grammars to serve the changing needs of their students, but they continued to teach with the Latin classics even as their dossiers of ancient texts to introduce the language expanded. Even if a renaissance student improved his Latin by reading an author like Catullus, virtually unknown during the long Middle Ages, the relationship to the Latin classics for both medieval and renaissance students was formative before it was aesthetic.

This brings us to a fundamental question: how do we read pedagogical readings of the Latin classics? Or to put it slightly differently: what happens when we read classical reception through a pedagogical lens? That is the question that the three essays in this issue of the *Journal of Latin Cosmopolitanism and European Literatures* set out to explore. Pedagogy has always figured in classical reception studies, but usually as the necessary

background to the largely aesthetic questions that occupy the foreground of reception histories.¹ Reading classical reception in a pedagogical framework redirects our attention to genres usually considered "minor" such as grammatical commentary and translations made for the classroom, or to humble genres such as the *fabula* or the proverb that have suffered from under theorizing despite their ubiquity. As pedagogical forms, such minor and humble genres were the most important vehicles of classical reception. They constituted the basic literary material that all students encountered before advancing to more challenging and sophisticated texts. And for many students who did not advance, such basic genres might represent the totality of their contact with classical antiquity. Thus to bring these genres to the front gives us a vastly different perspective on medieval and renaissance "classicisms." Through these genres classical Latinity presents itself to us not as a pinnacle of aspiration but as a common tool. This approach brings with it a particular difficulty, that of grasping and defining processes that are dynamic and even volatile. The historical record gives us ample evidence of pedagogical practices and innovations: the copying and dissemination of manuscripts suggesting that later schoolmasters continued to value a particular strategy; the careers (and even renown) of individual schoolmasters; the printing of a compilation containing a pedagogical genre. But tracing the impact of these genres on the students who were their audiences is surprisingly difficult. The odd reminiscence, snatches of a phrase quoted by a preacher or a writer: such random relicts may point to the common fund of classroom teaching, but the wider effects of pedagogical causes remain elusive. Where literary reception studies can find its arguments in the palpable textual effects of imitation and allusion and in other tangible lines of influence, the footprints of broader educational impact lie buried and often erased under many layers of cultural sediment. For example, the theologians and philosophers of the medieval universities barely refer to their elementary educations in their writings: they would certainly have encountered some of the curricular literary authors when first learning to read Latin, but we do not know what they thought of those readings because they do not reflect on that stage of their training in their professional writings.² In other words, studying the pedagogical uses of the Latin classics poses questions about broad cultural impact that resist direct, concrete answers.

But through pedagogical readings we can often trace the ideological reshaping of the classical past. For example, medieval schoolmasters, presenting classical Latin poetry to their elementary students, provided brief introductions to the texts that can tell us a great deal about how readers were trained to appropriate certain themes. Such commentaries can illuminate the dark passageways of reception between the ancient texts and their medieval poetic imitations. Thus the poetry of Ovid, valued by schoolmasters as a source for grammatical and rhetorical usage, also had to be explained, indeed justified, as a source of ethical teaching. The *Ars amatoria* and the *Remedium amoris*, works primed to invite moral censorship, could be submitted to ethical reevaluation: the *Ars amatoria* might be explained as a book showing how young girls ought to be faithful in love, and the *Remedium amoris* seen as advising both boys and girls how to avoid the entrapments of unlawful love.³ While

¹ See, e.g., Charles Martindale and David Hopkins, eds., *Horace Made New: Horatian Influences on British Writing from the Renaissance to the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

² See Sten Ebbesen and Irène Rosier-Catach, "Le trivium à la Faculté des arts," in *L'enseignement des disciplines (Paris et Oxford, XIIIe-XVe siècles)*, ed. Olga Weijers and Louis Holtz (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 97–128.

³ See, for example, James G. Clark, "Introduction," in *Ovid in the Middle Ages*, ed. James G. Clark, Frank T. Coulson, and Kathryn L. McKinley (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1–25; Robert Burchard Constantijn Huygens, *Accessus ad auctores; Bernard d'Utrecht; Conrad d'Hirsau Dialogus super auctores* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 33–4.

there may seem a great distance between the cynical outlook of Ovid's erotic poetry and the idealizing of love as a potential ethical force in medieval poetry inspired by Ovid (e.g., Bérout, Chrétien de Troyes, Chaucer), the schoolroom was a transitional ground between the two poles, the place where Ovidian erotics were converted to a new moral purpose.

The three essays in the present issue of *JOLCEL* reflect the complexities of tracing the broad cultural impacts of Latin education. In different ways they also explore the ideological "refurbishment" of classical literature for the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance.

Chrysanthi Demetriou connects the representation of rape in the comedies of Terence and in Hrotswitha's Terentian dramas of the tenth century through the most influential pedagogical mediation of Terence, the commentaries by the fourth-century grammarian Donatus. Terence's comedies were continually in place in the medieval monastic curriculum. The availability of Donatus' close grammatical commentaries played no small part in keeping Terentian comedies present in medieval classrooms. We may read these commentaries to get a sense of how Terence was used to teach a colloquial Latin, or even to assess how early medieval readers, without a drama tradition of their own, might have understood the dynamics of theatrical performance and the generic form of comedy. These are the kinds of questions that one might ask of a schoolroom commentary. On the other hand, Hrotswitha's remarkable plays modeled on Terence's comedies have commonly been read on the literary terms of classical reception. Hrotswitha's own preface calls attention to the changes her hagiographical rewriting has wrought on the charming stories of Terence, substituting the hard-won triumph of virtue for Terence's celebration of sensual gratification. Demetriou wisely directs our attention to the mediation of Donatus' commentaries on the comedies: she ups the stakes of pedagogical reading when she puts Hrotswitha's plays in conversation with Donatus' commentary. How was an early medieval reader to reckon with the controversial subject of rape in Terence's plays? Donatus' commentaries provide a moral mediation. Donatus seems to provide a diegetic voice that interprets the action, explicitly pointing to rape as a crime, even though the comic plots revolve around this motif. We may recall that Plato's Socrates was more tolerant of narration (*diegesis*) than of direct speech or impersonation (*mimesis*) because a narrator introduces some degree of critical distance between speaking characters and a gullible audience (*Republic* III, 392d-396e). In the "narrative" voice of Donatus' commentary Hrotswitha may have found her authority to question the entertainment value of rape in Terence's plots. Here the ideological reshaping in the schoolroom commentary tradition is a determining factor in classical reception. Demetriou brings this minor genre, grammatical commentary, out of the background to reveal how it may be informing (or indeed perhaps directing) the literary foreground.

Brian M. Jensen excavates the deep background of another minor genre, the fable. The genre was important enough to command the attention of the Swedish printer Johan Snell, who published a collection of fables and exempla, *Dialogus creaturarum moralizatus* in 1483. Why was it important? The usual answer, that such collections were useful to preachers on the model of biblical *parabola*e, is at best only partial. Medieval authorities were not at all agreed on the value of "nonsense" stories. Indeed, moral fables about talking animals who exhibit the moral deficiencies of humans cannot support a heavy structure of allegorical interpretation. Their very simplicity obviates the elaborate interpretive maneuvers that are intended to explain and justify them.⁴ The moralizer must find his real theological-didactic material in Scripture, or must turn to yet more fables to complicate the rather simple

⁴ On the proverb, see Christopher Cannon, *From Literacy to Literature: England, 1300-1400* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2016), 201-11.

message of the fable. In other words, in its very simplicity the non-biblical fable remains just beyond exegetical reach, eluding the preacher's explanatory arsenal. The fable may be read optimistically (the vain ostrich learns his lesson and reforms) or pessimistically (vanity gets its comeuppance). Fables may be justified on Gregorian terms as diversion for the illiterate or the tired, or they may be condemned on exactly the same grounds. But the greater truth of the fable's ubiquity is that it resists reading: its surface is all. This is, of course, the brilliant hermeneutical joke of Chaucer's "Nun's Priest's Tale," which impossibly complicates the Aesopic tale of the rooster and the fox, layering it like swirls of candy floss with virtually every literary genre: epic, romance, love lyric, de casibus narrative, mythography, hagiography, satire, advice to princes, proverb and exemplum, history and contemporary chronicle, tragedy, prophetic dream, dream theory, and philosophical discourse. But even such formal aggrandizement cannot account for or penetrate the hard transparent surface of the fable, which simply means what it says:

But ye that holden this tale a folye,
As of a fox, or of a cok and hen,
Taketh the moralite, goode men.
For Seint Paul seith that al that writen is,
To oure doctrine it is yrite ywis;
Taketh the fruyt, and lat the chaf be stille.⁵

The fable, whether silly or scurrilous, carries its meaning on its surface. It is already "the fruyt"; everything else that attaches to it is "the chaf." It resists theorizing, as Chaucer's Pauline joke suggests, and in its very pervasiveness it is a challenge to the depth machine of exegesis.

In her essay on schoolboy encounters with Euripides' *Medea* in sixteenth-century Bordeaux, Lucy Jackson acknowledges how difficult it is to discern the impact of a pedagogical initiative. She narrates an extraordinary episode in the history of Latin education: the performance by schoolboys of a Latin translation of *Medea* by the Scottish humanist George Buchanan. In his translation Buchanan underscored Medea's rhetorical skills, thereby enhancing the dramatic potential of the role. In its institutional context and in the influences that shaped it, Buchanan's translation epitomizes the dynamic between Latin education and classical reception which I outlined at the beginning. As an imitation of Euripides' play, Buchanan's version is also a response to the Ovidian and Senecan incarnations of Medea, a kind of Latin "domesticating" of the Greek play, despite Buchanan's fidelity to the original text. Buchanan's play was to have a long literary afterlife. But initial the institutional context frames his literary efforts: the play would have complemented a curriculum that was decidedly classical but that gave special emphasis to rhetorical teaching. The performance of the play, with the focus on Medea's speeches, would have reinforced that teaching. Humanist scholars often noted the pedagogical benefits of performance, whether for the players or the student audience. But the emphasis on Medea's rhetorical skill would have resonated with the ideological conflicts of the 1540s. Buchanan's translation draws out the themes of public speech and persuasion. A pedagogical setting is not a bubble protected from real-world concerns, and the live performance of a play about deception, flight and exile, divine justice, and murder would not be a merely innocent diversion. But Buchanan was also showing how literary Latin

⁵ Quotation from Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), VII. 3438.

could become a vehicle of strong political rhetoric. The students performing this play were also internalizing a powerful message about their own potential roles as participants in public life.

As these essays demonstrate, and as I have suggested, reading pedagogical readings of classical antiquity cannot answer all the questions that it raises, but it opens questions that are rarely broached in classical reception studies. The ideological interface of commentary and new text, the ubiquity of a resistantly minor genre, the transformation of a school performance into an encounter between ancient tragedy and modern conflict: these are issues that can be apprehended when we look at classical reception through the wider lens of Latin education.

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