

BOOK REVIEW

Forward with Classics: Classical Languages in Schools and Communities. Edited by ARLENE HOLMES-HENDERSON, STEVEN HUNT AND MAIMUSIÉ. London, UK, New York, NY and Oxford, UK: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018. Pp. xvii + 276. Paperback, \$40.95. ISBN: 978-1-4742-9767-7.

Anyone planning a class activity around Hannibal's crossing of the Alps will be hard pressed to beat "*Vita Hannibalis* SPQR Day," sponsored by the University of Pretoria's Academia Latina in the 1980s. Four elephants wearing SPQR cloaks attracted so much attention that they caused a traffic jam. The photograph (Fig. 12.3) tells it all.

This collection surveys the state of classics in K-12 education world wide: from places where Classics is barely holding on (the Academia Latina, despite its effectiveness in bridging "the gap between the privileged and the underprivileged" [Schumann and Theron, 182] unfortunately closed in 2017) to places like the Netherlands, where it is so firmly ensconced that a web site exists to help former gymnasium students keep up their Latin and Greek – for fun (www.addisco.nl, Bulwer, 75). An enviable situation, indeed.

There is politics to this, of course. Latin is unassailable in Italy; ancient Greek, in Greece. European Classics as a whole is boosted by the EU's Lisbon Treaty recommendation that students learn "one plus two languages" (Bulwer, 77), i.e., their native language and two second languages. In Germany, this has helped put Latin in third place after English and French. Conversely, France saw a decline after a recent national decision to reduce the hours for Latin and Greek in schools. The problems are familiar: determined political opposition, charges of elitism – "that Classics has always been for 'toffs,'" Beard, xv) – or mere irrelevance. Classically educated politician, and now prime minister, Boris Johnson has given some of these myths new currency, famously disparaging Classical Civilization as not "crunchy" enough as a subject (Hunt, 16).

The best answer to all of this is exactly what *Forward with Classics* offers: example after example of Classics programs succeeding with *all* kinds of people: an *Odyssey* storytelling project in Spennymoor, a former coal town among the "top 20

per cent most deprived areas nationally” (Richards, 193); “Latin in the Park,” open-air Latin classes at an affordable one pound each, sponsored by the University of Swansea (Bracke, 198-9); or OxLAT, a Saturday class for children from low income households run by Oxford University. Even more ambitious, “Projecto Minimus,” sponsored by the University of São Paulo, has been teaching Classics in a nearby school for five years. All fourth graders learn from *Minimus* (translated into Portuguese); fifth graders learn from a version of *Athenaze*. Success was not easy. The school has two shifts and operates in two enormous multi-grade rooms. Many children read below grade level or have special needs. Yet despite all cohorts of up to twenty teachers at a time (mostly undergraduates) have worked with the school’s system and won over the students. “After a couple of classes most pupils love it” (da Cunha Corrêa, 63).

This collection offers a wealth of good advice: non-specialist teachers can play a huge role in bringing Latin into schools; programs in the regular curriculum last longer than extracurriculars; senior school administrators need to be on board; and effective outreach programs are the ones that show “long-term ongoing engagement and support” (Searle, 29). There are handy resources, like the Open University’s free [online beginning Latin course](#) or the online game [Hadrian: The Roamin’ Emperor](#) (players move Hadrian around the Roman world while answering educational questions). Ideas worth stealing include the “healing and poison stall” created by the Iris Project for visiting schoolchildren, complete with “the opportunity to have fresh wounds painted onto arms and faces” (Robinson, 151). Need I say more?

There are some gems, like Edith Hall’s “Classics in our Ancestors’ Communities,” which profiles a colorful and impressive cast of working class Classicists, and Arlene Holmes-Henderson’s and Kathryn Tempest’s “Classics and Twenty-First Century Skills,” which explains how to label the skills students learn in Classics courses for employers by using the Ceth Employability Framework. For example, students in “An Introduction to Classical Civilization” taught at the University of Roehampton, said they saw improvement in communication skills (96.4%) and self management (92.9%) (237). It is important to be able to talk about these benefits. At the same time, however, we should acknowledge that other humanities fields teach many of these same skills and we should be able to articulate what is unique to Classics. One compelling theme of this collection (*pace*, Boris) is its resolute defense of Classical Civilization – for (among other things) its breadth as a subject, its wide skill set and the “clean-slate” neutrality it offers for exploring cultural differences.

The level of research is high. Most chapters have extensive bibliographies. Coverage could be a little more comprehensive. There is no discussion, for example, of India or Asia. For readers outside the U.K., there is a lot of British politics, not to mention acronyms, technical terms and slang (see “toff,” above). The sole chapter on the U.S. presents it as a haven where teachers pursue their own curricula and where admirable methods like comprehensible input flourish. In fact, the authors wonder that grammar-translation is still popular, “often to the detriment of the students’ engagement and success” (Holmes-Henderson et al., 269), despite Wing-Davey’s chapter praising “The Latin Programme,” which achieved success in inner city London schools by applying the (grammar-heavy) methods of Dr. Richard Gilder III. It is hard to disagree with her: “Like Shakespeare, [Latin] withstands a myriad of approaches, from the reverent to the iconoclastic, yet cannot but retain its essential worth” (123).

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