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**CLASSICS AS A TEST OF CHARACTER IN VICTORIAN PUBLIC SCHOOL STORIES**

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The night before Tom Brown starts school at Rugby he and his father, Squire Brown, stay at the Peacock Inn in Islington. While Tom sleeps upstairs, the Squire smokes a cheroot in the snug, musing on how to advise his son about life at school:

Shall I tell him to mind his work, and say he's sent to school to make himself a good scholar? Well but he isn't sent to school for that—at any rate, not for that mainly. I don't care a straw for Greek particles or the digamma; no more does his mother [. . .] If he'll only turn out a brave, helpful, truth-telling Englishman and a gentleman and a Christian, that's all I want. (Sanders (ed.) 1989: 73-4)

For the Squire, the classical curriculum is not an end in itself. He stresses instead morals, manners, religious observance, and patriotism as the desirable outcomes of a public school education. Tom will indeed 'turn out' from Rugby having demonstrated that he has all these virtues. But, though he will be a 'truth-telling Englishman', he will not be a scholar. Yet it is scholarship in public school stories that I examine in this article, for, though Tom Brown does not become a 'good scholar', *Tom Brown's Schooldays* and other novels like it take care to emphasize the importance of good scholarship, particularly scholarship in Latin and Greek, in forming good character.

For the most part, nineteenth-century school stories 'don't care a straw about Greek particles' (or, for that matter, Latin cases) either, at least not as an end in themselves. The events and crises of school stories emphasize physical bravery and good sportsmanship, shown in public settings, such as on the playing fields, or in other social settings, exploiting the tension between boys' loyalty to fellow pupils and loyalty to the school. Scenes in the classroom seem mainly designed to lend background colour to the real business of school stories, which is the development and socialization of their boy heroes. This is the case with classical subjects. But classroom scenes are used to test less glamorous qualities, quiet virtues such as honour, rigour, discipline, and self-restraint, qualities that nevertheless act as foundation-stones of nineteenth-century masculine virtue<sup>1</sup>. Until the later decades of the nineteenth century classical languages were the subjects most studied at public schools. As such, Greek and Latin are the subjects most represented in public school stories of the period, and are freighted with the moral drama of character formation. School novelists suggest that good scholarship develops, and relies on, an honest approach to the subject itself, but also to the classroom situation, the institution, and to life itself.

This association of classical languages with a test of honesty can be seen clearly in the two most famous nineteenth-century school stories, *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857) and *Eric, or: Little by Little: A Tale of Roslyn School* (1858). They were written at a time when a public school education was becoming affordable to large numbers of the newly wealthy middle class, and was thus of great interest to a new range of readers. They were written by men who had been educated at public schools or who had worked in them and who

were concerned with the moral education of boys. Thomas Hughes (1822–1896) had attended Rugby School under the headmastership of Thomas Arnold (1795–1842; headmaster from 1821–1841). He wrote *Tom Brown's Schooldays* as a guide to his son, who was about to enter Rugby himself. His enthusiastic narrative is coloured by his happy time at Rugby, as well as his great admiration for Dr Arnold, who was largely credited with reforming the discipline of the public schools, instituting the monitorial system, in which older boys kept an eye on younger boys. (In fact, the system was implemented at Shrewsbury by Samuel Butler, from 1798, and at Rugby, by Arnold's predecessor, Dr Wooll.) Thomas Arnold was also credited with implementing a version of Muscular Christianity akin to the one that Hughes put into action in his involvement with the Christian Social Movement and in the founding of the London Working Men's College, just prior to his writing *Tom Brown's Schooldays*<sup>2</sup>. Frederic Farrar (1831–1903) was a pupil at a lesser-ranked public school, King William's College. After university at Cambridge, he taught at Marlborough College, and at Harrow School, where he was working while he wrote *Eric*. Unlike Hughes, he also pursued a career in the Church, taking deacon's orders in 1855, famously becoming honorary chaplain to the queen in 1869. *Eric* is a warning, rather than a guide, documenting the decline and fall of Eric Williams, a proud and sensitive boy who is unable to withstand the corruption of the boys at the fictional Roslyn School. It draws on Farrar's schooldays at King William's College, in the days before monitorial reform: unlike the Rugby of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, which is set after monitorial reforms were put in place, Roslyn has an ingrained culture of bullying and other 'vicious' behaviours. Eric is unable to withstand this culture, and slips, 'little by little', off the path of righteousness and manliness.

David Newsome (*Godliness and Good Learning*) and Norman Vance (*The Sinews of the Spirit*) show in their works on the influence of Muscular Christianity on Victorian culture that there is a strongly religious dimension to the public school education, and to many Victorian school stories (see Newsome 1961 and Vance 1985). These stories are not only meant to entertain, or give an insight into what goes on at public schools, they are also meant to provide moral instruction to young readers. The tests in learning and in life that protagonists such as Eric and Tom undergo are explicitly Christian, emphasizing honesty and humility. They are also tested according to Victorian ideals of gentility, which combine class attitudes with religious morality (see Girouard 1981). Classical education, then, falls within these patterns of learning and character formation.

### THE APPROACH TO LATIN<sup>3</sup>: CRIBBING, CHEATING AND TEAM SPIRIT

In Victorian school stories, a student's approach to learning is as important as what he learns. Here, classical languages test whether the boys are truth-telling Englishmen. In facing the temptation of cheating, the boy's sense of honour (or dishonesty or shame) is first developed. We see this most clearly in the motif of 'cribbing'. 'Cribbing' is the act of using a 'crib': a 'translation of a classic or other work in a foreign language for the illegitimate use of students'.<sup>4</sup> One who cribs can make use of a published translation, such as the *Bohn's Classical Library*, a series of literal translations designed to make classical texts accessible for a general readership. Lazy, wicked, or foolish boys who crib from published works run the risk of being discovered, because others are cribbing from the same work, or because they may sound too polished, or because teachers may recognize

the translation. Tom Brown is no stranger to the crib; he also uses other illicit study aids, particularly when writing his 'vulgus', which is, Hughes explains: 'a short exercise in Greek or Latin verse, on a given subject, the minimum number of lines being fixed for each form.' (257). Hughes explains further that the vulgus is: 'commonly supposed to have been established by William of Wykeham at Winchester, and imported to Rugby by Arnold more for the sake of the lines which were learnt by heart with it than for its own intrinsic value' (ibid.). It is not surprising to Hughes, however, that boys pass on to one another copies of their work, collaborating to resist doing the work properly:

it will not be wondered that the masters gave the same subjects sometimes over again after a certain lapse of time. To meet and rebuke this bad habit of the masters, the schoolboy mind, with its accustomed ingenuity, had invented an elaborate system of tradition. Almost every boy kept his own vulgus written out in a book, and these books were duly handed down from boy to boy, till (if the tradition has gone on till now) I suppose the popular boys, in whose hands bequeathed vulgus-books have accumulated, are prepared with three or four vulguses on any subject in heaven or earth [. . .] which an unfortunate master can pitch upon. (260)

Hughes confesses to having used vulguses as a schoolboy, advising readers of the best way to go about it: 'you will find the traditionary [method of cribbing] most troublesome, unless you can steal your vulguses whole (*experto crede*)' (262). Shared cribbing has its dangers, teachers being more perceptive than schoolboys might imagine.

One of the charms of *Tom Brown's Schooldays* is the air of manly complicity that Hughes's narrative projects to readers: though he officially disapproves of cribbing, and shows Tom ultimately learning to reject the vulgus book, he understands its temptations. For instance, he cannot resist giving advice on how to get away with cribbing. He condemns the kind of cheating in which bullies make: 'clever boys whom they could thrash do their whole vulgus for them, and construe it to them afterwards.' (260). But he enjoys the collaborative cunning displayed in the boys' creation, use, and sharing of vulgus books. *Tom Brown's Schooldays* is influential in its recommendation of team spirit, and in exploring the potential clash between boys' loyalty to each other and their loyalty to the school. Tom's friend, Harry East, tries to justify cribbing on the grounds that boys and masters are naturally pitted against one another:

What one has always felt about the masters is, that it's a fair trial of skill and last [stamina] between us and them—like a match at football, or a battle. We're natural enemies in school, that's the fact. We've got to learn so much Latin and Greek and do so many verses, and they've got to see that we do it. If we can slip the collar, and do so much less without getting caught, that's one to us. If they can get more out of us, or catch us shirking, that's one to them. All's fair in war, but lying. If I run my luck against theirs, and go into school without looking at my lessons, and don't get called up, why am I a snob or a sneak? I don't tell the master I've learnt it. He's got to find out whether I have or not; what's he paid for? If he calls me up, and I get floored, he makes me write it out in Greek and English. Very good; he's caught me, and I don't grumble. (329)

Though, as Beverly Lyon Clark (1996:11) observes, *Tom Brown's Schooldays* does more than any other school novel of the period to show the gulf between boys and masters, East's notion of productive competition between teachers and pupils is not endorsed in the novel. Instead, Tom helps him to see that teachers are not 'natural enemies', and that cheating, or concealing lack of work, is a form of lying. He encourages East to apply himself to his work more rigorously. It emerges, however, that East has not been confirmed into the Anglican Church with all the other boys, and that his cheeky attitude to classes is a façade that masks his crisis of faith. Cheating at Latin or Greek, here, is a symptom of East's spiritual troubles, and not a sign of fundamental dishonesty. Nevertheless, though Hughes advocates honesty in class, he seems to do so reluctantly: his descriptions of the different methods of cheating show his enjoyment of the boys' ingenuity.<sup>5</sup>

In contrast to Hughes's appreciation of schoolboy cunning, Farrar is vehemently disapproving, extending his definition of cribbing to cover even the consultation of dictionaries and grammar books (a somewhat extreme attitude, though not unusual). We first see the practice through the 'delicately bred' eyes of Eric, his hero, who is: initially 'disgusted at the shameless way in which many of the boys 'cribbed' from books, and from each other, or used torn leaves concealed in their sleeves, or dates written on their wristbands and on their nails' (47). The boys' behaviour is dirty literally as well as figuratively, and is the first piece of corrupting behaviour Eric encounters at Roslyn School:

Indeed, there were only three boys out of the twenty in the form, who did not resort to modes of unfairness far worse than the use of cribs [. . .]; even Duncan, even Montague, inured to it by custom, were not ashamed to read their lesson off a concealed book, or copy a date from a furtive piece of paper. (44)

Cribbing is therefore pervasive at Roslyn, and Eric himself is unjustly suspected of cheating when he is caught passing a translation of Homer from one cribber to another. Upholding schoolboy honour, by manfully refusing to give up the culprit, he is caned by his teacher.<sup>6</sup> Despite his father's advice not to 'cherish ... resentment' for this unfair treatment, he allows himself to slide into an attitude of rebellious discontentment, which leads to further disgrace. Farrar suggests through Eric's actions that cribbing and cheating not only affect the character, or soul, of the boys who indulge in it, but can have repercussions for bystanders. The social fabric of the school is thus at stake; for Farrar, cribbing is the sign of a rotten institution, and the boys who cheat are robbing honest students of their rightful glory, as for instance, the boys of the Lower Fourth do to Eric's younger brother, Vernon (271–2).

Farrar's goal in writing *Eric, or Little by Little: A Tale of Roslyn School* was to call for institutional reform. Roslyn School was based on Farrar's boyhood school, King William's College in the Isle of Man, a lower-ranked public school popular with the families of administrators and businessmen in British India. Farrar did well there, swiftly advancing to head boy. Nevertheless, he was conscious of the many abuses that went on in the school, and his work as a teacher at Marlborough and Harrow confirmed his lack of faith in boy nature. In his later writing on education (for instance, his 1868 edited collection *Essays on a Liberal Education*, which included his own essay on Latin and Greek verse composition, and essays by Henry Sidgwick on the theory of classical education, and Lord Houghton on

the 'present social results' of a classical education) Farrar remained concerned about pupils' morality: his support for the monitorial system, smaller classes, a literary and philological approach to Latin and Greek, and a stronger emphasis on history, science and mathematics all proceeded from his frustration at the dry way in which the classical curriculum had been taught. Brendan Rapple's account of Farrar's educational writings shows the kind of changes he advocated:

he consistently maintained that the prevailing approach to teaching Latin and Greek, mainly to stress syntax and accidence as well as prose and verse translation from English into the ancient languages, was counter educational and, in addition, was failing to imbue in pupils any real appreciation of Greek and Roman civilization. Rather, what was needed was to instill a love of literature not a contempt for grammar.<sup>7</sup> (Rapple 1995:62)

Farrar's later school and university novels, *St Winifred's, or: The World of School* (1861), and *Julian Home: A Tale of College Life* (1859), explore this love of literature. But *Eric* emphasizes the moral failings of the boys at Roslyn school and shows that the system may be letting them down. Inadequate supervision, and an unpalatable classroom style led the boys to exploit their natural tendencies to wicked behaviour. Like the real life Thomas Arnold, who viewed 'evil all around, attractive, insidious, enticing', Farrar advocated monitorial supervision as a way of keeping boys on the straight and narrow, and *Eric*, suggests David Newsome (1961: 37): 'although it makes no reference to Arnold or to Rugby, is a truer reflection of Arnold's ideals than [*Tom Brown's Schooldays*] which has done more than any other work to popularise Arnold and Rugby'.

*Tom Brown's Schooldays*, however, is not set in a rotten institution, for Tom is at Rugby when Dr Arnold is headmaster, and the system is sufficiently able to cope with cribbers. Instead of coming out of frustration at the subject or the system, or being an expression of vicious evil, it is a sign of misplaced loyalty among the boys, and of individual character flaws. Here, reforming cribbers is a matter of reminding them that the scholarly, or honest, approach to translation and composition: 'pays the best both in marks and in other ways', where 'other ways' are computed in terms not only of actual knowledge of the subject, but spiritual salvation and gentlemanly honour (203). In *Tom Brown*, much of Tom's and Harry East's reform depends on the omniscience of Dr Arnold. Worried that Tom is becoming rough and insensitive, he draws out his tender side, by asking him to look after George Arthur, a delicate, scholarly new boy who is in danger of being bullied. Tom teaches Arthur how to get on with other boys, but Arthur teaches Tom the equally important lesson of an honest approach to his lessons. He asks Tom to: 'give up using vulgus books and cribs [. . . b]ecause you're the honestest boy in Rugby, and that ain't honest' (313–4). In effect, Arthur is asking Tom to apply to his studies the 'manly self-reliance' he has demonstrated in his dealings with the social aspects of school life.<sup>8</sup> Stricken, Tom tries to do so, and in his turn attempts to wean his main friend, Harry East, off the use of cribs. East, Tom's '*fidus Achates*', wittily defends his use of vulgus books, arguing that he is merely using the wisdom handed down through generations of Rugby schoolboys: 'Listen to me, Tom. Not use old vulgus-books?—why, you Goth! ain't we to take the benefit of the wisdom, and admire and use the works of past generations?' (327)<sup>9</sup>. East represents the unofficial traditions of Rugby, what Hughes calls 'the old Rugby prejudices'; even more than Tom, he shows how going with the flow can lead individual boys into bad ways.

Tom Brown, George Arthur and Harry East represent three aspects of English gentility: Tom, honest and sturdy, as indicated by his name, represents the farming landowners of the country; Arthur, named after St George and King Arthur, stalwarts of English religious faith and chivalry, represents the churchmen; and East, who literally goes East to serve as an officer in India, represents the army men. Their studentship is thus coloured by their future professions: Tom and Harry do not need to know classics for any utilitarian reasons, but they need to know the right way of doing things if they are to live up to their professional and personal expectations. (Arthur, on the other hand, is the model of an intellectual clergyman, and I will return to him shortly.) The novel makes it clear that East needs to understand how boys' minds operate, for, as an army officer, he will have to manage the troops under his command. Tom comments: 'no fellow could handle boys better, and I suppose soldiers are very like boys' (362). It is important, though, that East's transformation into a truth-telling Englishman of the military kind should involve his flirting with deviousness and dishonesty, for the tactics he uses against the teachers are useful training for the military strategy of his adult life. Like Tom, too, his morality is meant to be the more convincing because he has reformed.

In *Tom Brown* and *Eric*, then, the temptation to crib serves as a test of honesty, obedience, and loyalty, a stage in the character development of schoolboys. As the school story genre develops, authors use cribbing as a motif to establish character quickly, and focusing the moral drama onto other forms of cheating.<sup>10</sup> In Farrar's second novel, *Julian Home* (1859), set at 'Camford University', Kennedy,<sup>11</sup> a brilliant but erratic student who is under enormous pressure from home to succeed in his exams, is waiting in his tutor's study when he notices on the desk the Aeschylus exam for the following day. He absentmindedly reads the exam before realizing his mistake, but, when his tutor arrives, Kennedy does not tell him what he has done. He performs brilliantly in the exam, then is subjected to blackmail by a fellow student. His ensuing misery and guilt lead him to the verge of suicide, before the ghost of his dead mother intervenes, knocks his gun from his hand, and sets him on the path to redemption. Less melodramatically, Talbot Baines Reed's 1883 novel, *The Fifth Form at St Dominic's*, complicates the moral dilemma further. In it, Oliver Greenfield is unjustly suspected of having prior knowledge of the exam questions for a prestigious scholarship. Refusing to defend himself against allegations of cheating, he is shunned by the school until his character is cleared. Oliver demonstrates manly courage but also pride in refusing to clear his name; his actions have a knock-on effect, causing his younger brother, Stephen, a less resilient boy, to be tainted in association.

Rudyard Kipling's *Stalky and Co.* (1899), a satirical collection of short stories about the boys at Westward Ho!, a school training future army officers, subverts the cribbing motif's moral message. In one scene, they have been allowed to use the school printing press, but find that their teacher, Mr King, has left out their Latin exam, neatly typeset in its formes, ready to be printed:

Said Beetle, after a glance: 'It's King's Latin prose exam paper. *In—In Verrem: actio prima*. What a lark!'

'Think o' the pure-souled, high-minded boys who'd give their eyes for a squint at it!' said McTurk.

'No, Willie dear,' said Stalky; 'that would be wrong and painful to our kind teachers. You wouldn't crib, Willie, would you? (Kipling 1962: 190)

The boys are not tempted to cheat for personal gain. Instead, they shift words around carefully, making the exam impossible for all the boys, claiming they've improved on the original Latin: 'Vile prose Cicero wrote, didn't he? He ought to be grateful [...]' (ibid.:191). Here, Kipling returns to Harry East's idea of the adversarial relation between boys and masters: at Westward Ho! it explicitly provides training for their later careers as soldiers. Beetle, Stalky, and McTurk are justified in tampering with the exam papers. Mr. King has no ground to stand on—he should have overseen the printing and made sure that it was locked away. The boys win this round. For Kipling's schoolboys, it really is a battle between the boys and men, and the narrative shows them dealing out entertainingly appropriate punishment on each other in a series of episodes.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, Kipling highlights the teammanship involved in successful cribbing, approving, like Hughes, of the boys' loyalty to one another. Similarly, in his 1882 novel *Vice Versa* the comic novelist F. Anstey presents cribbing as a lifesaving device. Paul Bultitude, magically transposed into the body of his twelve-year-old son: 'could not for his life have written a Latin or German composition [and found himself] reduced to copy down his neighbour's exercises'. He would not survive school if it were not for the help of another boy, who: 'expressed doubts as to the wisdom of a servile imitation—more, perhaps, from prudence than conscientiousness' (Anstey 1981:110–11). Here, cribbing is justified, because Paul is in trouble, and the headmaster, Dr. Grimstone, a tyrant.

In all these cases the boys are cheating at their Latin or Greek. Readers of school novels might be forgiven for thinking that all that happens in the Victorian classical classrooms is that boys cheat, are caught, and are cured. But school stories also show good scholars at work, and it is to them I now turn.

#### GRADUS AD PARNASSUM: BECOMING A SCHOLARLY BOY

As well as showing the process of becoming scholarly, novels do their best to display model scholars as well as ordinary boys. It is not easy to be a good scholar in a nineteenth-century school story. One can, however, approach good scholarship by emulating it. Rejecting the proffered crib book is a first step along the path to being a good student. As we have seen, Tom Brown does this at the behest of Arthur, who has appealed to his sense of honour and honesty. But the path is not easy, as we see from episodes such as the one in which Hughes shows Tom, struck by Arthur's remarks, attempting to convert East and his other study mates, vowing not to use vulgus books, but backsliding, using them to check first one word, then as a study aid, and realizing with consternation at the end of the session that he has done no better than before (355–6). Good scholarship, then, is not easy to achieve, hence its value.

Frederic Farrar's later school novels show his continuing interest in teaching methods, and in how to teach a range of students. In *St Winifred's, or the World of School* (1861), he explores the problem of the 'plodder', in the form of Johnny Daubenay, nicknamed 'Dubbs', who dies of a brain fever caused by overwork. His death-bed scene shows him in the grip of delirium, restlessly repeating lines from his Horace, despite the pleas of his mother who is sitting by his side:

the poor boy fancied himself sitting under the gas-lamp in the passage as he had so often done, and trying to master one of his repetition lessons, repeating the lines fast to himself as he used to do—

Hac arte Pollux et vagus Hercules,  
 Enisus—enisus arces—enisus arces attigit igneas,  
 Quos inter Augustus—  
 How does it go on?— (Farrar 1920:250)

Poor Dubbs's death is highly sentimental, but Farrar's concern for him, the conscientious pupil who willingly accepts that he must work twice as hard as the other boys for less reward, is genuine. Dubbs's death is meant as a warning to masters who are only sympathetic to the able boys in their classes; it also criticizes the system's reliance on rote-learning, a style of learning that he felt was responsible for turning students off Greek and Latin.

Farrar also notes that classical antiquity is alive for the truly scholarly boy. Tragically, in *Eric*, Eric is a natural scholar, with a natural delight in learning and literature, which he allows to be snuffed out, through his false pride. One example of injustice in the novel is intended to be particularly poignant. Eric is chatting about Aeschylus with another boy, wrangling amicably about different possible translations. A teacher sees them, assumes that they are up to no good, and makes them copy out the six hundred lines of Virgil's Fourth *Georgic*, replacing live discussion of Greek (seen as a more advanced, erudite, and literary language), with dull, rote-learning in Latin of the kind Farrar deplors. Eric has gained a bad reputation, so the teacher is not egregiously unfair, but it is the injustice of his punishment confirms Eric in his downward path towards active wrongdoing.

How, then, does one avoid the tragedy of Johnny Dubbs or the disaffection of natural scholars like Eric Williams? In *Julian Home: A Tale of College Life* (1859), Farrar tries to show the value of good scholarship to a properly scholarly boy, in the form of his hero. Julian Home (who unites both classical nobility and modest domestic virtue in his name) is an artist in close reading, a skill that Farrar believed in wholeheartedly. In a passage whose spirit echoes Hughes's description of Arthur's scholarly method (and through it, Thomas Arnold's emphasis on the livingness, and modern-day relevance, of classical literature), we see Farrar stressing the honesty, the humility, and the rewards of Julian's approach to translation:

He studied accurately, yet with appreciation; sometimes the two ways of study are not combined, and while one man will be content with a cold and barren estimate of 'and' derived from wading through the unutterable tedium of interminable German notes, of which the last always contradicted all the rest, another will content himself with eviscerating the general meaning of a passage, without any attempt to feel the finer pulses of emotion, or discriminate the nicer shades of thought. Eschewing commentators as much as he could Julian would first carefully go over a long passage, solely with a view to the clear comprehension of the author's language, and would then re-read the whole for the purpose of enjoying and appreciating the thoughts which the words enshrined; and finally, when he had finished a book or poem, would run through it again as a whole, with all the glow and enthusiasm of a perfect comprehension. (77)

This is the closest any school novelist comes to giving a sense of the pleasure to be gained by translating, reading, and understanding a classical author, and of doing it well. Farrar was himself a scholar, and when he waxes lyrical on the pleasures of a good close reading, he is speaking from experience. He improves upon the occasion, taking a swipe at the timid souls who refer to other commentators, and the lazy ones who are satisfied with a general sense of what they translate. It is clear that for him, the good scholar aims at a true understanding of whatever work he is studying, and that includes an aesthetic appreciation of the work, as well as a sense of communion with the author. He continues:

Julian read for the sake of knowledge, and because he intensely enjoyed the great authors, whose thoughts he studied [. . .] . Never before [university] did he fully appreciate the 'thunderous lilt' of Greek epic, the touching and voluptuous tenderness of Latin elegy, the regal pomp of history, the gorgeous and philosophic mystery of the old dramatic fables. Never before had he learnt to gaze on 'the bright countenance of truth, in the mild and dewy air of delightful studies'.<sup>13</sup> Those who decry classical education do so from inexperience of its real character and value, and can hardly conceive the sense of strength and freedom which a young and ingenuous intellect acquires in all literature, and in all thought, by the laborious and successful endeavour to enter into that noble heritage which has been left us by the wisdom of bygone generations. Those hours were the happiest of Julian's life; often would he be beguiled by his studies into the 'wee small' hours of night; and in the grand company of eloquent men, and profound philosophers, he would forget everything in the sense of intellectual advance. (76)

Despite the orotundity of Farrar's prose (which Kipling noted and made fun of in *Stalky & Co.*), this passage conveys his sense that great works of literature and philosophy transcend time, to provide companionship to scholarly (or perhaps one should say the readerly) minds. A contemporary classical scholar George Grote (1794–1871) praised the classical education for providing students with 'intellectual communion among civilised men' (quoted in Turner 1989:61–81), and Julian certainly gains a sense of companionship from the ancient authors he reads. He and other intellectual boys will need that 'grand company,' for the scholarly life, as it is represented in Victorian fiction, requires stamina in the face of isolation. Not only must they engage one-on-one with the great works and authors, but they must be able to live alone in a crowd. In Baines Reed's *The Fifth Form at St Dominic's*, Oliver Greenfield, the scholarly boy who is suspected of cheating and shunned by the school, shows great resolve in the face of this crisis, though, given that he has always been aloof, and has never courted popularity, such isolation may not be as terrifying to him as to a different kind of boy (such as his brother, Stephen). School novelists agree that desire for popularity is a weakness that will lead boys into great danger (see *Eric*, for example), and they also agree that the price of good scholarship may be isolation, though the company of 'eloquent men, and profound philosophers' effectively assuages loneliness. Julian, Owen, Russell, and other notable scholars in Farrar's books are distinctive for despising popular opinion and choosing friends carefully (a theme that continues in school literature to the present day—witness the school novels of Enid Blyton, the American film *Mean Girls* or the Harry Potter novels, in which the desire for and perils of popularity are carefully examined).

George Arthur, the scholarly boy of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, is similarly isolated from his peers by his intellectual gifts. (For instance, he is viewed with scorn by other boys when he weeps over *Iliad* 24, 771–2, the lines of Helen's speech lamenting the death of Hector.) He is saved from his isolation by the vigilance of Dr Arnold, who pairs him with Tom Brown, judging that the boys' good qualities will rub off on one another. Like Julian, Arthur pursues an 'artistic' approach to his learning:

He considered first what point in the character or event which was the subject could most neatly be brought out within the limits of a vulgus, trying always to get his idea into the eight lines, but not binding himself to ten or even twelve lines if he couldn't do this. He then set to work, as much as possible without Gradus or other help, to clothe his idea in appropriate Latin or Greek, and would not be satisfied till he had polished it well up with the aptest and most poetic words and phrases he could find. (262)

Arthur's good scholarship proceeds from his fundamental honesty and is as natural to him as his devout Anglicanism (which he has inherited from his dead father, a devoted clergyman who died of a consumption from ministering to parishioners in the poor industrial north). Like many scholarly figures in literature (and like his father), Arthur is physically frail. His girlish appearance and gentle ways make him appeal to Tom's protective instincts; to some extent he is a boyish Angel in the House, encouraging Tom to give up cribbing from vulgus books, and to draw on his natural honesty. Claudia Nelson (1992) argues that Arthur enables Tom to practise the motherliness that is an essential part of the manliness preached by the novel, while Jeffrey Richards points to Tom's homosocial love for Arthur, both of which arguments are well founded. But Arthur also exists to demonstrate the value of good scholarship, to Tom, and to Tom's readers (see also Richards 1987:92–122).

In his university novel, *Tom Brown at Oxford*, Hughes changes the image of the perfect scholar in his depiction of Hardy (yet another allegorically named character, this time, indicating strength and endurance), a poor scholar at Oxford, who works as a servitor at Tom's college. In contrast to the angelic saintliness of Arthur, Hardy is craggy and hot-tempered; he is also very good at games. But, like Arthur, he guards Tom's morals, and teaches him a methodical approach to learning. Like Arthur, too, he has a valuable scholarly skill: the ability to make their subject come alive for others: they are born teachers, and both of them discuss biblical and classical figures as if they are contemporaries. Hardy makes classical history relevant for Tom and others by a system of maps and colour-coded pins which represent ancient figures. Almost immediately Tom understands the usefulness of Hardy's approach. He recommends Hardy's help to a friend who is in danger of failing, telling him: 'I think I can help you [. . .] I've just been hearing a lecture in Roman history, and one that won't be so easy to forget as most' (90). This is probably direct homage to the teaching Thomas Hughes received at Rugby—he remembered the passion with which Thomas Arnold spoke about the deeds of Julius Caesar, and marvelled at his ability to bring such antique figures to life.<sup>14</sup> Natural scholars, then, are those for whom the classical languages are not dead; natural teachers can also bring them to life for pupils.

But such ideal engagements with the classical languages are few. In public school stories, the majority of boys learning Latin and Greek do so under duress of some kind,

and must call on their reserves of virtue and moral self-reliance to do it properly. Despite the novels' emphasis on the content-value of good scholarship (in the form of Arthur and Hardy's life-giving approach to learning, and Julian Home's late-night engagement with the greatest minds), this representation of the Classics, to my mind, empties it of significance beyond its moral and civilizing aims. Though school novelists agree on the importance of Latin and Greek in the Victorian education system, and in the production of good gentlemen, it seems to me that they fall short of conveying the value of classical learning, at least in terms of knowledge, aesthetic appreciation, and grandeur of vision. Though they do attempt this, through good-scholar figures such as Hardy and George Arthur, it is only seldom that a primary character becomes a scholar himself.

#### LATIN AND GREEK AS 'PARTICLES' OF THE TRUTH-TELLING ENGLISHMAN

At the end of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, Tom himself jokingly denies that learning Greek is wholly responsible for his moral improvement: 'the question remains whether I should have got most good by understanding Greek particles or cricket thoroughly' (343). Classical education is relegated to the background by the young man whose character it has played a role in forming. Thus, while Victorian school novelists regard classical learning with affection, and strive to show its importance in producing a gentlemanly elite, moments like this show, perhaps unconsciously, that on graduation boys like Tom Brown will shelve their knowledge of Greek and Latin. Truly scholarly boys, like George Arthur, Julian Home, Hardy, and Oliver Greenfield will continue to commune with the 'grand company of eloquent men and profound philosophers'; classical learning will play a far greater role in their lives, professionally, intellectually, and spiritually. The Tom Browns, Harry Easts, and Stalkys of this world will seldom use their Greek and Latin for practical or professional purposes. But by learning these languages, their characters have been formed to the extent that one might view Greek and Latin themselves as 'particles' of truth-telling Englishmen. Greek particles, for instance, are smaller than a whole word, but, in being attached to words, transform their meaning, make clear the logic or feeling or tone of an argument. One cannot be expert in Greek without understanding these subtle but important grammatical units. Classical learning, then, transforms, extends, and refines the character of 'brave, helpful' boys like Tom, Harry, and Stalky, making them 'truth-telling' Englishmen, and fitting them to live valuable and moral lives.

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#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> As David Newsome observes: 'The application of the doctrine of godliness and good learning to the upbringing of boys in the public schools did much to create that breed of diligent, earnest, intellectual eminent Victorian which has left its impress on almost every aspect of the age'. (Newsome 1961. 49).

<sup>2</sup> *Tom Brown's Schooldays* and *The Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold, D.D.* (1845) by another Old Rugbaeian, Arthur Penhryn Stanley, were largely responsible for this vision of Arnold.

<sup>3</sup> James Patterson and Edwin V. McNaughton's *The Approach To Latin: First Part*. (1938) was for many years the standard British and Commonwealth text for teaching children Latin. I myself learned Latin (in New Zealand in the 1980s) from a defaced copy of this book (It had been graffitied so that the title read *The Approach to Eating: First Party*.)

<sup>4</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, entries for 'crib' (verb), (noun); 'cribbing' (n) and 'cribber'(n) (1989 IV:16–17). According to the *OED*, the word is carried over from: '*thieves' cant*: generally being a term used for petty theft', or 'to pilfer, purloin, steal; to appropriate furtively'. The earliest use recorded in the *OED*, interestingly, is in 1791, in Jeremy Bentham's *Panopticon*, referring to general thievery: 'cribbing, a vice thought hitherto a vice congenial to schools'.

<sup>5</sup> Much later, in *Stalky and Co.* (1899), Rudyard Kipling subverts ideals of team spirit and school patriotism when he shows his schoolboy protagonists Stalky, Beetle, and McTurk calmly dividing up their homework according to their separate abilities: Stalky takes care of the mathematics, Beetle the Latin, and McTurk the history. On learning of this practice, the school chaplain defends the boys to angry teachers, saying that they in fact demonstrate the kind of team spirit and ingenuity the school is trying to encourage. Kipling draws out the subtext of Hughes's ethics: his schoolboys, as future soldiers, have to be able to use all the cunning at their disposal; if teachers are not able to draw it out, they have to do it themselves.

<sup>6</sup> Beverly Lyon Clark (1966:68) observes that *Eric* is one of the few mid-Victorian school novels 'to give religion precedence over peer loyalty'. Here, Eric is wrong not to confess, as he gives into a craven desire for popularity rather than loyalty.

<sup>7</sup> This is not to say that Farrar did not value grammar—in 1870 he published *A brief Greek syntax, and hints on Greek accidence; with some reference to comparative philology, and with illustrations from various modern languages*. His title itself indicates the value of situating Greek among other languages, including modern languages, rather than locating it in a sterile past.

<sup>8</sup> Vance (1985:146–48) draws attention to Tom's manly self-reliance and moral courage in dealing with bullies and peer-pressure in schoolboy society; the same courage is required for the classroom..

<sup>9</sup> One might also like to note the easy classicism of Harry's statement: he appropriates the Roman use of 'Goth' to indicate uncivilized or ignorant behaviour.

<sup>10</sup> The latest example I have, Horace Annesley Vachell's *The Hill: A Romance of Friendship*, (1909), swiftly establishes the bad character of Desmond ('Demon') Scaife, by showing him calmly organizing a cribbing ring in an early chapter.

<sup>11</sup> Possibly named in ironic homage to Benjamin Hall Kennedy (1804–1888), the great scholar and grammarian?

<sup>12</sup> See Mackenzie (2002:609–20 esp. 612) on the concept of the adversarial classroom, where the battle between boys and masters is intellectually energizing.

<sup>13</sup> This is a quotation from John Milton: *The Reason of Church Government*.

<sup>14</sup> See T. W. Bamford (1967:66), who argues that Arnold: 'had no time for a sterile attitude; the classics must always be interpreted in terms of the present.'