Cultural Memory and Classical Education in Late Antique Gaul

Introduction

As the western Roman empire gradually lost control and influence in Gaul throughout the fifth century, Gallo-Roman aristocrats increasingly looked to traditions of their cultural and intellectual heritage to feel anchored to their Roman identity. Traditional literary education, based on a curriculum of Greek and Latin authors and largely unchanged for centuries, was a key aspect of such elite Roman identity.

This chapter examines the role grammatical and rhetorical education played in shaping a collective cultural memory of 'Rome' and, thus, in perpetuating elite Roman identity in late antique Gaul. Taking a diachronic approach, this study considers sources from the fourth and fifth centuries in Gaul including Eumenius, Ausonius, the *Theodosian Code*, Sidonius Apollinaris, Claudianus Mamertus and Ruricius of Limoges. Such approach allows us to observe how perceptions of education and priorities of Gallo-Roman aristocrats shifted from the fourth to fifth centuries in Gaul and contends that such shifts in attitudes towards traditional literary education are part of the larger political and societal changes taking place in this period. It will argue that, amid the shifting political, cultural, and religious landscapes of fifth century Gaul, Gallo-Roman aristocrats clung to the educational pursuits of their ancestors, and memories of the classical Roman past transferred and preserved in such literary education, to define and understand themselves, and feel connected to their Roman culture, identity, and to each other.[1]

I. Education and Elites in the Later Roman Empire

Roman literary education, so named because the curriculum was based on learning the language and style of a specific literary canon, had three main stages: elementary learning, grammar, and rhetoric. Though there were naturally many variations to this tripartite system, for centuries it remained the standard direction and model of Roman literary education across the empire.[2] Elementary learning comprised the basics of reading, writing (*prima elementa*),

[1] For this line of argument, and especially for the connection between the weakening of the political superstructure of the Roman empire and the disappearance of classical education as a 'public' institution in late antique Gaul, see my PhD dissertation, 'Learning and Power: A Cultural History of Education in Late Antique Gaul' (defended September 2018, University of Edinburgh).

[2] The three-stage system of literary education while never standardized or overseen by any authority, was nevertheless standard across the Roman empire, from east to west, and remained largely unchanged throughout the imperial period, from Quintilian to Ausonius and Sidonius. For the fluidity of this overall system, see Kaster (1983).

and arithmetic and was often taught privately in the home, or by lower-level teachers within grammatical schools.[3] Students would begin their grammatical education at the age of six or seven. For example, at the end of the fourth century, Paulinus of Pella began his formal grammatical instruction when he was six, after learning basic literacy at home (Paul. Pell. *Euch.* 60-67, 72-74).[4] Grammarians taught advanced reading and writing, focusing on syntax, parts of speech, pronunciation, and systematic line-by-line explication of a canon of prose and poetry, putting these texts in their historical, literary, and moral contexts.[5]

Rhetors generally accepted students from the ages of twelve or thirteen. Rhetorical instruction could last as long as four to six years, but many students left their studies early or moved to different teachers or types of schools.[6] Students of rhetoric learned the arts of oratory – of speaking and writing persuasively. They memorized model texts called *progymnasmata*, which illustrated principles of rhetoric, they learned the rules and use of *inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*, *memoria*, and *actio*, and finally they put these into practice by composing and delivering mock speeches, *declamationes*, on set topics from Roman law, history, and mythology. In these *declamationes* students put themselves in the shoes, as it were, of famous figures from Rome's mythic and historic past. Students were taught to draw on the examples and advice of classical authors, especially Cicero (and in Greek, Demosthenes).[7] The students performed their mock speeches in public before their teachers, fellow students, parents, and family friends. Such performances continued in the late fifth century in Gaul. For example, while his young friend Burgundio was preparing a speech on Julius Caesar, Sidonius promised to gather an audience to listen, support, and critique the student's performance (*Ep.* 9.14.7-9). Rhetorical training instilled the art of speaking well, thus preparing students for public life as lawyers, diplomats, and politicians. More crucially, though, by immersing students within Rome's mythical and historic past, grammatical and rhetorical schools promoted a collective memory and vision of 'Rome', thus fostering a common 'Roman' character and outlook among its students.

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[3] For elementary education in the ancient world cf. Kaster (1983); Booth (1981, 1979, 1978); Bonner (1977: 34-46, 115-45, 165-88); Marrou (1956: 358-368). For education in the post-Roman west see Riché (1962).

[4] Unless otherwise indicated, the text of Paulinus of Pella in this chapter is Evelyn-White (1921) and translations are based on the same.

[5] For grammar and grammarians see especially Kaster (1988); Morgan (1998: 152-189); Bonner (1977: 189-249); Marrou (1956: 369-380).

[6] For rhetoric and rhetors see Morgan (1998: 190-239); Bonner (1977: 250-327); Marrou (1956: 381-387); for Libanius and rhetoric in the late antique eastern empire see especially Cribiore (2001, 2007, 2013), also Van Hoof (2014, 2013).

[7] cf. Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.39. For the role of Cicero's speeches in Roman education see La Bua (2019).

Literary education was central to elite Roman life. It defined and shaped aristocratic identity and provided a potential entry point for would-be elites to the opportunities of the governing classes. Education was tied explicitly to political power and cultural prestige, and it was one of the main socializing forces of Roman youth. For example, when Pliny recommends the teacher Julius Genitor for the son of his friend Corellia Hispula (*Ep.* 3.3), Pliny assures her that Genitor will teach her son not only how to speak, but also how to act, prioritizing morals over eloquence.[8] Understanding and being able to engage with the classical literary canon of Latin and Greek granted access into a privileged group and taught young aristocrats how to behave and think.

Education went beyond the curriculum taught at school; in its broader sense literary education included the lifestyle, values, culture, and priorities of the educated class, which in Greek was termed *paideia* and can be approximated with the Latin terms *doctrina* ('teaching') or *disciplina* ('learning'). This was manifested in many ways: literary production and patronage, participation in intellectual and literary networks, letter writing, and copying and publishing contemporaries' works. A literary education was essential as it allowed aristocrats to participate fully in elite activities and social life. Gallo-Roman aristocrats would show off their learning through word play and allusions in literature that they would compose and circulate or perform at parties.[9] Sidonius recalls such a party in Arles, during Majorian's reign. He and his fellow guests Lampridius, Domnulus, and Severianus spurred each other on to compose, extempore, verses in various metres about a recent work of the writer and *magister epistularum* Petrus that had been discussed at the party (Sid. *Ep.* 9.14.4-5).

Attending the schools of the grammarian and rhetor could pave the way for successful public careers in the courts and the imperial administration, especially in the expanding imperial bureaucracy of the fourth century.[10] It was taken for granted that members of the aristocracy would complete grammatical and rhetorical education, but those of lower standing, or would-be elites, could also improve their position and prospects by virtue of their literary

[8] *proinde fauentibus dis trade eum praeceptori, a quo mores primum mox eloquentiam discat, quae male sine moribus discitur,* Plin. *Ep.* 3.3.7 ('So with the gods' support you must entrust him to the teacher from whom he is to learn first upright behaviour, and then eloquence. One cannot properly learn the second without the first.') Text is from Mynors (1963). Translation is from Walsh (2006).

[9] E.g. Ausonius' *Technop.*, *Ludus*, and his letter to Axius Paulus that switches between Greek and Latin (*Ep.* 8). Also cf. the "literary salons" at the home of Claudianus Mamertus, Sid. *Ep.* 4.11.

[10] For education and office holding see Brown (1992: 35-70); Kaster (1988: 28-31, esp. note 74); MacMullen (1962: 367-368, esp. note 16); Haarhoff (1920: 124-131); Van Hoof (2013). Jones (1964: 512-513, 527, 990); Cribiore (2001, 2009); Sanchez Vendranini (2016). Some individuals, such as notaries or autodidacts, could gain advancement without formal literary training in grammar and rhetoric. Cf. Kaster (1988: 47-50); Teitler (1985); Hopkins (1974). Such individuals annoyed Libanius: *Or.* 42.23-24; *Or*. 62.46. Cribiore (2009: 237-8).

training.[11] When Gallo-Roman authors in the fourth mention education, they tend to emphasize these practical rewards for literary training, linking their schooling to career advancement and explicitly tying education to the interests of the Roman state.

We can understand the Roman state's own awareness of the practical value of literary education through their attitude towards teachers and students in legislation from the *Theodosian Code*. The imperial government granted exemptions from tax and civic duties to teachers of grammar and rhetoric and occasionally set salaries, established professorships, and oversaw student life in Rome and Constantinople. Teachers were granted such special privileges because the Emperors understood that they provided an essential and valuable service to the state. This is stated most explicitly in *CTh* 13.3.18, which says that exemptions should be granted to physicians and teachers of literature *pro necessariis artibus et liberalibus disciplinis* ('because of their necessary arts and liberal instruction).[12] Moreover, while eloquence often helped to advance a public career, it sometimes even served as a prerequisite for a position in the imperial service. For example, in order to obtain a position within the first order of the *decuriales* in Rome, candidates had to excel in the "practice and training of the liberal studies" and be "so polished in the use of letters" that they could speak grammatically, with no mistakes.[13] The emperors were also keen to recruit talented students into their administration. An edict issued by Valentinian in 370 to Olybrius, the urban prefect, stated that the prefect should earmark potential future officials by sending a register of talented students to the emperors each year (*CTh* 14.9.1). This legislation was a clear message of the value the state placed on literary education, and that students trained in grammar and rhetoric could hope for career advancement within the imperial administration.

The practical importance of education, both for the individual and for the state, is also conveyed by Eumenius in his panegyric *Pro instaurandis scholis* (*Pan.Lat*.IX(5)), which he delivered in Gaul in the final years of the third century AD.[14] In this speech Eumenius, a teacher

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[11] Sidonius remarks that Paeonius, though of "municipal stock" became *vicarius* of the Seven Provinces then praetorian prefect (*Ep.*1.11.5), and Gaudentius was able to rise in the imperial ranks not because of his birth or status, but because of proving his abilities at court (Sid. *Ep*. 1.4.1).

[12] Cf. *CTh* 14.1.1; 6.26.1.

[13] *CTh* 14.1.1, issued in 360 by Constantius and Julian. (*in decuriarum ordine insigni, cui librariorum vel fiscalium sive censualium nomen est, nequaquam aliquis locum primi ordinis adipiscatur nisi is,* ***quem constiterit studiorum liberalium usu adque exercitatione pollere et ita esse litteris expolitum, ut citra offensam vitii ex eodem verba procedant***). Excellence in literary studies could also earn such a candidate a "more honorable rank" (*ne autem litteraturae, quae omnium virtutum maxima est, praemia denegentur, eum, qui studiis et eloquio dignus primo loco videbitur, honestiorem faciet nostra provisio sublimitate*). Text ed. Mommsen and Meyer (1905). Trans. Pharr, Pharr, and Davidson (2001).

[14] Text of Eumenius *Pan.Lat* IX(5) is Mynors (1964). Translations are from Nixon and Rodgers (1994). On the date and location of the speech see Rees (2002: 133-134); Nixon and Rodgers (1994: 147-8); Rodgers (1989: 266); Gibson and Rees (2013: 151). On Eumenius' panegyric also see La Bua, 2010 and Van Sickle, 1934.

of rhetoric in Autun, justifies his decision to use his teaching salary to rebuild the town's school buildings. In doing so he sets out how grammatical and rhetorical education is beneficial to the emperors (Maximian and Constantius) and necessary for the proper running of the Roman state. Eumenius shows how literary and rhetorical training is relevant to future careers in the bureaucracy and military (*Pan.Lat.*IX(5)5.4, 15.4), and argues that the skills learned at classical schools can be applied to all life's duties, even a military career (8.2).[15] Eumenius emphasizes the link between the empire's military stability to literary education, saying that the emperors will only feel that the Roman state is strong, "if not only Roman power but even Roman eloquence flourishes again" (*si non potentia sed etiam eloquentia Romana reuirescat* 19.4).

The links, both real and perceived, between the state, office-holding, and education are also expressed by Ausonius. Ausonius was a teacher of grammar and rhetoric in Bordeaux before becoming private tutor to the young Gratian, and later holding offices within the imperial government, including the consulship and Praetorian Prefecture of Gaul. In his *Gratiarum Actio* Ausonius celebrates his accomplishments culminating in his consulship, drawing a clear line between his education, teaching career and later political success.[16] Ausonius hints at his special qualifications that made Gratian bestow such an honour, setting himself apart from the types of people who usually are granted the consulship (*Fecisti autem et facies alios quoque consules, piissime Gratiane, sed non et causa pari*, Aus. *Grat. Act.* 4.16) and is careful to emphasize his unique position, saying, *quorum me etiamsi non secerno numero, tamen, quod ad honoris viam pertinet, ratione dispertio* (4.16). Ausonius reminds his audience that he was Gratian's tutor (*anne quod docui?* 5.24), underlining this important connection between his literary training and his success in politics.[17]

Ausonius hoped his children and grandchildren would also achieve high honours and illustrious careers. In his *Protrepticus ad Nepotem*, a poem of encouragement and instruction written for one of his grandsons, Ausonius draws a direct link between literary and rhetorical training and success in the imperial service:

… aut si
inuidia est, sperabo tamen, nec uota fatiscent,

[15] *Quae [sc. continentiae modestiae uigilantiae patientiae (preceding clause)] uniuersa cum in consuetudinem tenera aetate uenerunt, <ad> omnia deinceps officia uitae et ad ipsa quae diuersissima uidentur militae atque castrorum munia conualescunt* ('All of these (sc. self-control, moderation, vigilance and patience), when they become habitual at a tender age, grow strong thereafter in the face of all of life's duties, even the very one which seems the most divorced from them, the service of military life and the camps').
[16] Aus. *Grat. Act.* 4.16-17; 5.24. Cf. Aurelius Victor, who was from a humble background but went to school and thereby gained positions within the imperial bureaucracy, such as a consular governorship and urban prefecture (Aur. Vict. *De vir. ill.* 20.5).
[17] Text of Ausonius in this chapter is from Green, 1999. Translation are from Evelyn-White, 1919, 1921.

> ut patris utque mei non inmemor ardua semper
> praemia musarum cupias facundus et olim
> hac gradiare via, qua nos praecessimus et cui
> proconsul genitor, praefectus auunculus instant. *Protr.* 39-44
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> … or if this be begrudged, yet will I hope – nor shall my prayers grow weary – that, not unmindful of your father and myself, you may ever strive to win through eloquence the hard-won prizes of the Muses, and some day tread this path wherein I have gone before and your father, the proconsul, and your uncle the prefect now press on.

The poem ends with repeated hopes for the bright future of his grandson. The final lines encapsulate the main argument of the poem: study well and you can be consul (*hunc tu / effice, ne sit onus, per te ut conixus in altum / conscendas speresque tuos te consule fasces*, Aus. *Protr.* 98-100).[18]

We should keep in mind that both Eumenius and Ausonius were individuals with a real stake in the survival and prestige of schools of grammar and rhetoric. Therefore, their testimony may not entirely reflect the typical elite Roman's attitude towards education in this period. At the same time, however, we should reflect on the fact that two such individuals connected to the pedagogical environment were important political figures, and their work has survived, attesting to the enduring importance of both author and work and to the real connections between pedagogy and power in the later imperial period.[19]

II. Education, Cultural Memory, and Elite Identity in the 5th century

In the fifth century, education took on a specialized significance for Gallo-Roman aristocrats. While their predecessors in the fourth century tended to emphasize the importance of education for career advancement, as we shall see below, for the Gallo-Roman elite in the fifth century literary education had greater ideological and personal value.[20] As men like Sidonius,

[18] "This render thou no load, but by thine own efforts struggle to climb on high and hope for thine own insignia, thine own consulate".

[19] See Brown, 1992 for ideas of 'pedagogy and power'. On the question of how far we are to believe literary figures' insistence on the importance of literary culture in aristocratic life and identity, see Woolf (2003) for the first and second century AD. Also see Cribiore (2009) for the actual evidence of literary education among governors in the world of Libanius and the late antique East, and Heather (1994) for the changing uses of literacy in the late- and post-Roman world.

[20] On this theme see Mathisen (1993: 105-118), e.g. "During the barbarian occupation of the Roman west, such [literary] pursuits seem to have attained an even greater importance" (105) and "in late Roman Gaul participating in literary pursuits came to play an even larger role than before as a determinant of aristocratic status" (109). Mathisen argues against the (then) widely held scholarly assumption that literary culture was in decline in the fifth century, demonstrating that contemporary claims of literary decline should not be taken at face value. He argues that they reflect, if anything, a quantitative decline, rather than a qualitative decline in literary ambitions, resulting from the "contemporary retrenchment" (108) of the school system in the fifth century (a viewpoint which

Claudianus Mamertus, and Ruricius of Limoges navigated the political and cultural upheavals of fifth-century Gaul, traditional Roman education could serve as an anchor and lifeline to their Roman past and help them to underline their Roman aristocratic heritage and identity. Classical education, in which memories of the glorious Roman past were deeply embedded and promoted, provided common ground for friendships and networks, and was a key factor in how these Gallo-Roman elites sought to maintain and affirm their aristocratic status and Roman identity amid the uncertainties and transformations of the period.

By the second half of the fifth century, the period in which the bulk of the literary evidence and surviving letters of fifth-century Gallo-Roman aristocrats originates, Gallo-Romans had witnessed the ever-increasing expansion of barbarian kingdoms and the ultimate withdrawal of imperial control in Gaul. By this time the north of Gaul had long been essentially out of Roman control, and the situation was exacerbated after the defection of the *magister militum* Aegidius in 461. The following year Narbonne and its surroundings was granted to the Visigoths,[21] and soon after the Burgundian king Gundioc was made *magister militum*, which gave him a legitimate position to justify the Burgundian expansion into Lyon and along the Rhône.[22] After four years of summer sieges on Clermont, the city was granted to the Visigothic king Euric in exchange for Provence in 474, and only two years later the western Roman empire would 'fall', when Odoacer deposed the emperor Romulus. Even before these major political turning points, Sidonius, Claudianus, and Ruricius had grown up in a Gaul where Visigoths, Burgundians, and other barbarian groups already played a significant role in politics and defence, were forming close connections with Gallo-Roman elites, and exercised increasing influence in daily life. In the mid 450s Sidonius' father-in-law Avitus had been made emperor, albeit briefly, with the support of the Visigoths who had settled and controlled Toulouse and its surroundings, and Sidonius had visited the court in Toulouse as a young man.[23] In the 460s both the Visigoths and Burgundians even interfered in local Church affairs. In 462 the Visigoths appealed to pope Hilarius in Rome over the consecration of bishop Hermes in

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he pivots away from in later publications, e.g. Mathisen (2005). Cf. fn. 25 below). In this chapter Mathisen argues for education's role in fostering a "sense of superiority" (108) among Gallo-Roman elites, and a "cultural rallying point against the barbarians" (110) – issues related to, but distinct from the arguments of this present chapter.

[21] This treaty was handled by Agrippinus, who replaced Aegidius after Aegidius revolted against Ricimer and Libius Severus. Hydat., *Chron.* 212, s.a. 461, *ut Gothorum meretur auxilia*.

[22] See Shanzer and Wood (2002: 13-27). Gundioc was *vir illustis magister militum (per Gallias)*, as recorded during episcopal election at Die in 462/3, *Epistolae Arelatenses Genuinae* 19, MGH *Epp.* 3.

[23] Cf. Sidonius' description of Theodoric, *Ep.* 1.2. See Harries (1994: 101-102) for Sidonius' carefully balanced relationship with the Visigoths. For Roman-barbarian relations in general in Gaul see Mathisen (1993: 27-35, 67-85, 119-131).

Narbonne, and a year later the Burgundians opposed the election of Marcellus as bishop of Die.[24]

Throughout these decades of political turbulence and cultural change, Gallo-Romans still had some tangible connections to the central imperial government in Rome. Sidonius, for example, was Urban Prefect in 468, and during the same period the Council of the Seven Provinces, which met at Arles, referred Arvandus' case of treason against Rome to a higher court, the senate, in Rome itself. Nevertheless, men like Sidonius could not have but felt the tides of change, and the attitudes of Gallo-Roman elites towards classical education, as expressed in their epistolary exchanges, had altered markedly from previous periods. Without the superstructure of the Roman Empire, the practical value of education had greatly diminished. Eloquence and rhetorical prowess could certainly be useful for a bishop, and basic literacy and legal training was an asset within the administrations of barbarian kingdoms, but the fundamental connection between literary training and cultural prestige and political power faltered with the fall of the western empire and the withdrawal of centralized imperial power in Gaul.[25]

Amid this changing socio-political landscape, the classical schools acquired a new significance for Gallo-Roman aristocrats. We see in the correspondence of Gallo-Roman aristocrats the increasingly personal and private value of education, as opposed to the public value that literary training had under the Roman Empire. For example, in their letters Gallo-Romans idolize teachers of grammar and rhetoric, defining them as the champions of Rome's cultural heritage and, in this way, custodians of elite Roman identity.

Claudianus sees the teacher Sapaudus as the last hope for *doctrina* and the *os Romanum* in Gaul,[26] and Sidonius likewise credits the teacher Johannes with the preservation and

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[24] Harries (1994: 133-140).

[25] Mathisen (2005) suggests an alternative picture of the use of literary training in late- and post-Roman Gaul, arguing that classical schools continued to exist in Gaul into the seventh century, and argues for the continued relevance of grammatical and rhetorical training for the barbarian administrations and the Church. Mathisen's conclusions are problematic, largely because they are based on incorrect prosopographical data about the number of teachers in Gaul in late antiquity, and do not take into account the reality of the levels of literacy that would have been required by power brokers in the post-Roman world (i.e. barbarian kingdoms and the Church). For a discussion of the relationship between Roman literary education and power brokers in late- and post-imperial Gaul, see my PhD dissertation, 'Learning and Power: A Cultural History of Education in Late Antique Gaul' (defended September 2018, University of Edinburgh).

[26] *quorum egomet studiorum quasi quandam mortem flebili uelut epitaphio tumularem, nisi tute eadem uenerabili professione, laudabili sollertia, acri ingenio, profluente eloquio resuscitauisses ... hinc uero procul iniuria ceterorum penes Galliam nostram professionis tuae par unus et solus es.* Claud. Mam. *Ep.* 2 ('I would bury these studies, as though dead, with a tearful epitaph, as it were, if *you* had not resuscitated them with this very venerable profession, praiseworthy skill, sharp intellect, and fluent eloquence… But as it is, without injustice to others, you are the one and only equal to your profession within our Gaul'). *CSEL* 11, p. 204. ll.17-20, p. 204 l.30 – p. 205 l.3. Translations are my own.

revitalization of literary culture in Gaul and dubs him Latin's "reviver," "promoter," and "champion" (*suscitator*, *fautor*, *assertor*), who alone, "amid the storms of war has enabled Latin speech to gain a haven of refuge, although Latin arms have suffered shipwreck" (*Ep.* 8.2.1).[27] In this same letter Sidonius clearly articulates why the efforts of Johannes, and other teachers like him, are so precious to men like Sidonius. In the later fifth century, literary education and *paideia* provided a new measure of nobility and took on a new significance for Gallo-Roman aristocrats. Sidonius claims, "for now that the old degrees of official rank are swept away, those degrees by which the highest in the land used to be distinguished from the lowest, the only token of nobility will henceforth be a knowledge of letters" (Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 8.2.2).[28] This letter to Johannes is almost certainly dated to ca. 478.[29] By this time Sidonius had lived through four consecutive summers in Clermont under siege by the Visigoths, and witnessed its ultimate transferral to Visigothic hands, had been exiled by the Visigothic king from his bishopric, and the last emperor had been deposed and Italy was under the rule of the barbarian king, Odovacer. While Sidonius had previously hinted at this idea (namely, that it was education in particular that conferred nobility) in letters from 469/70 to Philagrius (*Ep.* 7.14.7),[30] and to Syagrius (*Ep.* 5.5.1),[31] it is only later, in his letter to Johannes in the post-imperial context, that Sidonius fully develops and explicitly expresses such feelings.[32]

In a letter to the teacher Hesperius in the late 470s, Ruricius of Limoges conveys a similar sentiment about the value and necessity of literary education in shaping the minds of his sons and establishing their status among the Gallo-Roman nobility.[33] Ruricius, writing as a parent with concerns for his family's prestige, places great value in Hesperius' role as a teacher

[27] *...teque per Gallias uno magistro sub hac tempestate bellorum Latina tenuerunt ora portum, cum pertulerint arma naufragium.* Cf. Sidonius on Hesperius' preservation of proper Latin forms, *Ep.* 2.10.1. Latin text throughout this chapter is from Loyen (1970). Translations are from Anderson (1936, 19650.

[28] *nam iam remotis gradibus dignitatum, per quas solebat ultimo a quoque summus quisque discerni, solum erit posthac nobilitatis indicium litteras nosse.*

[29] This date is agreed upon by various editors and commentators of Sidonius' letters, including Baret (1878) and Dalton (1915). Loyen (1970) and the *PLRE* (1980) date the letter from 476-477, and Kaufmann (1995) to a the period from 470-478.

[30] *conclamata sunt namque iudicio universali scientiae dignitas virtus praerogativa, cuius ad maximum culmen meritorum gradibus ascenditur* (*Ep.* 7.14.7).

[31] Sidonius says Syagrius' grandfather would have been famous by his literary pursuits, even if he had not held high office: *cum sis igitur e semine poetae, cui procul dubio statuas dederant litterae, si trabeae non dedissent* (*Ep.* 5.5.1).

[32] Ennodius expresses something similar in the early sixth century, when he says to a teacher of relatives of his from Gaul: *tibi uni concessum est claritatem aut dare aut reparare maiorum*, *Dict.* 8.4.

[33] This is the same teacher Hesperius to whom Sidonius wrote. This letter from Ruricius is dated to 475/480.

of grammar and rhetoric, and tells Hesperius that his sons would "indeed lose their nobility if they did not have you as an example" (Rur. *Ep.* 1.3).[34]

Gallo-Roman aristocrats in the fifth century could invest such importance in education because classical schools did not just teach young Romans the literary canon; they also shaped their broader aristocratic behaviours and thoughts, showing them who and how they ought to be. Grammatical and rhetorical education taught students how to act and think as a member of the elite classes, what the proper world-view was, and how they should situate themselves and others in Roman society.[35] In addition to teaching students to read, write, and speak, teachers of grammar and rhetoric gave their students the tools with which to understand their own place within Roman society and know what it meant to be 'Roman'.

As mentioned above, the 'curriculum' of the Roman schools by the fourth and fifth centuries had largely remained unchanged since Quintilian codified it in the first century AD. Most of the principal school texts that were used in the late antique west were produced in the Republican or early imperial periods, such as the works of Terence, Cicero, Virgil, or Sallust.[36] In his letter of advice to his young grandson, Ausonius lists some of the authors that will be read in school, including Homer, Menander, Valerius Flaccus, Virgil, Terence, and Sallust (Aus. *Protr.* 45-63). Another grandchild of Ausonius, Paulinus of Pella, recalls reading the *dogmata Socratus*, Homer, and Virgil as a young boy in Gaul (Paul. Pell. *Euch.* 72-80). Almost a century later, Sidonius was reading Menander and Terence with his son (Sid. *Ep.* 4.12),[37] and Claudianus Mamertus advocated a reading list of traditional, canonical, authors for the teacher Sapaudus and his students, namely Naevius and Plautus, Cato, Varro, Gracchus, Chrysippus, Fronto, and Cicero (Claud. Mam. *Ep.* 205 l. 30- 206 l.3).[38] It is significant that late antique students continued to be brought up mainly or exclusively on literature of the Republic and early empire, rather than on more contemporary authors. Through such ancient and established texts, fourth- and fifth-century students not only learned the 'correct' form and style of Latin

[34] *quae utique in tanta rerum confusione amitterent nobilitatem, si indicem non haberent* ('amid such worldly confusion they would indeed lose their nobility if they did not have you as an example'). Text of Ruricius throughout this chapter is from Engelbrecht (1891). Translations are from Mathisen (1999).

[35] Cf. La Bua (2019); Watts (2012, 2015); Bloomer (1997). Cribiore (2001: 8-9), in reference to Greek education in Greco-Roman Egypt, sees the school system as "an agent of social, cultural, and political continuity…Learning some skills and elements of a cultural patrimony went hand in hand with assimilation of and submission to the rules of the dominant order." Cf. Nixon (2012: 223-239) for the role the *Panegyrici Latini* played in forming the political attitudes of the youth in Gallic schools in the fourth century.

[36] On such canonical texts cf. Cassiod. *Inst.* 1.15.7; Sid. *Carm.* 2.182-92.

[37] On this letter see Courcelle (1969: 254-55); (Amherdt, 1999: 305-313); Lafaye (1916: 18-32).

[38] *Naeuius et Plautus tibi ad elegantiam, Cato ad grauitatem, Varro ad peritiam, Gracchus ad acrimoniam, Chrysippus as disciplinam, Fronto ad prompam, Cicero ad eloquentiam capessendam usui sint.* On Sidonius' and Claudianus' differing reading preferences see Pelttari (*forthcoming*).

but were also immersed in Roman history and long-entrenched, traditional ideas of Roman society and values. The centrality of such texts in boyhood, especially the school text *par excellence*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, which dramatizes and glorifies the founding of the Roman empire, meant that a specific collective cultural memory of 'Rome' would be perpetuated throughout these students' lives and would inform how they conceived of themselves and their place within the long arc of Rome's history.

A collective cultural memory of 'Rome' and its values was also at the heart of rhetorical education. Students imitated the style and argumentation of these canonical authors at rhetorical schools through practice speeches, or declamations.[39] Students composed and delivered speeches in public in which they deliberated points of law revolving around fictional cases of 'stock' figures from Roman society, such as sons who inherit wealth, or wronged women or slaves. These types of speeches reinforced social values and taught the young elite the proper modes of authority and social hierarchy in Roman society. As Bloomer remarks in his important contribution on Roman education,

> … declaimers were playing at the grandest role in Roman society, not that of the emperor (which was not an ambition to acknowledge) but that of the orator, the man who speaks to defend his friends, reunite the family, repair society, and champion Roman values. As little Ciceros, the speakers place themselves at the apogee of an imaginary Roman society, in a sort of idealized, frozen republicanism where the chief virtue and the end of life is the doing of *beneficia* to clients through speech to the acclamation of the society at large.[40]

In this way, preparing such speeches not only trained students for law courts and bureaucracy, but it also made them aware of their place in society and of their role as the future governing class of the empire.

In other types of declamations students gave voice to a set of famous characters from Roman history any myth, which helped to create and instill a collective cultural memory of 'Rome' and show students their place within Roman history and society.[41] Juvenal, for example, wondered how many more times Roman audiences would have to hear students advising Hannibal (*Sat.* 7. 160-67, cf. 10. 167-68). Centuries later, the same practice of reimagining key events in Roman history was taking place in Gaul. As mentioned above,

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[39] The more rudimentary speeches were called *progymnasmata*, speeches revolving around imaginary legal cases were *controversiae*, and those about famous characters from history and myth were *suasoriae*.

[40] Bloomer (2011: 173). Also cf. Corbeill (2007: 69): "…addressing the challenges offered by Beard (1993), who suggests that the Roman declamatory exercises of the first centuries CE function as "cultural myth-making". Declamation, that is, uses a restricted set of fictional scenarios to work out – through continual study, rehearsal, and performance – what it means to be "Roman"….[it] ultimately serves to recreate and reinforce social and political hierarchies"

[41] For the use of the historic, but also more recent, past in the *Panegyrici Latini*, see Nixon (1990).

Sidonius sends well wishes to his young friend Burgundio in advance of a declamation Burgundio will perform, in which he will praise the exploits of Julius Caesar (Sid. *Ep.* 9.14.7-8).[42] Sidonius hopes that Burgundio will rise to the occasion and be able to match the works of famous authors who also wrote on the topic, such as Livy, Suetonius, Juventius Martialis, and Balbus:

> quae materia tam grandis est, ut studentum si quis fuerit ille copiosissimus, nihil amplius in ipsa debeat cauere, quam ne quid minus dicat. nam si omittantur quae de titulis dictatoris inuicti scripta Patauinis sunt uoluminibus, quis opera Suetonii, quis Iuuentii Martialis historiam quisue ad extremum Balbi ephemeridem fando adaequauerit? Sid. *Ep.* 9.14.7.
>
> The subject is so colossal that even the most eloquent of students must guard against one thing particularly – the danger of not rising to the occasion. For if we leave out of account all that is recorded of the invincible dictator's glories in the books of Livy, what author's style could match the works of Suetonius, the history of Iuventius Martialis, and lastly the journal of Balbus?

The student Burgundio is not only tasked with learning about and speaking the praises of one of the most famous figures in Roman history, but he is also able to interact with Roman literary history and find a place and voice for himself within it. Moreover, declamations did not only reinforce a collective memory of Rome for the students performing, but also for the audience and wider public. Sidonius refers to Burgundio's performance as a "public examination" (*palaestra publici examinis*, 9.14.9) and promises to gather an audience to listen and critique his effort. In this way rhetorical education continued to evoke a specific idea of 'Romanness' and to promote a shared cultural memory of Rome's past far beyond the years spent at school.[43] Because of this strong link between education and 'Romanness', Gallo-Romans in the fifth century were able to look to their schools and literary training as an anchor, or solid link, to their Roman heritage and identity.

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[42] *namque imminet tibi thematis celeberrimi uotiua redhibitio,* ***laus*** *uidelicet* ***peroranda****, quam meditaris, Caesaris Iulii…officii magis est nostri auditoribus scamma componere, praeparare aures fragoribus intonaturis, dumque uirtutes tu dicis alienas, nos tuas dicere* ('An ideal chance will shortly be yours of repaying me by means of your exercise on an illustrious theme, I mean the laudatory declamation on Julius Caesar which you are composing').

[43] On the theory of 'cultural memory' see especially Galinsky (2015: 2), who articulates how traditions and collective memories contribute to the formation of identity: "What, then, about "cultural memory" specifically? The concept, even if used quite generally at times, has become a commonplace since it was articulated by Jan Assmann. Put succinctly, it denotes an ensemble of cultural traditions and practices and their manifestations in a variety of media, such as text, art, cult, and festivals, constituting "the way of remembering chosen by a community, the collective *idea* of the meaning of past events and of their embeddedness within temporal processes" all with an obvious relation to identity formation". For a quick summary of various ways 'Roman' was used to signify identity in the late and post-Roman period (i.e. political, religious, ethnic, familial, legal, cultural, or personal 'identities'), see Mathisen (2018).

Classical literary education cultivated a collective cultural memory by instilling in students the notion of a personal connection to Rome's mythical and historic past. This shared cultural identity not only connected students to their past, but also to one another. As we have seen, education could shape and define elite identity. Memories of school days, shared classroom experiences, and common literary interests also gave Gallo-Romans tangible links to each other and helped them to form and cement friendships and networks in adult life.[44] Such networks would prove even more valuable for Gallo-Roman aristocrats in the changing political and cultural environments of fifth-century Gaul.

Sidonius, for example, can attribute his close bond to his cousin Probus not only to family ties, but also to shared intellectual and literary tastes (*studiorum parilitas*), which both men would have first cultivated under the guidance of their masters of grammar and rhetoric. According to Sidonius, he and Probus, "have the same taste in literary matters, praising and blaming the same things, and are always at one in approval or disapproval of any particular form of diction" (*idem sentimus culpamus laudamus in litteris et aeque nobis quaelibet dictio placet improbaturque*, Sid. *Ep.* 4.1.1). Similarly, Sidonius and Avitus, the recipient of the first letter of the third book of Sidonius' correspondence and a relative of the emperor Eparchius Avitus, were united not only by blood, but also because they were "born in the same times, studied under the same teachers, were trained in the same accomplishments, amused [themselves] with the same sports, received advancement under the same emperors and passed through the same state service" (*ipsi isdem temporibus nati magistris usi, artibus institute lusibus otiati, principibus euecti stipendiis perfuncti sumus*, Sid. *Ep.* 3.1.1). Furthermore, not only were the grandfathers of Sidonius and a certain Aquilinus united by "their literary pursuits and dignities" (*laudabili familiaritate coniunxerart litterarum dignitatum*, Sid. *Ep.* 5.9.1), but the grandsons were likewise linked, largely because of their shared school experiences and memories. Sidonius recalls in his letter to Aquilinus, "the same school drilled us, the same master taught us, the same joys cheered us, the same strictness checked us, the same training moulded us" (*unus nos exercuit ludus, magister instituit; una nos Laetitia dissoluit, seueritas cohercuit, disciplina formauit*, Sid. *Ep.* 5.9.3). For Sidonius, shared education and literary tastes were second only to blood ties in cementing bonds that lasted throughout adulthood. These bonds that were formed during school helped to establish the connections that would be

[44] For experiences of students in the eastern empire see Watts (2015: 37-58, 2012, 2006, 2004, 2000); Cribiore (2001, 2007); McLynn (2007).

crucial for the status, reputation, and careers of Sidonius and other Gallo-Romans of the governing classes in the later fifth century.

Moreover, because the system of literary education was standard throughout the empire, in adulthood friendships and connections could be made with members of this educated elite from different cities or provinces on the basis of shared school experience and literary taste.[45] Perhaps one of the defining features of the system of classical education was that it was standard throughout the empire and had remained largely unchanged since the first century AD. In this way education, and memories of one's schooldays, helped unify and define the elite Roman world, and as Robert Kaster remarks in his seminal contribution on the role of grammarians in late antique society, education "provide[d] the language and *mores* through which a social and political elite recognized its members".[46]

Roman aristocrats could turn to the friendships and networks forged with their peers in their later careers.[47] Romans could use their education and reputation for eloquence to make connections with influential people, especially when moving to a new town or seeking employment in the courts or imperial administration. Roman aristocrats had long relied on networks of friends and acquaintances to further their careers or prospects, and their common culture and experience of *paideia* facilitated these connections. In letters of introduction, benefactors would cite the subject's literary abilities and educational achievements as a way of advertising their skills, moral merits, and membership of the elite class. Ennodius of Pavia, for example, took a keen interest in Deuterius' school in Milan, and wrote letters of recommendation for his young friends after they had 'graduated'.[48]

In this way, classical literary education, both the actual time spent at the schools of the grammarians and rhetors, the memories school, and the shared experiences across the empire, was integral in establishing friendships and networks among the governing classes of the Roman world. Education linked elite Romans not only to each other, but also to the idea and memory of 'Rome'.

Conclusion

For centuries throughout the Roman empire, literary education had been considered useful and necessary for careers, and explicitly connected to cultural prestige and public office. Both

[45] E.g. Libanius and Symmachus (even though Libanius could not read Latin).
[46] Kaster (1988: 14).
[47] For friendship, *philia* developed at school see Brown (1992: 45-47); McLynn (2007).
[48] E.g. Ennod. *Ep.* 9.2, 9.4; 5.9, 5.11; 6.15, 8.38, 9.8.

aristocrats and would-be elites could reliably presume that sending their children to learn grammar and rhetoric would help them to get better jobs, make connections, or improve their social standing. By the mid- to late-fifth century there was a shift in the way education is valued, and how Gallo-Romans perceived it. Increasingly, literary education was appreciated primarily for its personal and ideological value in shaping and preserving elite Roman identity, language, and culture.

Through close study of canonical Roman and Greek authors under the guidance of grammarians, and practice speeches in which students reimagined events and impersonated real and fictional characters from Roman society and history, classical schools fostered a common cultural memory of 'Rome'. By immersion in the literature of their ancestors, and by re-imagining key moments in Roman history through declamations, young men could connect themselves to their cultural inheritance and find a place for themselves within Rome's journey through history. The curriculum of the classical schools ensured that students felt the presence and weight of the Roman past. In the shifting cultural and political worlds of fifth-century Gaul, this inherent feature of classical education took on special significance, and shared experience in classical schools became integral not only for anchoring Gallo-Romans to their past, but also to their own identity and to each other.

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