


$$\int_a^b f(x) dx = \lim_{\Delta x \rightarrow 0} (f(a)\Delta x + f(x_1)\Delta x + \dots + f(x_{n-1})\Delta x + f(b)\Delta x)$$

$$\sum_{i=1}^n a_i = a_1 + a_2 + \dots + a_n$$


mitologia

μυθολογία

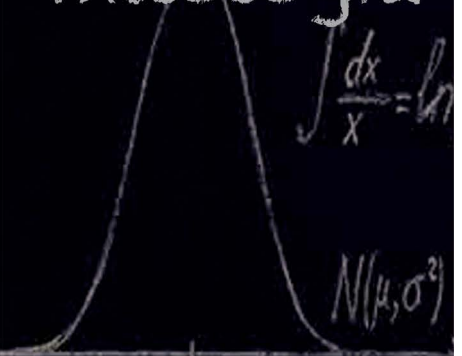
Mythologie

$$\begin{pmatrix} y_1 \\ y_2 \\ \vdots \\ y_n \end{pmatrix} = x_1 y_1 + x_2 y_2 + \dots + x_n y_n$$

mythology

$$f(x) = \frac{1}{\sigma\sqrt{2\pi}} \exp\left(-\frac{(x-\mu)^2}{2\sigma^2}\right)$$

mitología



Part I

OUR MYTHICAL EDUCATION  
IN WESTERN EUROPE



# OUR MYTHICAL FASCISM? CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY AT SCHOOL DURING THE ITALIAN FASCIST TWENTY-YEAR PERIOD\*

## Classical Antiquity and Fascism

Much has been written about the ideology of classicism and the political manipulation of classical heritage by the Fascist regime in Italy.<sup>1</sup> We will focus on a specific aspect of classical education during the Fascist period: schoolbooks on classical myths for secondary school published during the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>2</sup>

### I. Classical Mythology in Giovanni Gentile's Reform

The first period of the Fascist era for Italian schools begins with Gentile's reform in 1923, one of the most durable reformations of the Italian secondary school, due to the Fascist politician and philosopher Giovanni Gentile.<sup>3</sup>

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\* I should like to acknowledge my gratitude to Federico Condello, Patrick Finglass, Katarzyna Marciniak, Camillo Neri, Vinicio Tammaro, and Renzo Tosi, who either gave me many precious suggestions or read the first draft of this paper.

<sup>1</sup> On classical studies and Fascism in Italy see, e.g., Luciano Canfora, "Classicismo e fascismo", *Quaderni di Storia* 2.3 (1976), 15–48, and his *Ideologie del classicismo*, Torino: Einaudi, 1980.

<sup>2</sup> Only a selection of books are examined in what follows. Such a selection has been made on the basis of a few criteria: they are schoolbooks, that is books clearly intended as tools for school; their main subject is classical mythology; they were popular enough for their copies to be still preserved in public libraries. Such criteria exclude not only narratives and novels drawing their subject from classical myths, and whose features and objectives are different from those of schoolbooks, but also anthologies of short stories on various subjects, including only a few classical myths. On the former, see William Grandi, *La Musa bambina. La letteratura mitologica italiana per ragazzi tra storia, narrazione e pedagogia*, Milano: Unicopli, 2011, 202–205, on the latter, *ibidem*, 164–169.

<sup>3</sup> On Gentile's reform, see, e.g., Jürgen Charnitzky, *Fascismo e scuola. La politica scolastica del regime (1922–1943)*, trans. Laura Sergio Bürge and Ina Pizzuto, Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1996

Although the remarkable continuity between Italian schooling before Gentile's reform (which had been shaped mainly by Casati's reform of 1859)<sup>4</sup> and after it has been recently pointed out,<sup>5</sup> Gentile's reform marked a significant change as regards the role assigned to classical myth at school, although this was in part prepared by some trends already developed in Italian classical scholarship.<sup>6</sup> The new syllabuses required knowledge of classical mythology at several school levels and in more than one curriculum, and, whereas the previous syllabuses prescribed the knowledge of classical deities and heroes as a very small part of a wider and detailed study of Greek and Roman civilization,<sup>7</sup> the new syllabuses focused on mythology itself. Schoolbooks published after 1923 were obligated to follow the guidelines drawn up by this reform.

The schooling system established by Gentile consisted of five years of primary school, followed by, in its longest form, five years of *ginnasio* (divided into three years of *ginnasio inferiore* and two years of *ginnasio superiore*) and three years of *liceo classico*. This was the highest-level curriculum and the only one that included the compulsory study of both Greek and Latin.<sup>8</sup>

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(ed. pr. in German 1994), 93–191; Adolfo Scotto di Luzio, *La scuola degli Italiani*, Bologna: il Mulino, 2007, 121–170; Gianluca Gabrielli and Davide Montino, eds., *La scuola fascista. Istituzioni, parole d'ordine e luoghi dell'immaginario*, Verona: Ombre Corte, 2009, 150–155; Camillo Neri, "Il greco ai giorni nostri", ovvero: sacrificarsi per Atene o sacrificare Atene?", in Luciano Canfora and Ugo Cardinale, eds., *Disegnare il futuro con intelligenza antica. L'insegnamento del latino e del greco antico in Italia e nel mondo*, Bologna: il Mulino, 2012, 134–135; Federico Condello, *La scuola giusta. In difesa del liceo classico*, Milano: Mondadori, 2018, 101–120.

<sup>4</sup> For a rich collection of documents concerning the classical school before Gentile's reform, see Gaetano Bonetta and Gigliola Fioravanti, eds., *Archivio centrale dello Stato. Fonti per la storia della scuola: III. L'istruzione classica (1860–1910)*, Roma: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1995. On Casati's reform, see Gianluigi Baldo, "Gli studi di latino nell'Italia postunitaria. Dalla legge Casati alla scuola media unificata", in Luciano Canfora and Ugo Cardinale, eds., *Disegnare il futuro con intelligenza antica. L'insegnamento del latino e del greco antico in Italia e nel mondo*, Bologna: il Mulino, 2012, 171–177.

<sup>5</sup> Condello, *La scuola giusta*, 108–120; also Scotto di Luzio, *La scuola degli Italiani*, 57–68. Tables summarizing the Italian schooling system before and after 1923 can be found in Charnitzky, *Fascismo e scuola*, 525, 531.

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., Neri, "Il greco ai giorni nostri", 113–117, and his "Un Filologo-Rettore: Vittorio Puntoni (Pisa 24.6.1859–Roma 21.3.1926)", *Eikasmós* 27 (2016), 386, 388.

<sup>7</sup> See *Codice dell'istruzione secondaria classica e tecnica e della primaria e normale. Raccolta delle leggi, regolamenti, istruzioni ed altri provvedimenti governativi emanati in base alla legge 13 novembre 1859 con note spiegative e raffronti colle leggi preesistenti approvata dal Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione*, Torino: Tipografia scolastica di Seb. Franco, 1861, 198–199 (syllabuses for the final exam of *ginnasio*).

<sup>8</sup> For a table summarizing the Italian schooling system according to Gentile's reform, see Charnitzky, *Fascismo e scuola*, 531.

Gentile's *ginnasio* required the students to read episodes from the *Iliad*, *Odyssey* and *Aeneid* in Italian translation, to know "il mondo dei miti e della religione romana" (the world of the myths and Roman religion), "la vita religiosa e i suoi miti" (religious life and its rites)<sup>9</sup> already for the admission exam from the first to the second cycle (*ginnasio superiore*), not to neglect "le tradizioni e leggende che parlano vivamente all'animo del giovinetto" (the traditions and legends that can speak to the young boy)<sup>10</sup> for the admission exam to the first class of *liceo classico*, and to translate select passages and summarize the contents of one book of the *Iliad* and one of the *Odyssey* for the final exam.

Even students of the *scuola complementare di avviamento professionale*, whose *cursus studiorum* lasted only three years and did not give access to further steps, as well as those who wanted to be admitted to the second cycle of *istituto tecnico* and to *liceo femminile*, were expected to read an Italian translation of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*<sup>11</sup> and to be familiar with Roman mythology and religion.<sup>12</sup> The latter holds true for the candidates for the second cycle of *istituto magistrale*.<sup>13</sup>

In other words, a basic knowledge of classical mythology was required at a relatively early stage of secondary school, even within the non-classicist and professional curricula. Such an institutional framework stimulated a new set of schoolbooks suitable for these needs.

## 2. Our Mythical Books: Before 1923

Although 1923 is a turning point in the history of Italian publishing for schools, books published before that date remained in use and were reprinted. The pocket-sized schoolbook on classical mythology written by Felice Ramorino (1897) long enjoyed wide circulation,<sup>14</sup> and among the most pop-

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<sup>9</sup> Giovanni Gentile, "Orari e programmi per le regie scuole medie", *Bollettino Ufficiale del Ministero dell'Istruzione Pubblica* 50.2 (17 November 1923), 4433, 4435. All translations are mine (V.G.), unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, 4441.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, 4426, 4454, 4499.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, 4455, 4500.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, 4482. After the five-year primary school, the first cycle of *istituto magistrale* lasted four years, the second cycle only three years.

<sup>14</sup> Felice Ramorino was a Latinist who taught at the universities of Turin, Palermo, Pavia, Florence, and Milan (the Catholic University). His scholarly work concerned several Latin authors, but

ular pre-1923 handbooks and dictionaries of mythology are those by Nicola Terzaghi [1912],<sup>15</sup> Domenico Bassi (1912), Guido Falorsi (1913), Enrico Bianchi [1917], and Concetto Marchesi (1922).<sup>16</sup>

Most titles specifically mention the school for which the book is intended. So Terzaghi refers to the *scuole medie classiche*, and especially addresses the *ginnasio* students; he declares that his book was inspired by “un desiderio sincero di bene per la nostra scuola, e da un profondo amore per l’antichità classica” (7;<sup>17</sup> a genuine desire for the benefit of our school, and a deep love for Classical Antiquity), as an alternative to “soliti manuali di mitologia che infestano le nostre aule scolastiche” (5; the usual handbooks that infest our classrooms); he also prints an appendix with “pochissimi cenni sugli oracoli e sui Riti religiosi, voluti dai programmi ministeriali pei Licei Moderni” (a few remarks on oracles and religious Rituals, prescribed by the official syllabuses for Modern Colleges). Bassi presents his book “ad uso delle scuole e delle persone colte” (for the use of schools and learned people). Similarly, Bianchi considers doing something helpful “non solo alla scuola, ma anche a tutte quelle persone colte che amano leggere e intendere i grandi capolavori delle letterature antiche e moderne” (iv; not only for the school, but also for all learned people who like to read and to understand the masterpieces of ancient and modern literatures). Falorsi’s book belongs to the series titled “Biblioteca degli studenti. Riassunti per tutte le materie d’esame nei Licei, Ginnasi, Istituti Tecnici, ecc.”, and the title of Marchesi’s book includes the subheading *Lecture latine ad uso dei ginnasi superiori*.

Nicola Terzaghi (1880–1964) was Professor of Latin Language and Literature in Turin (1923–1942) and then in Florence (1942–1950).<sup>18</sup> A pupil

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an important part of his publications was devoted to school. See AA.VV., *Raccolta di scritti in onore di Felice Ramorino*, Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1927, xviii–xx.

<sup>15</sup> The dates are put in square brackets when they are not printed on the book.

<sup>16</sup> Nicola Terzaghi, *Miti e leggende del mondo greco-romano. Manuale di lecture mitologiche ad uso delle scuole medie classiche*, Palermo and Roma: Sandron, [1912]; Domenico Bassi, *Mitologia greca e romana. Ad uso delle scuole e delle persone colte*, Firenze: Sansoni, 1912; Guido Falorsi, *Mitologia*, 4th ed., Livorno: Raffaello Giusti, 1913 (ed. pr. 1901); Enrico Bianchi, *Dizionario di mitologia e di cultura classica, con un’appendice storica e con molte illustrazioni*, 2 vols., Firenze: Sansoni, 1921 [ed. pr. 1917]; Concetto Marchesi, *Miti e riti. Lecture latine ad uso dei ginnasi superiori*, Messina: Principato, 1922.

<sup>17</sup> Throughout this paper, the figures in brackets indicate page numbers of the quoted passages.

<sup>18</sup> See Enzo Degani, “La filologia greca nel secolo XX (Italia)”, in AA.VV., *La filologia greca e latina nel secolo XX. Atti del Congresso Internazionale. Roma, 17–21 settembre 1984*, vol. 2, Pisa: Giardini, 1989, 1120–1122.

of Girolamo Vitelli, his earlier works betray a clear inclination to regard Greek and Roman civilizations as a whole and to prefer research topics suitable for such a unitary approach.<sup>19</sup> One of them were ancient myths, observed from both a literary and iconographical point of view, always within a firm philological setting. He wrote:<sup>20</sup>

[N]on si può dire, che gli studi di carattere insieme archeologico e filologico fossero inutili o vani: al contrario abituavano a cogliere i rapporti fra l'arte figurata, la letteratura, la mitologia, la storia del culto e della religione, la vita, il costume, per capir meglio l'antichità nel suo insieme, e per render chiaro, che il mondo antico non è composto di due compartimenti stagni, la Grecia e Roma [...], ma è un'unità grandiosa dall'età preellenica fino al principio del Medio Evo. (ix-x)

One cannot say that archaeological and philological studies were useless or idle: on the contrary, they got people accustomed to noticing the connections between figurative art, literature, mythology, history of cult and religion, life, tradition, in order to better understand antiquity as a whole, and to make clear that the ancient world is not made of two separate parts, Greece and Rome [...], but is a great unity from the pre-Hellenic time to the beginning of the Middle Ages.

Such an approach to the ancient world produced his schoolbook on myths (not his only schoolbook).<sup>21</sup> Terzaghi offers a book collecting "le principali figure divine dell'antichità e le principali tradizioni mitologiche e legendarie" (5; the major deities of antiquity and the main mythological and legendary traditions). He does not intend to translate, but rather to "reduce" various passages from ancient authors describing mythical characters and mythical traditions (5–6). He prefers the Latin names of deities to the Greek equivalents because *ginnasio* students read only Roman authors, and it is the teacher that can decide whether to explain the differences between the gods of the Greeks and of the Romans (6).

<sup>19</sup> This idea of a global approach to Classical Antiquity was shared by scholars such as Domenico Comparetti, Enea Piccolomini, and Vittorio Puntori: see Neri, "Il greco ai giorni nostri", 113–117, and his "Un Filologo-Rettore", 386, 388.

<sup>20</sup> Nicola Terzaghi, *La filologia classica a Firenze al principio del secolo XX*, Firenze: Le Monnier, 1957.

<sup>21</sup> See Degani, "La filologia greca", 1122.

In other words, Terzaghi writes a schoolbook as a classical scholar, always keeping well separated the needs of the school and students, and those of classical scholars, with a preference for the former:

La scuola ha dei diritti imprescindibili, ed anche superiori a quelli accampati dalla scienza, sì che questi debbono per forza venir sacrificati a quelli. (6)

School has its own essential rights, even greater than those claimed by science, so that the latter must be necessarily sacrificed to the former.

This allows him to offer an excellent schoolbook with a reliable scholarly background.

Domenico Bassi (1859–1943) had focused on mythology already as a philologist,<sup>22</sup> and in 1912 wanted to make a work of “learned popularization”:

Con la speranza di far cosa non inutile alla cultura italiana accettai molto volentieri la proposta del cortese editore [...] di comporre un trattato di Mitologia greca e romana “ad uso delle scuole e delle persone colte”, cioè un’opera essenzialmente di divulgazione. Ma, pur componendo un’opera di divulgazione si può, anzi si deve soddisfare, entro certi limiti, alle esigenze della scienza [...]. L’opera, giova ripetere, non ha pretese scientifiche; bensì vuol essere, e speriamo che sia realmente, di divulgazione scientifica. (v, xi)

In the hope of doing something of value for Italian culture, I accepted with great pleasure the proposal of the kind publisher [...], that of writing a treatise on Greek and Roman mythology “for the use of schools and learned people”, that is, a work of popularization. Nonetheless, even in writing a work of popularization, one can, or, better, one must, meet – to some extent – the needs of science [...]. The work, as needs to be said, does not have any scholarly ambitions; on the contrary, it intends to be, and let us hope it is really, learned popularization.

Actually, the scholarly background of this work is noticeable even in the preface (v–xi): he acknowledges his debts to the most recent, prestigious,

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<sup>22</sup> See, e.g., Domenico Bassi, *Mitologia babilonese-assira*, Milano: Hoepli, 1898; *Mitologia germanica: gli dei e gli eroi*, Milano: Hoepli, 1933; “Apollo Liceo”, *Rivista di storia antica e scienze affini* 1.3 (1895), 61–74. He published a few essays concerning mythology in the *Rivista di filologia e d’istruzione classica* (1890, 1895), and to its editor-in-chief, Ettore Stampini, is dedicated his 1912 book (“Ad Ettore Stampini Direttore della ‘Rivista di Filologia e d’Istruzione Classica’”).



and up-to-date scholarly works, published in Italy and abroad (an excellent bibliography is given on pp. viii-x); at the same time he claims independence from foreign books:<sup>23</sup>

Compendio veramente è anche il mio, non però una riduzione o un rimaneggiamento di nessuna specie di qualche libro straniero. (v)

Mine is honestly a summary, but it is not an adaptation or a remake of any sort of foreign book.

He also makes the best of the most recent research in the domains of anthropology and archaeology: in smaller font he gives more details about these aspects of ancient myths. He pays attention "al culto e ai monumenti artistici" (to religion and artistic monuments), in addition to the neglected and less known versions of the myths. Two detailed and rich indexes ("Indice de' nomi propri mitologici" and "Indice delle cose più notevoli") make this volume a good tool for students and for all readers.

The attitude of Guido Falorsi (1847–1920) was strongly positivist. His definition of mythology in general is telling:

Mitologia è, secondo la derivazione della voce, esposizione o narrazione dei Miti, cioè delle favolose credenze, le quali [...] ciascuna delle genti medesime si foggì secondo la sua naturale disposizione, e le contingenze esterne del viver suo. (v)

Mythology is, according to the etymology of the word, description or narration of the Myths, that is of the imaginary beliefs that each nation fashioned following their natural inclination, as well as the external conditions of their life.

On Greek and Roman mythology he writes in particular:

La Mitologia, o Religione, dei Greci, e per gran parte anco quella dei Romani, è un naturalismo antropomorfo; una credenza, cioè, che attribuisce natura e caratteri divini alla cagione immediata, da cui procede ciascun fenomeno od ordine di fenomeni nel mondo fisico, ed anco nel morale. (vi)

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<sup>23</sup> This clarification can be understood in the context of a long-lasting debate between those who looked to German classical scholarship for guidance, and those who refused to follow the model of the foreign scholarship for reasons of alleged patriotism. See Neri, "Il greco ai giorni nostri", 128–130.

The Mythology, or Religion, of the Greeks, and to a great extent also that of the Romans, is an anthropomorphic naturalism; in other words, a belief which imparts a divine nature and divine features to the immediate cause of each phenomenon of the physical world, as well as of the moral world.

He goes into more detail while confronting the difference between Greek and Roman mythology:

L'uomo greco, trovandosi in presenza ad una natura, che ne provocava ed esercitava le energie senza sopraffarle, poté di leggieri immaginare le naturali potenze, da lui deificate, nelle forme e nelle proporzioni di individui umani trascendenti di forza e di beltà, ma non in infinito eccesso, i mortali; e così il naturalismo antropomorfo dei Greci assoggettavasi alle norme della estetica, immaginando, e studiandosi di rappresentare le sue Deità secondo i più severi canoni della perfezione fisica umana [...]. Questo originario antropomorfismo, e quella maggior libertà, di cui relativamente ad altri popoli godettero i Greci, presso i quali i sacerdoti non si costituiscono mai in casta, non dominarono mai lo Stato [...], conferirono al Mito greco quella agevolezza di umanizzarsi e di evolversi [...]. Una più austera concezione della vita, che naturali disposizioni e condizioni di ambiente contribuirono a creare nella coscienza latina, ed in generale nella italica; una minore libertà politica; una più rigorosa e dogmatica influenza dello Stato così sulle cerimonie del culto esterno, come sulle dottrine filosofico-religiose e sulle credenze; quella minore fecondità d'immaginazione, e minor facoltà creativa di Miti, che caratterizzano il genio italico raffrontato col greco; influirono notabilmente sulla Mitologia romana. (vi-x)

The Greek man, facing a nature that stimulated and trained his strengths without defeating them, could easily figure out the natural forces, deified by him, as creatures with the appearance and size of human beings, by far superior in strength and beauty – although not excessively – compared to mortals; so the anthropomorphic naturalism of the Greeks followed the aesthetic rules, shaping its Deities in accordance with the strictest standards of physical perfection [...]. This original anthropomorphism, and the bigger freedom of the Greeks, whose priests never constituted a caste, never dominated the State [...], gave Greek Myth its own humanity and variety [...]. A more austere concept of life, in whose creation in the Latin and more generally Italic conscience a natural attitude together with environmental conditions contributed; a lesser political freedom; a more strict and dogmatic influence of the State on the ceremonies of cult as well as on the philosophical and religious doctrines and beliefs; a less prolific

imagination and ability to create Myths, which are typical of the Italic mind compared to the Greek one; all this affected Roman Mythology considerably.

Myth and religion are regarded as phenomena to be observed and analysed *sine ira et studio* and placed within their cultural context. The discussion of the reasons for learning classical myths is rather modern: they help us to know and understand not only classical history and civilization as such, but also modern literature and arts, which are indebted to the classical world and which draw so much from ancient mythology (v). The book closes with an analytic and etymological index of myths and mythological characters, suggesting that it is not only a schoolbook but also a reference tool.

Enrico Bianchi (1878–1953), another pupil of Vitelli in Florence, engaged “in una seria e fruttuosa opera di divulgazione” (in serious and fruitful popularization), a definition which could suit all the books examined so far:<sup>24</sup> he was mostly the author of schoolbooks, but also of a critical edition of the scholia to Nicander’s *Alexipharmaca*.<sup>25</sup> His paperback *Dizionarietto* [1917] offers some information about ancient culture and civilization, and therefore includes names not only of mythological characters but also of historical people, as a result of the same view of the ancient culture and world as a unitary whole that we have described above.

Concetto Marchesi’s (1878–1957) book (1922) is different from the ones examined above: it is an anthology of passages (or whole texts, whenever possible) taken from various ancient authors and given in their original language, with a line-by-line commentary but no translation. These texts are collected in two main sections, the first entitled “Miti”, the second one “Riti”. As the author writes in his preface (v), the intrinsic unity of such parts is due to the unity of the subject matter, connecting myth and religion. The texts were chosen to stimulate the students’ memory and arouse their curiosity: in the first section poets prevail, especially Ovid and Tibullus, and generally speaking most passages collected in the book come from the works of Augustan authors. But Christian texts are included too:

[P]erché la struttura ideale del libro sia compiuta, e perché lo studio del latino vada oltre quell’indebito limite che ha fatto considerare a molti sinora come unica lingua di Roma quella che è soltanto la lingua di alcuni scrittori

<sup>24</sup> Degani, “La filologia greca”, 1119, n. 52.

<sup>25</sup> *Scholia in Nicandri Alexipharmaca*, ed. Henricus Bianchi, Firenze: Seeber, 1904.

romani [...]; è giusto che gli scolari sappiano e intendano come la lingua di Roma abbia potuto comprendere e significare due grandi epoche della nostra civiltà. (v)

So that the structure of the book may be complete, and the study of Latin may go beyond the usual line, as if Latin were only the language of a few Roman writers [...], students must learn and understand that the language of Rome included and gave voice to two major ages of our civilization.

The emphasis put on a complete (and non-partisan) view of Ancient Rome, different from that advertised by the Fascist administration, is consistent with Marchesi's political profile: he joined the Socialist Party in 1895 and the Communist Party in 1921.<sup>26</sup> In 1922 his name appeared in the journal *Rassegna comunista*, sometimes under the pseudonym "Marsico", then in the party journal *l'Unità* until January 1925. Since he was concerned about the immediate political future, although he was Professor of Latin at Messina University since 1915, he became a student of law in 1922 and graduated in 1923, to make sure to have a fallback position, fearing that the coming Fascist regime could prevent him from teaching because of his political ideas.<sup>27</sup> In fact, the regime never deprived him of his chair: in January 1927, as a full professor, he swore loyalty to the king and his successors, and in 1931, on 28 November, he also swore loyalty to the Fascist regime, as all professors were bound to do in order to keep their chair.<sup>28</sup> The Communist Party, which was clandestine, approved this oath because it was important that such a personality kept his educative role and his relationship with young people.<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless, he never enrolled in the

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<sup>26</sup> Ezio Franceschini writes in *Concetto Marchesi. Linee per l'interpretazione di un uomo inquieto*, Padova: Antenore, 1978, 96: "Proveniva dal socialismo, in cui fermamente credeva, e se ne staccò, come tanti, quando lo vide [...] impotente a risolvere i problemi della classe operaia e contadina o, per dire una frase che amava, della povera gente" (He came from socialism, believed firmly in it, and left it, like many people, when he saw that it was [...] unable to solve the problems of the working class and the farmers, or, better, as he liked to say, of the poor people).

<sup>27</sup> On Marchesi's complicated and uneven career and life, see, e.g., Franceschini, *Concetto Marchesi*; Luciano Canfora, *La sentenza*, Palermo: Sellerio, 1985; and Emilio Pianezzola, *Concetto Marchesi. Gli anni della lotta*, Padova: Il Poligrafo, 2015.

<sup>28</sup> It was Gentile who suggested that Mussolini required all professors to swear: see Franceschini, *Concetto Marchesi*, 97. Only twelve professors refused to swear: among them, the historian of antiquity Gaetano De Sanctis. See Helmut Goetz, *Il giuramento rifiutato. I docenti universitari e il regime fascista*, trans. Loredana Melissari, Milano: La Nuova Italia, 2000 (ed. pr. in German 1993).

<sup>29</sup> See Franceschini, *Concetto Marchesi*, 97, and Pianezzola, *Concetto Marchesi*, 30–31. Nevertheless, Marchesi's choice had to be independent: "[L]a sua coscienza stessa deve avergli detto

National Fascist Party, and this kept him out of any other public assignment usually connected to the role of professor.<sup>30</sup> In 1923 he moved from Messina University to Padua University, where he taught for thirty years, until 1953, when he retired.<sup>31</sup>

His recognized masterpiece, the handbook of the history of Latin literature, was published between 1925 and 1927 by his main publisher, Principato, which also printed his schoolbook on myths. The handbook was rather successful, going through eight editions,<sup>32</sup> and is still reprinted. It covers a wide timespan, from the origins of Latin to the sixth century CE: this choice betrays the idea expressed already in the preface to the book on myths, that Christian literature cannot be separated from classical literature. He writes:

Roma ha innestato le sue facoltà creative sul tronco dei generi letterari greci e ha prodotto una letteratura che doveva sopravvivere nei secoli alla caduca potenza del suo impero.<sup>33</sup>

Rome added its own creative talents to the core of Greek literary genres and produced a literature that was to survive over the centuries the passing power of its empire.

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essere più utile all'idea rimanere fra i giovani che andarsene con un gesto clamoroso" (Franceschini, *Concetto Marchesi*, 98; His own conscience must have told him that it was more helpful to the idea to remain among the young people than to leave by a clamorous action).

<sup>30</sup> See Franceschini, *Concetto Marchesi*, 86–87: "Sta cominciando l'era fascista' che durerà venti lunghi anni, costringendolo alla inattività aperta e alla vita privata. Non in quanto gli abbia tolto la cattedra, ché a tanto non giunse mai, almeno per chi si sottomise al giuramento. Ma perché lo escluse da ogni funzione pubblica, anche da altri incarichi d'insegnamento, dalla partecipazione a concorsi d'ogni genere, da promozioni, trasferimenti, da tutto ciò insomma che si accompagnava alla carica di docente universitario. E questo perché egli non si piegò mai a chiedere l'iscrizione al partito nazionale fascista" (The "Fascist era" is beginning, which will last twenty years, and force him into inactivity and private life. This is not because the regime deprived him of the chair, for it never did so much, at least for those who swore. Nonetheless, the regime kept him out of any public position, even of any teaching position, of any kind of competitive exam, promotion, transfer, of anything connected to the role of academic professor. And this happened because he never agreed to enroll in the National Fascist Party).

<sup>31</sup> Marchesi was Chancellor of Padua University from 1 September (designated by the Badoglio government) to 28 November 1943 (when he resigned after the creation of the Italian Social Republic), and from February to December 1944 he sought refuge in Switzerland. He was able to go back to Padua in November 1945. See Franceschini, *Concetto Marchesi*, 31–39, and Pianezzola, *Concetto Marchesi*, *passim*.

<sup>32</sup> 2nd ed. 1929, 3rd ed. 1932–1933, 4th ed. 1936–1937, 5th ed. 1939–1940, 6th ed. 1944, 7th ed. 1949, 8th ed. 1950.

<sup>33</sup> Concetto Marchesi, *Storia della letteratura latina*, 2 vols., Messina: Principato, 1925–1927, vol. 2, 400.

The revolutionary thought implied by this handbook was apparently not recognized by the regime, which therefore did not forbid its publication.<sup>34</sup> His schoolbook on myths met a different fate, not being republished after 1922. Marchesi's publications for school have been underestimated by scholars,<sup>35</sup> although they are perfectly consistent with his scholarly works and his political ideas. He recognized the importance of schools and their role in society, and devoted a significant part of his work to school texts and, after World War Two, to political essays on school.<sup>36</sup>

Among the books on mythology examined above, Marchesi's alone was not published again after 1923. Terzaghi's reliable book enjoyed understandably long-lasting success and was reprinted at least until the 1980s. Bianchi's *Dizionarietto* [1917] was a convenient tool, and was reprinted up to the 1940s. Finally, Bassi's (1912) and Falorsi's (1913) books circulated

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<sup>34</sup> See Franceschini, *Concetto Marchesi*, 92: "[S]olo l'ignoranza e l'ottusità del fascismo, all'apparire della prima edizione della Storia in tutt'altre faccende affaccendato [...], poterono non impedire la sua diffusione: ché altrimenti sarebbe bastata la lettura delle pagine dedicate a Sallustio a porla al bando. Ma Catilina e Sallustio erano morti da tempo... quindi non c'era pericolo. Invece proprio la lettura di quelle e di altre pagine del Marchesi aiutarono a non morire chi si sentiva soffocare nei tempi delle camicie nere e del saluto al duce: e tennero desti il desiderio di libertà e la speranza di rinascita" (Only the ignorance and stupidity of the Fascist regime, which was busy with other affairs when the first edition of the Storia appeared [...], made it possible that its circulation was not forbidden: otherwise, the reading of the pages devoted to Sallust would have been enough to ban it. But Catilina and Sallust had been dead for a long time... therefore there was no danger. On the contrary, reading those and other pages of Marchesi allowed those who felt they were suffocating at the time of the Blackshirts and of the Roman salute not to die: and this kept the freedom desire and the hope for a renaissance alive). According to Pianezzola, *Concetto Marchesi*, 28, the Fascist regime found it more convenient to regard Marchesi's handbook as merely a literary work. On Marchesi's history of Latin literature, see also Baldo, "Gli studi di latino", 177–180.

<sup>35</sup> For example, schoolbooks are kept out of Franceschini's bibliography (*Concetto Marchesi*, 361–372).

<sup>36</sup> On Marchesi's proposals about school to the Italian Constituent Assembly in 1946, see, e.g., Francesco Olgiati, "Concetto Marchesi e la libertà della cultura e della scuola", *Vita e pensiero* 30 (1947), 15–18; Tina Tomasi, *La scuola italiana dalla dittatura alla repubblica. 1943–1948*, Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1976, 273–285. See also Concetto Marchesi, "Motivi di politica scolastica", *Rinascita* 2 (1945), 244–246; "Nella scuola, la nostra salvezza", *Il Politecnico* (3 November 1945); "La cultura e la scuola", *Rinascita* 3 (1946), 217–224; "In difesa della scuola", *L'Acropoli* 2 (1946), liii–lvi; "Crisi di scuola e di cultura", *Rinascita* 5 (1948), 262–264; "L'istruzione superiore", *Rinascita* 6 (1949), 379–382; "Corrispondenza", *Atene e Roma*, n.s. 1 (July–August 1951), [23]; "Il latino nella scuola", *Riforma della scuola* (1 November 1955); "Latino sì o no?", *l'Unità* (7 April 1956); "In difesa del latino", *Belfagor* 11 (1956), 345–348. For an analysis of Marchesi's ideas about school, see Lucio Lombardo Radice and Alessandro Natta, "Concetto Marchesi uomo di scuola", *Riforma della scuola* 3.3 (1957), 14–17, and Tomasi, *La scuola italiana*, 186–193.

only during the 1920s, most likely because of their strong bond with their time, which made them old-fashioned quite quickly.

As this survey reveals, the schoolbooks on classical mythology published before 1923 share a scholarly approach to classical mythology inspired by a positivist tradition, looking at the ancient culture and civilization as a unitary subject of study, including all aspects of this world (from religion and literature to archaeology and anthropology), and looking at Greece and Rome as two halves of one and the same civilization.<sup>37</sup> This approach produced some examples of serious and committed popularization, based on scholarly reliable grounds.

### 3. Our Mythical Books: After 1923

During the rest of the 1920s and during the 1930s,<sup>38</sup> many kinds of schoolbooks on mythology were published. They can be divided into two main types:

1. collections of passages taken from ancient authors;
2. handbooks and dictionaries (reference books).<sup>39</sup>

#### 3.1. Anthologies

In fact, in the field of anthologies, little new was published after 1923: on the one hand, the previous “mythical anthologies” were still in use and relevant for the first cycle of high school despite the new curriculum (Terzaghi, for example); on the other, the new syllabuses emphasized the importance

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<sup>37</sup> Whereas at primary school classical myth had a pedagogic function, as Grandi, *La Musa bambina*, 165–168, shows.

<sup>38</sup> The range of time under examination extends up to 1938, when the racial laws forbade the adoption of schoolbooks written by Jewish authors, and therefore the panorama of schoolbooks is “adulterated”. Moreover, in 1939 Giuseppe Bottai, the Fascist education minister, published the *Carta della scuola*, which marked a new period in the history of the Italian school system: see Baldo, “Gli studi di latino”, 181–184. On the effects of the racial laws on Italian school, see Charnitzky, *Fascismo e scuola*, 469–483.

<sup>39</sup> I do not agree with Grandi (*La Musa bambina*, 69–70), who regards dictionaries as closer to narrative texts than to schoolbooks for their language and illustrations: since their purpose is giving information, not narrating, I rather take them to be reference books/handbooks.

of reading ancient authors,<sup>40</sup> which encouraged the publication of anthologies of passages in their original language with commentary from a mainly linguistic point of view, rather than collections of texts translated and illustrating ancient myths.

Two examples are Ferruccio Bernini's (1926) and Manfredo Vanni's (1923) anthologies.<sup>41</sup> Bernini opens his preface with the following words:

Questo piccolo volume è stato composto per i giovinetti delle scuole medie inferiori d'Italia, i quali secondo le prescrizioni dei nuovi programmi governativi debbono *mostrare di conoscere il mondo dei miti e della religione romana e dar prova di saper tradurre passi scelti dalle Metamorfosi di Ovidio.* (v)

This little volume has been written for boys of the first cycle of secondary school in Italy, who according to the prescriptions of the new syllabuses are expected to *know the world of myths and of Roman religion and to translate select passages from Ovid's Metamorphoses.*

This book is an anthology of Ovidian passages, given in Italian metrical translation (Italian hexameters)<sup>42</sup> and regarded as early tools for learning about ancient mythology and religion and the contents of the Ovidian poem.<sup>43</sup> The selection of passages ends with lines 843–870 of Book 15 of the poem, Caesar's deification, the prophecy of Rome as "queen of the world" and Augustus' celebration, a favourite subject of the ideological propaganda, which suggested that continuity be shown from Caesar to Mussolini.

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<sup>40</sup> See Gentile, "Orari e programmi", 4451: "Lo studio d'una letteratura si riduce ad un semplice 'ammobigliamento della memoria' se non è accompagnato dalla lettura degli autori. Perciò, nessuna letteratura, né l'italiana, né la latina, né la greca sarà studiata senza leggere le opere più significative di esse" (Studying literature is reduced to the mere "furnishing of memory" if it does not go hand in hand with reading the authors. For this reason, no literature, neither Italian, nor Latin, nor Greek, should be studied without reading its main works).

<sup>41</sup> Ferruccio Bernini, *Nel mondo dei miti. Per i giovinetti delle scuole medie inferiori. Favole scelte dalle "Metamorfosi" di Ovidio tradotte in esametri italiani e collegate col racconto dell'intero poema*, Bologna: Zanichelli, 1926; Manfredo Vanni, *"L'Iliade" di Omero nella traduzione italiana di Vincenzo Monti. Letture - scelte e commentate e ricongiunte col nesso del poema, aggiuntivi i riepiloghi delle note di lingua, grammatica e stile e un repertorio di mitologia - ad uso delle scuole medie con illustrazioni d'arte*, Milano: Signorelli, 1923.

<sup>42</sup> See Bernini, *Nel mondo dei miti*, vi–vii. In particular, he opts for the hexameter used by Giovanni Pascoli.

<sup>43</sup> Later, in 1933, Bernini published a complete translation in Italian hexameters of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Bologna: Zanichelli).



Vanni's anthology (1923) is a shorter version of a previous book (also from 1923),<sup>44</sup> as the author declares on page 5 of his preface (dated "Milano, il maggio del 1923"): while the previous anthology includes both Homeric poems and Virgil's *Aeneid*, this selection includes only the *Iliad*. This book is intended to meet the needs of the new school:

Non credo di apparire presuntuoso affermando di aver preveduti gli ordinamenti nuovi della Scuola, nella quale l'alunno [...] sparisce per dar posto al giovane, che mira, nelle nuove responsabilità che lo attendono, ad esser l'artefice di se stesso nella vita. (5)

I do not believe that I come across as presumptuous by asserting that I had foreseen the new School system, where the student [...] disappears and is replaced by the young man, who aims – with his new responsibilities – at being the creator of himself in his life.

After a short introduction to Homer and the Homeric question (7–8), Vincenzo Monti's Italian translation of select passages is given, together with explanatory footnotes and marginal notes. At the end of the volume appears a short illustrated dictionary of mythology ("Mito, favola e leggenda nel ciclo omerico-virgiliano", 73–98), which is a shortened version of the *Breviario* of the same author (1923, see below).

### 3.2. Handbooks and Dictionaries (Reference Books)

Manfredo Vanni (1860–1937) was a teacher and writer: he taught literature for his whole life, in Arezzo and Milano, and his fondness for teaching together with his experience made him a productive author of schoolbooks.<sup>45</sup> His *Breviario* (1923),<sup>46</sup> from the same year as the anthology described above, is presented by its author as "un primo avviamento ad apprendere e intendere il

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<sup>44</sup> Manfredo Vanni, *Calliope (Epos di Grecia e di Roma). Letture omeriche e virgiliane nelle traduzioni del Monti, del Pindemonte e del Caro, scelte e commentate e ricongiunte col nesso del poema – aggiuntivi i riepiloghi delle note di lingua, grammatica e stile ad uso delle scuole medie superiori*, Milano: Signorelli, 1923.

<sup>45</sup> For his complete bibliography, see Giuseppe Fatini, "Manfredo Vanni. Maestro e scrittore", *Bullettino senese di storia patria* 19.3 (1941), 223–230. Besides anthologies and handbooks for school, Vanni published a few collections of short novels, as well as of epigrams.

<sup>46</sup> Manfredo Vanni, *Breviario di mitologia con speciale riguardo alla greco-romana e illustrazioni dedotte da reliquie d'arte antica*, Milano: Signorelli, 1923.

vasto mondo dei miti. Particolarmente quelli greco-romani, senza i quali non si può fare il primo passo verso l'antico" (5; the first introduction to learn and understand the wide world of myths, especially the Graeco-Roman myths, without which one cannot take the first step towards antiquity).

The book has the alphabetical structure of a dictionary, and is therefore a reference work; to make it less dry, Vanni supplements entries with some quotations of either an ancient (Ovid, Virgil) or a modern poet (Giuseppe Parini, Ugo Foscolo, Giosue Carducci), giving his little book a distinctive profile. The mythological entries of the dictionary include also characters of the Egyptian, Indian, Persian, Germanic, and Scandinavian traditions. However, the focus is obviously on Greek and especially Roman myths: in this regard, Vanni places special emphasis on the "Romanness" of several gods and heroes. For example, Mars is introduced as "divinità schiettamente romana" (67; very Roman deity), and Diana is described as "divinità Latina" (37; Latin deity); Ceres is "una delle grandi divinità latine" (30; one of the major Latin deities). Moreover, the entry corresponding to the Latin name of a god or a hero is longer and more complete than the entry corresponding to the Greek name, which gives just a few hints: whereas Zeus is briefly described as "nome greco di Giove o Jupiter latino" (101; Greek name of Latin Jove or Jupiter), "Giove" is "prima divinità dei Romani" (56; the first deity of the Romans);<sup>47</sup> Heracles appears both as "Eracle" and as "Erocle", and the latter is introduced as "divinità latina, nel nome e nel culto non dissimile dall'Eracle greco, ma con caratteri proprii di dio agreste, protettore del suolo, dio dell'abbondanza, dei ritrovati agricoli, e anche della parola mantenuta" (43; Latin deity, not different from Greek Heracles in terms of his name and cult, but having his own features of a rustic god, protecting the country, god of wealth, of agricultural inventions, and also of keeping one's word). More generally, the point of view is certainly anchored in the Roman world, since Greek names of the deities appear systematically as "Greek name of X" and the complete description of the god can be read under the corresponding Latin name. Even more, the minor characters of Aeneas' story find an important place in Vanni's dictionary.<sup>48</sup> This *Breviario* was successful even after the war, and was reprinted at least until the 1950s.

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<sup>47</sup> In the same entry one can read: "Il Giove latino (Jupiter) ha linee meno maestose e leggiadre di fantasia, ma varie, e nella loro semplicità profonde a interpretare la stirpe latina e la civiltà romana" (56-57; Latin Jupiter has a less majestic and graceful profile, but a plain and varied one, helpful for understanding the Latin race and the Roman civilization).

<sup>48</sup> On the Fascist ideology of Romanness, see, e.g., Gabrielli and Montino, *La scuola fascista*, 155-158.

Luigi Mario Capelli and Renato Rasponi (1924) in their preface refer directly to Gentile,<sup>49</sup> presenting their book as a tool for providing *ginnasio* students with the knowledge of Greek and Roman mythology and religion.<sup>50</sup> The structure of the book itself mirrors what is prescribed by the current syllabuses: the description of the myths is followed by that of religion, and every treatise is furnished with passages from ancient poems. Such a book, so tightly bound to the present, was never reprinted afterwards.

No less conditioned by the recent past is Aristide Calderini's (1883–1968) mythology (1924).<sup>51</sup> Calderini, whose whole career was in Milan, mainly as Professor at the Catholic University of Greek and Roman Antiquities, Roman History, and Papyrology, was particularly active in the fields of archaeology, papyrology, and ancient history.<sup>52</sup> The preface to his mythology, referring once again to the new syllabuses, identifies as its main aim that of generating interest in the students:

[S]e esso contribuirà a suscitare nei nostri giovani qualche interesse maggiore per questo grande archivio di pensiero antico, sicché siano spinti alcuni a cercare di approfondire la conoscenza altrove, potrò credere che il tentativo, per incompleto e manchevole che sia, ha raggiunto il suo scopo più alto. (v)

If it contributes to generate in our youth some more interest in this great archive of ancient thought, so that someone may be encouraged to learn more about this elsewhere, I will admit that this attempt, although lacking, achieved its top goal.

At the same time, the book belongs to a series of volumes entitled "Il libro d'oro del sapere. Il sapere in brevi trattati per le famiglie" (vol. 4.1) – such a title reveals that families, as well as students, are the intended addressees of the book.

A final section concerns the survival of mythology in the present time (192–196), which betrays an approach to ancient myth consistent with that of Fascist propaganda: the author draws the reader's attention to

<sup>49</sup> Gentile, "Orari e programmi", 4433.

<sup>50</sup> Luigi Mario Capelli and Renato Rasponi, *La mitologia greco-romana esposta ai giovinetti delle scuole medie e corredata di 123 illustrazioni e di 40 letture, in conformità dei programmi ministeriali 14 ottobre 1923*, Milano: Trevisini, 1924.

<sup>51</sup> Aristide Calderini, *La mitologia classica*, Milano: Vallardi, 1924.

<sup>52</sup> On Calderini's profile, see Claudio Barocas, "Calderini, Aristide", *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 16 (1973), 595–597, with further bibliography.

quanta sia la parte della mitologia, che sotto i più diversi aspetti rifiorisce fresca e vigorosa intorno a noi [...], innalzandosi ancora verde di giovinezza sul nostro suolo e nel cielo nostro. (192)

how widespread mythology is, which under the most varied appearances flourishes fresh and vigorous around us [...], and stands out green for youth in our land and in our sky.

Even more explicit is the final phrase, suggesting that the present time deserves a new mythology, deeply rooted in the classical culture:

[E] rinacque e rivive anche intorno a noi ed in noi; e infatti che altro sono le figure più belle e più significative della storia nostra, e gli atti più fulgidi e quasi soprannaturali degli eroismi e dei sacrifici nuovissimi, se non la materia sempre viva e sempre rinnovata di una moderna mitologia? (192)

And [ancient mythology] was reborn and lives again around us and in us; indeed, what else are the most noble and important figures of our history, and the most brilliant and almost supernatural deeds of most recent heroism and sacrifice, if not the more and more lively and new subject of a modern mythology?

All this ensured that Calderini's book would not see further editions. After all, as Claudio Barocas observes, a unifying feature of Calderini's personality was his looking for the everyday man behind the great historical events, his

mancanza di un reale impegno culturale, di una problematicità vera e propria [...], impedimento a comprendere i fatti storici come punto di incontro delle volontà individuali [...]. Tale assenza di dialettica può in parte spiegare anche il successo delle sue iniziative nei tempi culturalmente difficili del fascismo, che in alcune delle sue espressioni amava esaltare il valore dell'individuo e che per di più ricercava una rievocazione meno storicistica possibile del passato.<sup>53</sup>

lack of a deep cultural engagement, of a proper problematical attitude, of the ability to regard the historical events as meeting points of individual wills [...]. Such a lack of dialectical approach can also partly explain his success during the difficult time of Fascism, which in some manifestations liked to emphasize the value of the individual and sought a commemoration as little historicist as possible of the past time.

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<sup>53</sup> Barocas, "Calderini, Aristide", 596.

Fernando Palazzi (1884–1962) was neither a classicist nor a teacher: he studied law and worked in that field until 1922, when he decided to devote his time and energies to his genuine passion, literature.<sup>54</sup> He published many schoolbooks, and together with Vincenzo Errante he gave life to one of the most successful collections of children's literature during the Fascist regime, *La scala d'oro*.<sup>55</sup>

Palazzi's *Piccolo dizionario* (1924), frequently reprinted after World War Two until the 1970s, is an encyclopaedic index not only of gods and heroes, but of whatever belongs to Classical Antiquity (authors, institutions, festivals, places, architectural structures).<sup>56</sup> One appendix is devoted to the Roman calendar, a second appendix to the Greek calendar, and a third appendix to weights and units of measurement. Besides "Artemide", "Ercole", and "Zeus", one finds also "aes uxorium", "agon", "agora", "affinitas", "age-ma", "sortes": in other words, this is not a specific tool for learning classical mythology. What is more, Palazzi's approach to antiquity is rather impartial: the names of the gods and heroes are sometimes Greek and sometimes Latin, and equal attention is paid to all aspects of the ancient world.

Anna Evangelisti's (1882–1945) *mitologia* (1925) is presented by its own author as a remake of a previous book of hers (1910), in accordance with the current syllabuses.<sup>57</sup> The preface is a letter addressed to Oliviero Franchi, editor-in-chief of the publishing house Zanichelli. In the whole preface (v–vii) the attention paid to the new syllabuses is nearly obsessive:

Lei mi porse i cinque volumettini contenenti i programmi di tutte le Scuole secondarie. Io studiandoli ho visto che l'epopea classica di Omero e di Virgilio, la quale importa diretta conoscenza di mitologia, si trova, oltre che nelle Scuole classiche (Ginnasi inferiori), anche negli Istituti tecnici, anche nei Licei scientifici e femminili e anche nelle Scuole complementari: il nostro libro in qualche modo risponde dunque a tutte le diverse Scuole secondarie. (v)

<sup>54</sup> On Palazzi, see Elisa Rebellato, *La scala d'oro. Libri per ragazzi durante il fascismo*, Milano: Unicopli, 2016, 20–22 and passim.

<sup>55</sup> See *ibidem*.

<sup>56</sup> Fernando Palazzi, *Piccolo dizionario di mitologia e antichità classiche*, Milano: Mondadori, 1924.

<sup>57</sup> Anna Evangelisti, *Mitologia, epopea e storia secondo i programmi del R. Ginnasio, con un preambolo di geografia, con trattati illustrativi di grandi autori, con note di richiamo a opere d'arte*, Bologna: Zanichelli, 1925.

You gave me the five little volumes containing the syllabuses of all Secondary schools. By examining them, I realized that Homer's and Virgil's classical epic poetry, which requires a direct knowledge of mythology, is found, apart from the Classical schools, also in the *Istituti tecnici*, *Licei scientifici* and *femminili* and even in the *Scuole complementari*: our book to some extent meets the needs of all different Secondary schools.

[Q]uel programma richiede la storia tutta quanta, dalle origini ai nostri giorni. E io ho voluto seguirlo a tutto rigore: infatti i dieci capitoli della parte terza hanno per titolo le dieci tesi di quel programma. Il programma, piuttosto che alla serie dei fatti, mostra di dare importanza alla vita dei popoli [...]. Del resto, non credo di aver poi mancato al programma, se ho tenuto anche il filo storico dei fatti e della cronologia. (vi)

That syllabus requires the study of the whole of history, from the origins to the present time. And I wanted to follow it exactly: indeed, the titles of the ten chapters of the third part mirror the ten points of that syllabus. The syllabus proves to pay attention to the life of peoples rather than to the sequence of deeds [...]. However, I do not believe to have failed the syllabus by following the historical thread of deeds and chronology.

In a footnote of the book (xi) one finds a reference even to the geography syllabus, and an especially detailed description of contemporary Italy with its boundaries, including a list of the Italian colonies. The descriptions of the gods and heroes are centred around the Roman tradition, the names of the mythical characters are Latin, and Aeneas' epic together with Ulysses' is given more space than the Trojan War. A short digression is devoted to the history of the Jews, described with a cool and disdainful tone: we are still far from the racial laws, but the direction is already drawn. Evangelisti was a high school teacher, a scholar, and a writer: her rich writing covers a wide range of subjects, such as classical and Christian Rome,<sup>58</sup> Giosue Carducci,<sup>59</sup> whose courses she attended at Bologna University, but also Giovanni Federzoni, father of the politician Luigi Federzoni,<sup>60</sup> Valfredo

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<sup>58</sup> Anna Evangelisti, *Romanità classica e cristiana*, Roma: Desclée & C., 1932; Anna Evangelisti, *Nuovi studi di romanità*, Roma: Desclée & C., 1942.

<sup>59</sup> Anna Evangelisti, *Giosue Carducci col suo maestro e col suo precursore: saggi due*, Bologna: Cappelli, 1924; Anna Evangelisti, *Giosue Carducci, 1835-1907. Saggi storico-letterari*, Bologna: Cappelli, 1934.

<sup>60</sup> Anna Evangelisti, "Giovanni Federzoni", *Rassegna italiana* 73 (1924), 359-369. In 1924, after Giacomo Matteotti's murder, Luigi Federzoni (1878-1967), a nationalist close to Mussolini, was appointed Interior Minister; see Albertina Vittoria, "Federzoni, Luigi", *Dizionario Biografico degli*

Carducci, Giosue's younger brother and Benito Mussolini's teacher.<sup>61</sup> Neither did she miss the opportunity to celebrate the Fascist Bimillenario Augusteo (1938).<sup>62</sup> In other words, her work shows the signs of the time, and we must not be surprised that the schoolbook described above was not reprinted nor re-edited: it could not satisfy the request of the editor, that of a good schoolbook "che sia (scusi la brutta parola) digerito, che abbia in sé la ragione del proprio essere e si sostenga anche all'infuori dei programmi scolastici" (which may be [excuse the ugly word] digested, which may have in itself its own reason to exist and may survive even outside the syllabuses for school).<sup>63</sup>

Whereas G. Edoardo Mottini's mythology (1926),<sup>64</sup> thanks to its historical slant and its numerous plates of classical sculptures, kept being reprinted until the 1990s, Bassi's (1931)<sup>65</sup> – like Evangelisti's (1925) – is an adaptation ("una riduzione") of a previous book of the same author (1912), "fatta in modo da rispondere il meglio possibile alle prescrizioni dei vigenti programmi per le scuole a cui il libro è destinato" (v; made for meeting as well as possible the prescriptions of the current syllabuses for schools, to which this book is addressed). Bassi appears worried about the current syllabuses and highlights the differences between this book and the previous one:

Il tono è meno scientifico che nella *Mitologia* [...], le discussioni critiche furono omesse, e così le notizie su redazioni speciali di questo o quel mito, di questa o quella leggenda [...]. Il libro dovrebbe servire, e spero che servirà realmente, di commento anzitutto alla lettura delle *Metamorfosi*

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*Italiani* 45 (1995), 792–801. His father, Giovanni Federzoni (1849–1923), was a teacher and scholar, as well as Carducci's pupil; see Chiara Boninsegni, "Federzoni, Giovanni", *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 45 (1995), 789–792.

<sup>61</sup> Anna Evangelisti, "Il maestro di Benito Mussolini (Valfredo Carducci)", *La rassegna italiana*, 2nd series, 133 (June 1929), 517–524. In this article, Evangelisti boasts "una specie di cuginanza col Duce restauratore, sempre più potente e felice, delle affrante cose d'Italia" (some sort of cousinness with the Duce, who is restoring – more and more powerful and happy – Italian ruins), and Valfredo Carducci is described as "uomo austero e retto di carattere veramente romano per la sua seria solidità" (austere and honest man, with genuine Roman character).

<sup>62</sup> Anna Evangelisti, *Il "De Republica" di Cicerone nel bimillenario di Augusto*, Roma: Desclée & C., 1938.

<sup>63</sup> Evangelisti, *Mitologia, epopea e storia*, v.

<sup>64</sup> G. Edoardo Mottini, *Mitologia greca e romana, con 31 tavole da sculture classiche*, Milano: Mondadori, 1926.

<sup>65</sup> Domenico Bassi, *Miti e leggende del mondo classico per le classi superiori del ginnasio e le inferiori dell'Istituto tecnico con 104 illustrazioni*, Firenze: Sansoni, 1931.

e dei *Fasti* di Ovidio; e mi sembra che possa dare un'idea adeguata di ciò che è la Mitologia classica. Chi voglia saperne di più, veda la *Mitologia*. (v)

The tone is less scientific than in the *Mythology* [...], critical arguments have been omitted, as well as details about special versions of each myth, each legend [...]. This book is expected to work, and I hope it really will work, first of all as a commentary to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti*; it seems to me to be able to give an appropriate idea of what classical Mythology is. Whoever wants to learn more should see my *Mythology*.

A scholarly and up-to-date bibliography (in German, English, French, and Italian) follows, together with an index of the mythical names. In the light of what has been observed, Bassi's 1931 handbook appears to be another work too strongly conceived for fitting in its time: its success lasted only a few years.

#### **4. Our Mythical Authors**

As we have observed, the authors of the books under examination belong to either of the following categories: specialists (academic scholars) and school teachers.<sup>66</sup> Among the authors we have found a few major scholars, such as Terzaghi, Marchesi, or Calderini. However, two authors out of three wrote and published their books before 1923: the only classical scholar whose book belongs to the two Fascist decades, Calderini, was the one who never came into conflict with the regime. Such a difference in the number of academic scholars engaged in popularizing classical mythology between the period before and the period after 1923 may be regarded as a remarkable sign of the different value that writing a book on classical mythology could have during the decades when Fascist propaganda made use of Classical Antiquity and myths as instruments of its ideological propaganda. After 1923 most authors are teachers, and this comes to light also in their concern about the official syllabuses (see above).

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<sup>66</sup> The only exception is Palazzi.



## 5. Some Concluding Remarks

The resulting picture is partly unexpected: not all Italian schoolbooks on mythology during the age of Gentile show explicit signs of Fascist ideology, and in general classical mythology as a subject of schoolbooks seems to be less showily affected by ideological elements than one can expect. On the one hand, the introduction of classical mythology as a major subject of study at school had a political value of its own. As a result, in the selected schoolbooks the explicit mention of the official syllabuses established by Gentile's reform in 1923, together with the concern about following them accurately, is a strong tie with the political present: depending on how trustworthy that reference is, we can evaluate how effective the Fascist ideology is in each case. On the other hand, the emphasis given to the Roman side of classical myth betrays the Fascist ideology of the renewed Roman empire.<sup>67</sup>

However, the majority of these books are of a high quality and provide a good base for study. Like the books for primary school,<sup>68</sup> the books of mythology for secondary school also fluctuate ambiguously between continuity with the previous schoolbooks on mythology, belonging to the positivist and liberal culture of the first two decades of the twentieth century, and the ideological use of classical (especially Roman) myth.

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<sup>67</sup> The same holds true for the books for primary school examined by Grandi, *La Musa bambina*, 173–174.

<sup>68</sup> See *ibidem*, 168–179.