

Q.E.D., or Latin for the Masses

Peter Jones

Ian Hislop, editor of *Private Eye*, recently published a most complimentary piece in his *Sunday Telegraph* 'Diary' about Professor Susannah Morton Braund's obviously brilliant inaugural lecture at Royal Holloway College, London. 'Too good for students' was his pithy summary. When I wrote to Professor Morton Braund to congratulate her and see if I could cadge a version of her speech for the *Friends of Classics*' journal *ad familiares*, she revealed (to my surprise) that she was quite unaware that Hislop had pronounced so favourably in the public prints, and could she have a copy, please?

I should not have been surprised. I personally am a newspaper addict, spending more time than I should scouring the national press for stories about education and the ancient world. It is dark and lonely work, like growing mushrooms under the stairs or chicken-sexing, but someone has to do it. My university colleagues, quite rightly, have other priorities.

So too do *JACT* members, but they certainly read their brilliant *JACT* Review. As a result, I leapt at your Editor's kind suggestion that I contribute an article about *QED*, the little Latin course that I wrote in fifteen episodes in the *Sunday Telegraph* between September and December 1995 ('*QED*: Learn Latin by Christmas'), and repeated in different format, with different target texts, over twenty episodes in the *Saturday Daily Telegraph* between October 1996 and March 1997.

The impetus for *QED* came from Charles Moore, editor of the *Sunday Telegraph* and now editor of the *Daily*. He has been as concerned as anyone about what is happening to our education system, puts a high value on Latin, and (uniquely among the editors of national newspapers) embraces the idea that newspapers should play a small educational role from time to time.

In 1991 I had started writing a weekly *Ancient and Modern* column in the *Sunday Telegraph* (now in *The Spectator*) and contributing reviews on, and pieces about, classics. The *QED* story started in June 1995 when Christopher Howse of the *Sunday Telegraph* rang me to say that Charles Moore was considering the possibility of a 'Learn Latin' column, and was I interested? Was I, as they say, *cocoa*. Christopher and I then met in London to discuss the matter further, but as usually happens in these circumstances, everything promptly ground to a halt. Newspapers seethe daily in a ferment of instant ideas, and what may seem a good idea one day often does not appear quite so brilliant the next. But I knew that if the call really did come, I had better be ready, because (second vital point about newspapers) everything is decided at the very last moment, in case something better gallops over the horizon. I could be certain that my phone would ring on a Thursday afternoon asking if the series could start on Sunday.

As I chewed over possibilities and experimented with different sorts of approach, four guiding principles emerged. First, however much current orthodoxy ordains a *CLC* style of approach to learning Latin, it is just not on in a newspaper, where space is heavily restricted, linking text with pictures at such short notice would be a nightmare anyway, and there is no friendly teacher to encourage and pick up the pieces. However valuable the 'look and guess' approach is in class in the early stages of learning, in a self-teach course readers must know exactly where they are, what they are doing and why they are doing it. Everything has to be explained with absolute clarity all the time. I could see no alternative to a pretty old-fashioned approach: simple examples of a new grammatical phenomenon, invitations to work out what was going on, full grammatical explanation, exercises, sentences.

Second, even as benign an editor as Charles Moore would not allow the course to run for years. One could not possibly hope to cover all Latin grammar. The consequence of that observation was to

make me think about what the course should aim at. Clearly, it should aim at a simple Latin text, and every other feature of Latin should be sacrificed in order to hit that single target square in the middle.

Third, self-teach linguists require grammatical and lexical reference works. But clearly the paper could not print a Latin grammar, let alone vocabulary. I therefore needed to identify an inexpensive and widely available grammar-cum-dictionary, tie the course to it and persuade everyone to buy it.

Fourth, what about the answers? What about the problems? I could not personally supply an OFLAT emergency helpline with an 0345 number. There would have to be some way of getting the answers to readers, preferably with information about where they could also get help and encouragement.

And so the course was conceived and began, slowly, to take shape. It was born, as I had anticipated, all of a rush. I had been keeping the *Sunday Telegraph* up to date with developments, and on September 4th 1995 I wrote to Charles Moore enquiring if they had got any further with their thinking on the subject. Now came the stroke of luck. On September 6th, most papers carried a story about civil servants in the Treasury abandoning the use of Latin tags because the exciting new breed of Treasury employee, reared on the much-loved Kenneth Baker's magnificent standards-raising National Curriculum, could not make head or tail of them. On September 8th Charles Moore rang to say that the *Sunday Telegraph* was now going to go ahead with the course and could it start on September 17th? The title of the course was to be '*QED*: Learn Latin by Christmas'. I had 750 words a week for fifteen weeks. 'Not yet' replied my *thumos*. 'Yes' replied my *glossa*. I promptly went into labour.

Knowing now what I was actually dealing with, I decided to make St Luke's Christmas story in St Jerome's *Vulgate* the target text. It was appropriate for Christmas, the Latin was easy, and the text still (?) fairly well known. It did not groan with gerunds, subjunctives, conditionals and questions requiring the answer 'Six gins and a pickled egg, my good man'. The target could probably be hit in fifteen weeks. The vocabulary also linked in well with oratorios, creeds and masses.

This decision had another implication. Given the heterogeneous nature of the target texts, I could with a clear conscience regard Latin as a universal language, and abandon any pretence that the material was culturally authentic (I am not a purist in this respect anyway). Since it was also to be Sunday morning reading, there seemed to be advantages in treating the whole thing fairly light-heartedly. So I had no hesitation in introducing Gazza, Hezza and Diana fairly early on into the action, and mixing them up with Lesbia, Virgil, God, sheep, babies, Sibyls, angels, K. Herod and other bores in a rich tapestry of human interactions. Since this approach is well in line with contemporary literary theory, which sees no distinction between any one person, place or time and any other, I could also claim to be at the very cutting edge of advanced critical thought, a posture I have long yearned to adopt.

The obvious reference book was Oxford's new Pocket Oxford Latin Dictionary. It was up-to-date, had Latin-English and English-Latin, was in paperback and, most important of all, had a summary accident at the back. As for emergency helplines and answers, *JACT* agreed to make its newly published list of postal tutors available to anyone writing in with an *sae*. In addition to that, readers also received the *JACT* Latin Committee's hurriedly commissioned (and, in the event, quite excellent) four-page document on the availability of Latin courses up and down the country (and much other very helpful advice), and I produced sheets of answers to the exercises.

The response was remarkable. As I later wrote in an account produced for *The Spectator*, 'many letters came from those who had

learnt Latin at school some years ago, remembered it fondly, and welcomed the chance to renew their acquaintance ("I have thoroughly enjoyed scraping up my prep-school Latin from the far recesses of my memory"). Some remembered it unfondly but were converted ("It must be about sixty years since I did Latin at school, when I *really* hated it, so I can't understand the fascination of it now"). Many came from those who had never learnt Latin at all and now understood what they had missed ("For many years - I am now 73 - I have been sorry I did not learn Latin at school..."). Others saw it as a blow at modern education ("I hope it will help to encourage the classical counter-revolution"). Some were even using the column to ensure deprived children or grandchildren received the same advantages ("I am trying to teach my daughters Latin from memories long ago"). The one constant theme, however, was how useful as well as pleasurable Latin had been. The letters conveyed an overwhelming sense that, even though the details of the language were now hazy, it had had a lasting and beneficial effect on people's general grasp of English language and grammar.'

But that was the *Sunday Telegraph* version. By the time it had finished (December 24th 1995), Charles Moore had moved to the *Daily Telegraph*, and, knowing that the readership of the *Sunday* and *Daily* did not overlap all that much, was keen to repeat the experiment there. After a number of false starts and some negotiating on the size and content of the new version (based on my experience with the old), a column of 1200 words emerged, lasting twenty weeks, on the back page of the Saturday *Arts and Books* section. The main improvements were that each column contained the answers to its exercises, and also had a little section on Roman life, history and culture, called, by a strange coincidence, 'The world of Rome' (cf. PV Jones and KC Sidwell, *The World of Rome*, Cambridge 1997). In this way there was something to draw readers to the column even if they were not learning the language. There was also to be a cartoon accompaniment (there is a technical point here - unlike the words, a cartoon can be

expanded or shrunk to accommodate the amount of advertising that the page attracts).

QED II started on October 19th 1996 and, as I write, is now halfway through its run. It ends on March 1st 1997. Its target texts are more ambitious: the Bayeux Tapestry, selections from Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*, some Catullus poems on Lesbia (the subject matter is ideal for introducing the acc. and inf. - *Catullus dixit se Lesbiam amare*, and so on) and St John's version of the Easter story in St Jerome's *Vulgate*. The response has been equally gratifying. I have received a huge mail, and Tim Rostron, the features editor dealing with the column, said they would have to get in a new secretary if they got any more requests for back numbers.

But at least this time I have received one letter of complaint, from a teacher who was shocked that I had not adopted a *CLC* style of approach. I was amused, however, to receive a letter a few days later from an enthusiast who appeared to think my way of doing things was bang up to date and commented how differently Latin was taught now compared with her experience sixty years ago. Little did she know... But what short- or long-term effect the course has had, what the age-profile of readers is (old, I suspect), how many young people are starting Latin as a result, how many readers actually finish and carry on with their Latin or persuade others to start, these are the big questions which I cannot answer. As usual with journalistic exercises of this kind, it is bread on the water, here today, gone tomorrow, and all we can do is watch it float away.

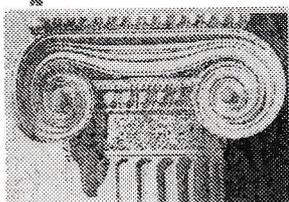
What I would dearly love to do now, of course, is persuade a national paper or magazine to start a similar Greek course. No luck so far.

PETER JONES

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The *Daily Telegraph* version of *QED* has been published by Duckworth. Duckworth will be publishing a *QED* (Greek) in 1998.

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D IS FOR DOG

My dog went mad and bit my hand,
I was bitten to the bone:
My wife went walking out with him,
And then came back alone.

I smoked my pipe, I nursed my wound,
I saw them both depart:
And when my wife came back alone,
I was bitten to the heart.

William Henry Davies (1871-1940)

Factus es, ecce, canis demens dextramque feroci
Dente momordisti; nec leve vulnus erat.
Cum cane fecit iter coniunx mea; cum cane nostro
Discessit, sed mox, ei mihi, sola redit.
Herba fragrans solamen erat, vulnusque fovebam:
Conspexere abitum lumina nostra gravem:
Munere perfecto coniunx ubi sola reversa est,
Sors canis, heu!, pectus rosit acerba meum.

BOVINE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY

Vacca insana vocor; sed longe insanior ille est
Carnivoram qui me reddidit insipens.

'Mad Cow' I'm called, but madder far is he
Whose folly made a carnivore of me.

Herbert H. Huxley,
St. John's College, Cambridge

Myths in the Classroom

Jenny March

Greek myths are not just pretty sanitised tales for children, set in long ago: I know that and you know that. But students are not always aware of the *real* myths, of their power and vitality, their immediacy, the way in which they have inspired, and no doubt always will inspire, artists working in words, in paint, in stone, in bronze, in music. This article is written for teachers, with practical suggestions of various ways in which Greek myths can be introduced in the classroom and used for student discussion. The basic method throughout is to produce a kind of collage of words (ancient and modern texts) and pictures (slides of ancient art and, if possible, postclassical art too), using each to illustrate each. Make comparisons, point out contrasts, see which myths have been the most inspirational, ask questions, get students talking. The myths will come alive. As Roberto Calasso says in his 1993 book on myths, *The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony*: "For centuries people have spoken of the Greek myths as of something to be rediscovered, reawoken. The truth is, it is the myths that are still out there waiting to wake us and be seen by us, like a tree waiting to greet our newly opened eyes."

Here then are just a few suggestions of how you might get your students involved with the myths. (Incidentally, if you are starting this topic more or less from scratch, then a very good basic slide collection of ancient and post-classical art can be acquired from slides on sale at the British Museum and the National Gallery. As for words, ancient and modern, you will have your own ideas. But, at the risk of being partial, let me add that back issues of *CA News* can usefully be mined for short pieces. I give a couple of examples below.)

The Gods

The Olympian gods make a good beginning, since they play so large a part in the way the Greeks looked at the world. Aim to put across the very real and particular power of each god. On this subject you can find lots of illustrations, and as for texts, the *Iliad* alone will give you plenty of material (the marvellous depiction of Poseidon's power and glory in 13.17-38 comes to mind, and there are many more fine passages). There are some interesting contrasts too, such as the great Zeus of book 1, whose nod is enough to shake the whole of Olympus (528-30), contrasted with the susceptible god of book 14 (153-353) who is beguiled and seduced by Hera - though admittedly with Aphrodite's help. Or Aphrodite herself: the powerful goddess who forces Helen quite against her will into bed with Paris (3.380-448), and the weak opponent of Athena who is buffeted to the ground during the farcical battle of the gods (21.416-433). And crippled Hephaestus, who makes the gods laugh in book 1 (584-600), who is cuckolded by Ares in the *Odyssey* (8.266-366): use for contrast Mary Hodgson's poem "Hephaistos" (*CA News* no. 4):

I am the cripple god, the cuckold god,
The laughing-stock of all the other gods.
Well, be it so; but I am still a god,
And if a man is wise he honours me.
For I am fire: think well before you say that you despise me.

I am the fire upon your kitchen hearth,
Making the green sticks smoke in frosty dawns,
Burning your rubbish, drying rain-soaked clothes:
The humble servant of your daily needs.
Then put your hand into the fire and say that you despise me.

When ancient cities fall to hostile arms
And flame runs riot through the vanquished streets,
When blazing timbers crash, and stifling smoke
Whirls round the ruined town, that is my work.
Can you watch *your* home burn and say that you despise me?

Or have you ever seen the forest blaze?
Heard the engulfing tide of flame roar on,
Swallowing acres in its hungry maw,
While every bird and beast and insect flees?
Can you watch that unmoved and say that you despise me?

You know my name: my forges too you know,
But have you heard their thunder underground?
Have you once seen the molten lava pour
Down over vineyards, villages and farms?
Go to Pompeii - what was once Pompeii - and say that you despise me.

Gods and Humans

A fruitful area to focus on is the relationship of gods with humans. Take Apollo, for instance. His tremendous power to harm is obvious at the beginning of the *Iliad*

when his arrows bring plague and death to the Greeks (1.44-9):

Angered in his heart he strode from the peaks of Olympus,
carrying on his shoulders his bow and covered quiver,
and the shafts clashed on the shoulders of the angry god,
moving in fury. He came as night comes down.
Settling far from the ships he let fly an arrow,
and terrible was the clash that rose from his silver bow . . .

This same Apollo, together with his sister Artemis, shot and killed all of Niobe's children, simply because she had boasted that she had more children than their mother Leto's two (and since Niobe had somewhere between twelve and twenty, depending on which ancient source you use, you might think she had a right to boast. But boasting, of course, is always risky . . .). And a stern and powerful Apollo lies in some way (in what way?) behind the action of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*.

But compare this Apollo with the god who comes to earth to woo mortal women - and without a lot of success. He loved Cassandra, who at first accepted him, then changed her mind. He loved Marpessa, and Zeus gave her the choice between Apollo and her mortal husband, Idas, at which the canny Marpessa chose Idas because in the nature of things he would grow old at the same time that she did, whereas Apollo would abandon her when her beauty faded. He loved Daphne, who became a laurel tree rather than have him. He loved the beautiful youth Hyacinth, who for once returned his love but then was killed by the jealous West Wind, Zephyrus, deflecting a discus that Apollo was throwing to his lover. The death-dealing Far-shooter and the unhappy or unsuccessful lover are two very different sides of Apollo.

Of course the most successful lover of them all was Zeus, who in a wild variety of disguises - bull, swan, satyr, shower of gold etc., etc. - had his way with the mortal women of his choice. This whole area of divine and mortal love-affairs has a lot of scope for discussion (as well as plenty of artistic illustrations). On the one hand, it was important to the Greeks to trace back their genealogies to such an original union. And on the plus side for the woman, she could be sure of bearing a fine hero of a son (the gods almost always begot sons; Helen is a notable exception). But get students to look at what these myths mean in human terms. In Euripides' *Ion*, you get from Creusa a wonderfully vivid image of the beautiful Apollo - "You came to me, your hair gleaming gold . . . (887-8)" - before he drags her to the ground and rapes her, then leaves her with all the grief, not only of an illegitimate child, but of that child's loss when she is forced to expose it, followed by years of sad childlessness.

A memorable picture comes too from Ovid, telling of the outcome of Zeus's love for Callisto (*Metamorphoses* 2.409-531). She is a huntress in the mountains of Arcadia, vowed to chastity, and a favourite companion of Artemis. Zeus sees Callisto one day as she is resting in the woods. At once he desires her, and without wasting any time he disguises himself as Artemis and approaches her. In her ignorance she welcomes him warmly, and only when he is kissing her does she realise that this is no goddess. But by then it is too late, for Zeus goes on to rape her even though she struggles against him with all her strength. He leaves her pregnant. The months pass, and she gives birth to a son, Arcas, which makes Hera so angry and jealous that she punishes the innocent girl cruelly. She catches Callisto by the hair and flings her to the ground. "And when the girl stretched out her arms to beg for mercy, they began to bristle with coarse black hairs, and her hands curved round, tipped with crooked claws, and turned into feet. Her face, which just now Zeus had praised, was disfigured by wide gaping jaws. And lest she might win sympathy with her prayers and imploring words, her powers of speech were taken from her, and only an angry threatening growl, terrifying to hear, came harshly from her throat. She was now a bear, but still her mind remained as it was . . ." (477-85).

But even this is not the end of it. For fifteen years Callisto lives in the wilds, afraid of humans and wild beasts alike. Then one day she comes face to face in the woods with her son Arcas, and recognises him, but he shrinks back in fear from this beast that eagerly approaches him. He is about to kill her when Zeus at long last has pity on Callisto and carries mother and son into the sky, immortalising them among the stars (Callisto becomes the Great Bear and Arcas the brilliant star Arcturus, "Bear-guardian"). So there is, I suppose, a kind of happy(ish) ending here.

There are many other examples of the human pathos implicit in these unions of god and mortal. On this subject generally, the following poem by Ursula Vaughan Williams, "Swan and Dove" (*CA News* no. 14), is a good basis for discussion:

Mate with a god, whatever his disguise,
insistent swan or cool descending dove.
Why do immortals choose a dress of lies
to cloak desire for girls desiring love?

For each, one meeting in a lifetime's days
made cross-bred scions of earth and paradise,
a doomed inheritance we recognize,
a daughter's beauty, dazzling human eyes,
a burdened son, born to be more than wise.
But Leda? Mary? What charmed memory stays
to last through life's despairs, through mortal's praise,
or what cold hatred for both swan and dove?

Pathways through the Myths

Start with one particular person and trace a pathway through the myths, with words and pictures, wherever the fancy takes you: students will get a very good idea of how all the myths link up with one another. Perhaps start with Zeus. Then choose one of his mortal loves: let's say Leda. That takes you to the beautiful Helen, to Paris, to the whole long Trojan War and the many deaths of Greeks and Trojans, to the destruction of Troy, to the homecomings of the Greek heroes, to Odysseus' tribulations or Agamemnon's death at the hands of Clytaemnestra (who is half-sister to Helen). For all of this particular sequence, illustrations and texts abound. But do include W. B. Yeats, who says it all in the span of a single poem, *Leda and the Swan*, capturing the significance of that moment of union between Zeus and Leda:

A sudden blow: the great wings beating still
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed
By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,
He holds her helpless breast upon his breast . . .

A shudder in the loins engenders there
The broken wall, the burning roof and tower
And Agamemnon dead . . .

Heroes

Focus in-depth on a single hero. An obvious choice would be Heracles, particularly from an ancient viewpoint with its multitude of vasepaintings showing his Labours and other deeds, and the good stories that his travails provide. In fact he was easily the most popular hero in ancient art. (Ask students why this might have been so. Was it because people then too enjoyed the image of Superman? Or because at the end of a desperately difficult life he was rewarded with immortality - so there must be hope for us all? Or some other reason?)

Another good hero is Odysseus, using the *Odyssey* as a starting point, plus the many vase-paintings of the various beings - monstrous, mortal or divine - that got in the way of Odysseus' homecoming during his Wanderings. Contrast these with more modern versions. For example, Turner's glorious, romanticised painting in the National Gallery of "Odysseus Deriding Polyphemus" is very different from the earthier ancient images, verbal and visual, of the same incident. And how do Tennyson's Lotus-eaters compare with Homer's brief mention of them (*Odyssey* 9.82-104)? It was in fact only after Tennyson's seminal poem that they captured the popular imagination and became a source of inspiration for artists. The sensuous lure of his island (though this is surely not a Greek island) is irresistible:

There is sweet music here that softer falls
Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
Or night-dews on still waters between walls
Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;
Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,
Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes;
Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies.
Here are cool mosses deep,
And thro' the moss the ivies creep,
and in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,
And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep.

Nor do Tennyson's mariners resist, unlike those of Odysseus who are forced back on board by their captain and tied fast. The poem ends:

Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the shore
Than labour in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave and oar;
Oh rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more.

And to stay with Tennyson for a moment, perhaps the greatest contrast, ancient and modern, lies in the figure of Odysseus himself. The modern image of Odysseus is summed up in Tennyson's poem *Ulysses*, where the poet (much influenced by Dante) makes Odysseus a man who yearns to travel, to explore. "I cannot rest from travel; I will drink / life to the lees", he says. "How dull it is to pause, to make an end, / to rust unburnished, not to shine in use!" He and his fellow sailors are now old, and near to death, but he still urges them onwards:

Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

That's magnificent - but it's not Homer. Homer's Odysseus hated the sea and all the troubles that it brought him, he hated the way it kept him from his home in Ithaca. Look at what he says to Calypso when the nymph offers him immortality (*Od.* 5.215-20):

"Lady goddess, do not be angry with me. I know all this for myself, that wise Penelope is never a match for you in beauty and stature, for she is a mortal, and you are immortal and ageless. But even so, what I want, and all my days I long for, is to go back to my house and to see the day of my homecoming."

All that Homer's Odysseus wants is to get away from the sea, to get back home, to Penelope, the woman of many wiles, the much-enduring wife, who has waited faithfully for him for twenty years.

Contrasting versions of a myth

Look at a myth that has different versions in the ancient sources, then at its reuse in postclassical art, discussing which version was chosen, and why. For instance, take Eos, goddess of Dawn. She was forever falling in love with mortals and snatching them up to have her way with them - you will find pictures of her doing so in both ancient and modern art. One of her victims was Tithonus, son of Laomedon, king of Troy. In youth he had great beauty, and Eos, falling in love with him, carried him off "in a golden four-horse chariot from the stars" (Euripides, *The Women of Troy* 855-6) to her home in Ethiopia, in the farthest East and by the river of Ocean. Homer speaks of Eos arising in the morning from Tithonus' bed: "Dawn arose from her bed, from the side of proud Tithonus, to carry light to the immortals and to men" (*Iliad* 11.1 -2, *Odyssey* 5.1-2). Because of her love for Tithonus, she asked Zeus if he might be made immortal, and Zeus granted her wish. But this apparently happy love story had a sad sequel, recounted in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (218-38): Eos had forgotten to ask that her lover might remain forever young, and so as the years went by he grew older, and greyer, and more shrivelled. At first Eos looked after him, giving him food and ambrosia and rich clothing. But when he grew so old that he could no longer move, she shut his withered husk of a body away in his room, and closed the shining doors on him, leaving him there to babble eternally. But a different and happier ending to the story is given in the scholia: Eos changed Tithonus into a cicada, that most vocal of insects, so that she might have the joy of hearing her lover's voice forever sounding in her ears.

Which version is the more potent for the creative artist? Which would students themselves use for a modern reworking of the legend? Tennyson's early poem "Tithonus" keeps to the more melancholy version:

The woods decay, the woods decay and fall,
The vapours weep their burthen to the ground,
Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath,
And after many a summer dies the swan.
Me only cruel immortality
Consumes: I wither slowly in thine arms,
Here at the quiet limit of the world,
A white-hair'd shadow roaming like a dream
The ever-silent spaces of the East,
Far-folded mists, and gleaming halls of morn....

Those, then, are just a few suggestions of how you might bring myths alive in the classroom, using words and pictures. You can add music too, if you wish. Offenbach is likeable and fun, for instance, with *Orpheus in the Underworld* accompanying the gods and *La Belle Helene* the Trojan War. The possibilities are endless . . .

Jenny March

Jenny March would be happy to visit schools and talk about Greek myths. And if any reader is unfamiliar with CA News and would like a free copy (and/or information about the Classical Association) write to her at PO Box 38, ALRESFORD, Hants SO24 OZQ.)

TEMPORA CLAUSENTI – The Southampton ‘Thunderer’

Diana Sparkes

It is nearly twenty-seven years since our local Classics magazine for schools came into existence under the enthusiastic and calm hand of Mrs. Pat Wagstaff. At first it was issued biannually, but it was soon realised that this was far too frequent and onerous a task for the editor, and so it became, and continues to be, an annual publication. I took over as Editor in 1983, and I hope, despite or perhaps because of my retirement from active teaching two years ago, that I can continue to remain at the helm for the foreseeable future, though I am always looking for a successor!

Some of you may know our unique magazine, but many will not, and so a brief summary of its contents and age-range will be in order. Each year a different topic is chosen as the special theme. In the early days this topic was solely Roman, from marriage to medicine, from religions to Rome itself. But with the advent and growth of Classical Civilisation courses, it was felt more suitable to widen the scope of the topics, and to tackle them with respect to Egypt, Crete and Greece, and of course Italy too. Guided by pupils’ advice, local teachers and I usually choose the topic in the autumn, and the teachers are then invited to encourage their pupils (mostly in the 11-16 age-range) to contribute articles, cartoons, stories, poems, quizzes, crosswords and drawings based on the set theme, and to send them to me by the end of April. Most themes relate to GCSE work which can prove a useful way of broadening pupils’ knowledge of their Background topics. But ‘magazine

work’ can also be fun, and can test pupils’ initiative and imagination. It is a point of pride in many Latin classes to have your name mentioned in the magazine!

Once the material has reached me from the different schools, I then have to select the items for publication. Sometimes this is easy: I won’t accept illustrative work done in pencil, as I don’t have the artistic skills necessary for improving these drawings for reproduction; in addition no quiz or crossword requiring answers is accepted unless it is provided with those answers! But after that it can frequently be very difficult to differentiate between thirty articles on Education in the Ancient World, with the result that complicated amalgamation becomes the ‘order of the day’, so that as many pupils as possible from as many schools as possible will have their names ‘in print’. *Tempora Clausenti* really is a magazine by the pupils for the pupils. Sometimes there are gaps in the set theme because no-one has contributed that section, but I think it wrong for me as editor to fill these in, as it is their magazine.

Next, I rough-type every accepted contribution, design the lay-out of each page, choose the prize-winners and write my editorial before taking the whole journal to a professional typist. The only job left then is to stick the illustrations in place, and by early to mid-June, after about one and a half months’ struggle, *Tempora Clausenti* is ready for Cantell School’s excellent reprographics department, with its

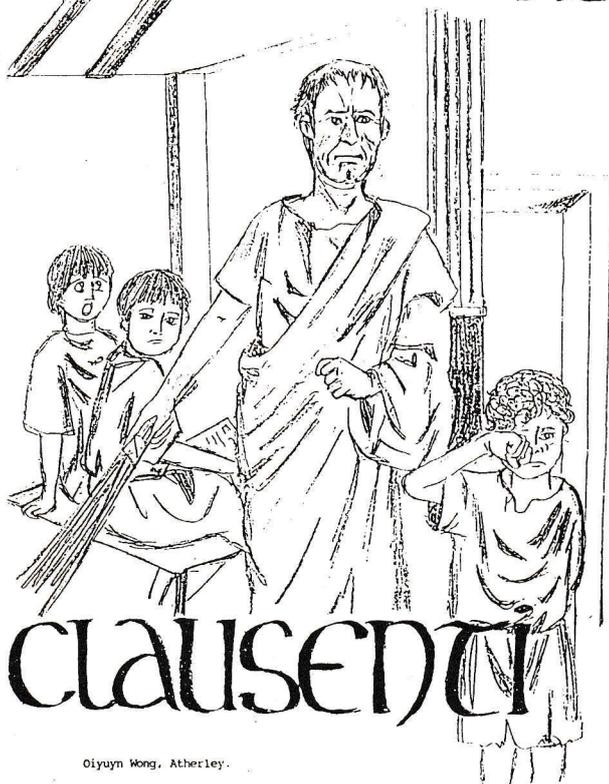
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Andrew Sampson King Edward VI School



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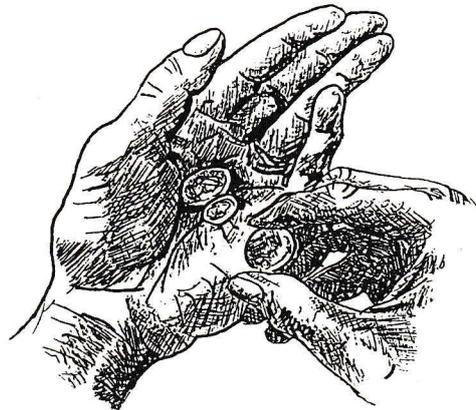
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machine that can copy, collate and staple in one fell swoop! This machine seems centuries away from the waxy stencils of yesteryear (dotted with pink correction fluid!), the Gestetner machine tuned by hand, and the teams of pupils who walked round islands of desks collating everything individually! One could not have envisaged then how greatly the quality of producing amateur publications would have improved, so much so that they appear almost to have been printed professionally! Once the cover-colour has been chosen, the machines roll, and in a very short time, seven hundred copies are ready to be put in my car-boot for distribution to near and far. 'Near' obviously means locally, but 'far' now means the Classical Gymnasium in St. Petersburg (not in the car-boot!), with whom we gained our special contact via its link with *Omnibus*. Its contributions reach me by fax! We also have a link with a school in Barcelona, and its pupils sent in a wealth of contributions in '96. They too heard of us via *Omnibus*. In addition I gather that a copy has been sent to the Czech Republic, so we hope that we shall join forces with them too! Copies regularly wend their way to Australia and America, to Newcastle and Cornwall, to *The Times* and to Blackwells, but I am always looking for more schools to subscribe and contribute. The more the merrier! You don't have to live near Southampton!

Obviously I have had to think extremely carefully about costs. I wanted to keep the price for local children at the low level of fifty pence, and seventy pence for adults and 'for-

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ELROY SIMMONS
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eigners', but it became clear, some years ago, that with the escalation of the costs of photocopying and postage, a grant would be needed. Over the years we have been very fortunate to receive one-off grants from the Classical Association and the Roman Society, but our generous annual grant from the Hellenic Society has meant that we can afford to employ a professional typist and maintain the low price for pupils. The fact too that Cantell School only charges me the same rate per page as a teacher 'in post' there means that we can at the moment cover our costs for the actual printing of the 32 sides and cover. This takes a very great weight off my mind.

Since the distant demise of *Acta Diurna* and the more recent passing of *Minibus*, I believe that there has not been a Classics magazine in Britain which caters for secondary school pupils. *Tempora Clausenti* fills this gap, and I hope that those of you who are interested in seeing a copy of the 1996 issue on 'Women in the Ancient World' will write to me and think seriously about subscribing, contributing and being put on the 1997 mailing list. The theme for this year is 'Towns and Cities in the Ancient World' which is of interest to most pre-GCSE pupils. Do contact me about *Tempora Clausenti*, or if you are considering starting up your own periodical and need help, drop me a line at: 16, Leigh Road, Highfield, Southampton SO17 1EF (fax: 01703-556818; e-mail: basp@soton.ac.uk).

Diana Sparkes

CLASSICS REDIVIVAE –

A Story of Revival in the Maintained Sector

Annette Thornton

Whenever I attend Classics Days or events at any venue in the country I hear laments about the death or imminent demise of Classics in the maintained sector. All too often lively, dedicated and very capable teachers of Classics seem ready (unsurprisingly) to throw up the sponge and declare that all is lost in the face of National Curriculum pressures, managerial hostility within schools and combined parental and pupil apathy.

And yet.....all is *not* necessarily lost. This is the tale of one maintained school where a revival of almost all aspects of classical study is taking place. I have been teaching for seven years at Reading School, a grant-maintained boys' Grammar School which caters for both day-boys and boarders. There are almost 800 pupils in the school who range in age from eleven to eighteen years. Until five years ago only Latin had been offered from the wider Classical menu. The subject had been quite popular and had held its own until the introduction of the National Curriculum. At that point pupil interest and support dwindled drastically - a depressingly familiar story.

How has the revival of the subject been fuelled? Undoubtedly, a major factor has been the unswerving determination of our headmaster, Dr. P. R. Mason (not himself a Classicist but a Chemist) that Classics should survive and prosper in the school, and his moral and practical support for the idea that the boundaries of the subject should expand to attract as many pupils as possible. Managerially and financially, opting-out of Local Authority control has given the Headmaster and Governors the freedom to decide to expand in this area. The practical response has been that, while the Classics Department has continued to offer Latin throughout the school, from Years 7 and 8 (when it is compulsory) to Years 12 and 13, Classical Civilisation at GCSE level and A Level is now also on offer. My third GCSE group will take the examination in June, and for the first time I shall have pupils entering for the A Level examination. Being nothing if not ambitious, we embarked on teaching GCSE Greek in September 1995. One pupil elected to take the subject, and it was a calculated gamble to fund the subject at this level. I guess that in the corridors of power there were sharp intakes of breath and deep apprehension! However, the gamble seems to have paid off. In Year 10 I have four pupils, and with option choices looming once again, I have just had enquiries from more than twice that number of pupils in the present Year 9. If you are attempting to reintroduce Classics or expand its base, be very aware that it is a process which takes two or three years at least to gain momentum. Word of mouth, examination results, parental chat, and publicity all play their part. I am delighted to be able to add that my Year 11 pupil wishes to go on to A/S Level Greek next year, and if we can juggle the Options Columns he will be allowed to do so.

My Head of Department and I also took the carefully considered decision to move from the use of *Ecce Romani*, Harrison and other Latin readers to the Cambridge Latin Course. So far, we have taught four years of the Course. It is our perception that pupils are now much more confident in their handling of the subject, both orally and in written work, and that even pupils who are weaker linguistically do not feel discouraged and therefore hostile towards the subject. The incorporated background material helps to sustain interest and provides a base from which wide-ranging questions of etymology, religion, social organisation, history, eco-

nomics, geography and archaeology can be addressed. Those pupils who elect to give up Latin at the end of Year 8 take with them memories of a positive and mindstretching experience. Perhaps even more importantly, they are likely to pass on to their children the notion that Latin is a worthwhile and enjoyable subject. I certainly encounter many youngsters whose parents clearly suffered a miserable and dreary introduction to Latin in their own youth and who have hated the subject with a passion ever since.

Thus it is that within five years a range of Classical options has been introduced at Reading School. How has this been possible within the National Curriculum straitjacket? One reason is that our teaching week consists of 45 lessons, each of 35 minutes duration. Five of these lessons are taught on Saturday morning. Then, our pupils are generally very able, and they usually study ten, eleven or even more subjects at GCSE, which naturally widens their choice considerably. Thus, they can deal with the bedrock necessities and permit themselves the indulgence of more widely-ranging and challenging subjects such as Classics.

Beyond all this, however, it has been essential to create in the school and among Governors and parents a climate of respect for and acceptance of Classics as a valuable, challenging and enjoyable element in the curriculum and in school life. Always and almost everywhere one has to combat the attitude that Classics is "pointless", that it has "had its day" and that the pursuit of any branch of the subject is a waste of valuable "relevant" time. How do you counter these attitudes? Sometimes employers do it for you. One Year 12 pupil studying Classical Civilisation recently spent a week with Honda on work experience. Management there was much more interested in his Classics than in anything else he had studied. Generally, however, it takes time, patience, forensic and conversational skills, unremitting hard work and devotion on the teacher's part, publicity and above all, lessons in the subject that are (one hopes!) interesting, challenging and thought-provoking, so that pupils pass on to fellow-pupils their own recommendations. I have spent a great deal of time with staff members of the English and Drama Departments with whom I have most cordial relationships. We discuss many aspects of literature and we mount joint theatre trips. I have helped with Drama productions in school, and at Sixth Form level there is much cross-fertilisation of ideas among those pupils who study Classical Civilisation and Theatre Studies or English. Aspects of Greek and Roman technology regularly come up for discussion with Technology colleagues whose IT skills I can also call upon. Questions of a religious, spiritual and ethical character arise naturally out of the subject and the school's Chaplain is often drawn into debates. One of our Modern Languages staff teaches some Latin. Our Department worked with historians in the school to deliver KS3 Roman History requirements, and I have even involved mathematicians and scientists in the delivery of pre-Socratic and Alexandrian material. Music, Politics and Economics are other areas of shared interest. The essential element is your own enthusiasm; if colleagues sense that you are genuine in your interest in their subjects as well as your own they will usually respond very generously and helpfully and support you should your subject come under threat. They will begin to view Classics as an integral and (O blessed jargon!) truly cross-

curricular subject which has a surprising relevance to many aspects of their own subjects. If to this you can add assorted Classics trips throughout the year to interesting sites with well-prepared material which accompanying non-Classics staff can enjoy, you are well on the way to entrenching Classics within the curriculum. We now run field-trips each year for Years 7 - 11, and for Sixth-Formers, which other members of staff compete to accompany. There is, for instance, a little grocer's shop in Cirencester which produces pork pies to die for; and one of our Chemists does not count his year complete if he has not accompanied his Year 7 tutor group to the Corinium Museum and purchased his pie which he then consumes with relish at Chedworth Roman Villa.

Fishbourne, Verulamium, Bignor, The Museum of London and the British Museum are all grist to our mill. This year I am running a Classics Club trip to Bath on which some parents will join us. And we take youngsters to see modern productions of classical plays or entertainment deriving from classical themes. So enthralled by the Bradfield production of *Troïades* in 1994 were some of my pupils that they asked me to take them a second and third time to a performance. Finally, in June 1996 we took a party to major Bronze Age and Classical sites on mainland Greece, a new venture for the school.

What other measures can you take? If possible, make sure that you are reasonably computer-literate; pupils respect such skills which help to destroy the perception that Classicists can't cope with the modern world and they are, of course, very useful in their own right. Incorporate computer programs into your teaching agenda. Learn your way round your own school's computer system. If your school has access to the Internet, put a Departmental entry on the World Wide Web. And make sure that you have an E-mail address. Junk may turn up but so will items of interest from other Classicists around the globe. Increasingly, pupils are using computers as tools for learning and although we, as Classicists, know that books are infinitely more valuable as tools, it is imperative that Classics teachers be *au fait* with the technology and aware of the range of programs and CD Roms available. At Reading School we are working closely with the Librarian to stock Classics shelves not only with books but with software and CD Roms. These are backed up by our growing Departmental collection of slides and videos. I have transferred slides which I have taken on to a CD Rom (courtesy of Boots the Chemist) and this produces stunning prints up to poster size and with sharper, truer colours than conventional prints. They are a magnificent teaching aid.

"Relevance" is a mantra these days, so seize the initiative and set up a Classics Club for all years which can meet at lunch-time or after school. Set pupils to read papers, magazines, journals and periodicals for a month and to extract from them as many articles or references to the Classical world in any shape or form as they can. The assiduous ones will astonish themselves and will provide you with a bumper crop of material which can then be mounted and displayed with an accompanying brief commentary. Help Club members to make models of Greek and Roman buildings and figures and encourage them to design posters and a Classics Logo (a favourite pastime of computer buffs). One of my regulars in Year 8 has designed a Classics publicity leaflet for new entrants to the school and copies of this will go out to pupils in their introduction packs later in the year. I am also the proud owner of magnificent models of a Greek theatre, a Greek house, a Greek boat and one of Pliny's villas. Mosaic-making, Roman cookery and games construction are all sources of instruction and entertainment. We can now play Classical Cluedo and Monopoly. Use some of the excellent Latin plays recently published, together with macaronics,

extracts from classical writers in translation, English poems on classical themes and even some Greek readings, to mount a Classics evening to which parents and Governors are invited. This does wonders for pupils' confidence, helps them to see Classics in a wider context and improves the written performance of those who are involved in Latin speaking.

I have made a point of advertising the subject throughout the school. Make sure that pupils at all levels have plenty of enticing information about courses well before they choose their options. Use noticeboards, where possible, to display pupils' work or posters and newspaper/magazine material. Buy or construct large-scale Latin or Classical Civilisation crosswords and word-searches, and invite the passing public to fill in clues or cross out words. It is also a good idea to look outwards to the community to seek sponsorship from firms and to discover whether you can ally yourselves with other schools in the vicinity for both co-operation and friendly competition. We are fortunate in Reading to have a lively University Classics Department which hosts a local Classical Association and which is always prepared to offer cheerful and encouraging advice and help. But you can form your own support group locally - or use the Internet if you are on your own! Mount public lectures. A resounding success of this year has been a lecture by Dr. Peter Jones on the origins of the English language which we threw open to the local community as well as the school. Positive feedback from unexpected sources is still coming our way.

What of the future? Our aim at Reading School must be to build on what has already been achieved. We have to make sure that all the options we offer within the broad outlines of the subject are established as permanent and respected - even sought-after - elements of the curriculum. The battle is already almost won in this school because of the support we receive from our Headmaster and Governors, but ebullience combined with tact and expertise ought to produce results in most schools. Persuasion, evidence, persistence and the mention of parental choice should help the process of acceptance along. Certainly at Reading we are now seeing a very healthy uptake throughout the school and we hope that JACT and other Classics organisations will use the school as a venue for meetings and courses. I am, however, becoming increasingly convinced that if Classics is to survive in any maintained school, and particularly in Comprehensive schools, Classical Civilisation and/ or Ancient History must be the ingredients on offer to *all* pupils. For the majority, access to the Classical world will only ever be through literature in translation and through the study in English of the social, economic, religious, political and archaeological aspects of that world. In contrast, only a minority (albeit a sizeable minority in Grammar Schools) will have the will, the ability and the time to study Latin and Greek in depth. I suspect and hope that these subjects *can* be nourished and perpetuated but I think it will be as adjuncts to Classics-in-translation. It is unlikely, even with devolved school budgets, that they will be funded to stand alone.

In *The Idea of a University* John Henry Newman wrote, "There is a knowledge which is desirable, though nothing come of it, as being itself a treasure, and a sufficient remuneration of years of labour". Pupils at Reading School are discovering the truth of this dictum and realising, to their surprise, that their knowledge of Classics is already enriching their lives in many unexpected ways. They may well find in the future that that knowledge is also well respected by many employers and that it increases their chances of securing a coveted job.

Annette Thornton
Reading School, Berkshire

KNOWLEDGE TELLERS OR KNOWLEDGE TRANSFORMERS -

(The Problems of Essay Writing in A Level Classical Civilisation)

Simon Tombs

Essay writing is traditionally at the centre of an A Level student's experience of learning. Lessons are often planned with a specific question in mind. The bulk of assessment both during and at the end of the course is based on essay writing. Teachers spend many hours reading and marking the essays of their students. However, for both teachers and pupils, the A Level essay is in many respects frustrating and unsatisfactory. Even well-motivated and conscientious students find it difficult to complete assignments. For teachers, there is often the double frustration of having to expend much effort to persuade students to hand in their work only to find the same basic errors creeping into students' work again and again.

What is Going Wrong?

It seems important at the outset to try to identify exactly what is going wrong. Three major problems can be identified.

Firstly, students often find it difficult to incorporate primary evidence into their essays. There is the particularly galling experience which too many teachers endure of spending much time in lessons going through text or evidence in detail only to find little or no reference to that evidence in the essays which students write: it then becomes necessary to write "Evidence?" or "Quote?" in the margin many times over.

Secondly, students frequently fail to focus on the specifics of the question set. For example, when my students were set the question "What were the demands which Stoicism and Epicureanism made of those who followed them?", their essays offered a general overview of the beliefs of Stoicism and Epicureanism but failed to say much on the idea of "demands".

Thirdly, students find it difficult to examine and develop two or more aspects of an argument and draw significant conclusions from that analysis. Many of the questions which A Level students are set (the students I have worked with have followed the UCLES syllabus) require such an even-handed approach. Take for example this question which appeared on the 1995 UCLES paper.

- a) In Aeschylus' "Agamemnon" it is Agamemnon's own crimes and errors which have opened the way for divine justice. Discuss.
- b) How impious was his final act of hubris?

For the first part of the question, an interesting answer would consider not only how Agamemnon's own actions led to punishment from the gods but also consider other explanations such as the guilt of his wife and the impious acts of previous generations. An exceptional answer might try to take these contrasting views and try to achieve a synthesis of them. All too often however, students fail to produce writing with this sophisticated level of argument. Too often, they fall into the trap of putting the conclusion into the introduction. Thus, a typical answer to the first part of the question might begin

"Agamemnon commits many crimes and makes many errors which lead the gods to punish him." Little in the way of discussion of the ideas behind the statement would then occur.

Are There Psychological Models Which Might Explain What's Going Wrong?

In their book "The Psychology Of Written Composition", Canadian psychologists Carl Bereiter and Marlene Scardamalia put forward two models of writing which they term "knowledge telling" and "knowledge transforming". In knowledge telling, writers are simply writing down what they know. In knowledge transforming, writers are using the process of writing to transform and enhance their understanding of the subject about which they are writing.

This distinction is well summed up by two passages which appear in Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987). The first comes from a twelve year old describing his experience of writing who says,

"I have a whole bunch of ideas and write them down until my supply of ideas is exhausted. Then I might try to think of more ideas up to the point when you can't get any more ideas that are worth putting down on paper and then I would end it." (Bereiter and Scardamalia 1987 p.9).

Contrast this with a quote from Aldous Huxley.

"Generally, I write everything many times over. All my thoughts are second thoughts. And I correct each page a great deal, or rewrite it several times as I go along... Things come to me in dribblets, and when the dribblets come I have to work hard to make them into something coherent."

(Bereiter and Scardamalia 1987 p.10).

For the twelve year old, writing simply involves letting someone else see what is inside his head. For Huxley, writing affords the opportunity to transform dribblets of thought into something coherent and new.

Bereiter and Scardamalia show that the crucial features which distinguish knowledge transforming from knowledge telling are the ability to plan at a whole text level and to revise. These features become clear from looking at two thinking aloud protocols from one of Bereiter and Scardamalia's experiments. In this experiment, the task is to write a story about a boy who has lost something. Subjects are asked to state out loud what they are thinking as they write. What they say is recorded and transcribed. Anything they say which is duplicated or paraphrased in their writing is in bold type. An adult's response to this task looks like this.

"Right now, he's isolated - and how I would... If I have a connection made there - how I want to do that: *Do I want an adult to intervene?* Or do I want this to be that *realistic?* O

fairy tale? Or because *I can make it any way I want*. Okay, maybe I...weird!! Ah, *let me see...* I know. **He makes this model out of a ship, and on this ship he makes a little model of himself, and he loses it!** And this little model of himself happens to end up in his back pocket. Oh, why not? I do anything I like with this story! Okay, so he just doesn't have any friends, and he's still losing things, and he doesn't know where he's put his ship and this little model he made of himself. But - magic!! The little model starts to talk to him and helps him to find things! *Let me see now... I want to get some other kids involved, here.* There's always one kid that shines through. **Okay, one kid likes his work, his art work, and, and, helps him."**

(Bereiter and Scardamalia 1987 p.20)

There is a clear attempt by this writer to plan at a whole text level. When he says, "Or do I want this to be that *realistic?* Or *fairy tale?* Or because *I can make it any way I want,*" he is clearly thinking about the story as a whole, considering the genre and overall effect of the piece. It is the ability to have such long term goals and to have in mind overarching concepts such as genre which marks out knowledge transforming. It is also clear that the writer engages in the process of revising. In Bereiter and Scardamalia's model, revising does not simply mean adjusting what has already been written but rather implies the ability to look back over what has already been written and to look over several possibilities which might already be in mind in order to move forward. Twice this adult subject says "let me see" which implies that this process of revising is at work.

The contrast with the response to the same task of a ten year old is striking.

"I could put him going to school and he probably loses a shoe. And then he's trying to find it and someone else finds it. And he goes home and tells his mother and his mother.... and then the person finds it, gives it back and then the next day, the person found it, so the boy says thank you to the person that found it. Then the next day he goes to school, he loses something else. And the teacher asks him what he lost and he says his short pants. He said his short pants. And they were in the washroom. And he goes home and brings them back. And then it's Saturday and school is over. And that's all. He goes back to school on Monday, he goes and plays...."

(Bereiter and Scardamalia 1987 pp.20-21)

Clearly, this subject does not take a step back from the task as the adult writer does. There is no attempt to consider concepts such as genre and the overall effect of the piece and no attempt to revise. All of the writer's thoughts are directed towards generating the content of the story.

What Evidence Is There That Much Sixth Form Writing Is Merely Knowledge Telling?

One way of explaining shortcomings in the writing of A Level students is to suggest that they are merely engaging in knowledge telling. The fact that many students are reluctant to write even though they show commitment to their studies in other respects might be explained by the fact that they see writing merely as writing down what you know rather than as an opportunity to transform and therefore enhance knowledge.

Their tendency not to focus on the specifics of a question might be explained by the fact that they do not engage in overall text planning but simply see a word they recognise and then move from one point to the next until they run out of ideas, rather like the ten year old in the example above. This lack of whole text planning might also explain the shortcomings in balanced argument and the tendency to put the conclusion in the introduction which were also noted earlier.

However, evidence is needed before these claims can be asserted with confidence. To this end, part of my research involved asking my students to complete a questionnaire about their approach to essay writing. It emerged that for some students, writing essays enabled them to transform their knowledge. When asked whether the essays which they wrote were good preparation for the A Level exam, those subjects who did claim that writing essays was useful preparation cited as reasons the opportunity to organise thoughts, to collect appropriate primary source material, to see which ideas were good and which were bad, to understand what was required in essays, to focus the mind and think carefully about topics, to summarise the main points of a topic and to help in remembering the information.

On the other hand, it emerged that students' essay planning was haphazard and uncontrolled. Only 5 out of 28 students said that they always wrote a plan; a further 5 students said that they usually did so. When asked how they decide which approach to adopt to an essay, among the factors which were cited as important were which teacher is marking the essay, the amount of time available, the amount of source material which needs to be included in the essay, the difficulty of the subject, "put it into practice and see what works best", "it comes naturally" and "it just happens".

It also emerged that students rarely produced more than one draft of their work and thus did not give themselves the opportunity to alter and to develop what they had written. Those who did write a first draft tended to focus on fairly low level factors such as correcting spelling and punctuation and adding in points which they had missed out. There was no suggestion that essays and therefore the knowledge that goes with them underwent radical transformation between the first and the second draft.

Thirdly, it emerged that the satisfaction which students gained from their work was often extrinsic. They were asked, "What satisfaction or sense of achievement do you gain from writing Classics essays?" They were scored as having intrinsic satisfaction if they referred to improved knowledge or understanding and extrinsic satisfaction if they referred to some external factor such as gaining a high mark and receiving praise or avoiding criticism from teachers. Thirteen were scored as extrinsic, fifteen as intrinsic.

What's To Stop A Level Students Becoming Knowledge Transformers?

This is where the crunch comes. Of course, these problems in students' writing are not limited to A Level Classical Civilisation. Teachers in many other subjects experience difficulties in their students' writing which correspond closely to those experienced by Classics teachers. There is increasing academic interest in the areas of critical thinking and analytic writing, issues which are discussed in great depth and with admirable clarity by Mitchell (1994). In short, the problems which students experience in these areas are well described but

solutions are much less clear. For now, the following observations seem pertinent.

Firstly, it soon becomes clear that the processes involved in knowledge transforming are highly complex. Even when writing a simple story about a boy who lost something, the adult subject in Bereiter and Scardamalia's experiment who was quoted earlier had to bring to bear a number of important considerations about content and genre and to keep these in mind as he developed his story. It is no surprise that many A Level students, when struggling with new subject matter, with the demands of writing grammatically coherent sentences in appropriate academic English and with a genre of writing with which many of them are not greatly familiar, lapse into a mode of writing which is much less ambitious. The data from my study indicated that those whose spelling and punctuation were judged as weaker than average were less likely to show the ability to evaluate two or more points of view in their essays. It is reasonable to suppose that they are so concerned with the technical accuracy of their work that they are unable to focus on the more advanced aspects of academic writing.

Secondly, it is worth remembering that in many ways, knowledge telling works well for these students. Without engaging in complex planning, they are able to produce essays which cover a fair range of subject matter and which at least acknowledge the question set simply by allowing one point to suggest another. Crucially, they can use the facts which are assembled in this way as a basis for revision for exams and in the exam itself, they realise that they can gain considerable credit for reeling off these facts as quickly as they can.

Thirdly, A Level students rarely have the opportunity to revise their work. Essays tend to be seen as the final product of a sequence of lessons, the opportunity for students to show what they know and for teachers to assess progress. There is therefore little incentive for students to use essays to explore complex ideas about which they might not be sure or to attempt to synthesise disparate ideas since in doing so, they might be accused of muddled and unclear thinking and they won't have a piece of work which sums a topic up with the exam in mind. Even if their work is marked carefully with constructive comments appended, more often than not they will not receive back their work until the next topic has been started.

Fourthly, it emerged from the questionnaire answers which my students offered that they had received much contradictory advice about how to plan their work. In response to the question, "In Classics and in other subjects, what have you been taught about planning essays?", the following ideas were mentioned:-

Bubble charts, being precise, focusing on the question, selecting, doing a brainstorm, giving the answer at the beginning, the need for a brief introduction stating what the main arguments will be, a concise and definitely boring conclusion, plans should be less than two sides, one point per paragraph, a beginning a middle and an end, looking at key words, listing all the points of the essay in the plan, introduction, argument, middle, end, always write up a plan and do a rough draft, read and reread the rough draft, noting down key words, keeping your essay to the right length, keep everything short and simple, not making the reader think, no waffle.

One of the key ideas in the knowledge transforming model is that writers have to be able to combine overarching rhetorical and genre goals with considerations of content. If students have such a large amount of confusing and at times contradic-

tory advice floating round in their heads, then it becomes hard to set these overall goals. A lapse into knowledge telling is inevitable.

Finally, many students do not appear to possess the ability to argue. As part of my research project, I was keen to see how well A Level students could develop arguments on non-academic issues. Following the schedule developed by the American psychologist Deanna Kuhn in her book, "The Skills Of Argument", students were asked in an interview to consider two topics, prisoners' return to crime and pupils failing in school. For each topic, students had to state reasons for these phenomena, offer evidence in support of their theories and then to consider what somebody with views different to their own might say to show that they were wrong. They were then asked to analyse passages of evidence. The aim of these interviews was to see how strong students' ability to reason in these non-academic contexts was and to see if failure to argue successfully in these contexts was related to failure to argue well in the Classical Civilisation essays which they wrote: they were also asked to assess exam essays to see if they could spot strengths and defects in the work of others. In general, students' reasoning was quite successful, more successful in fact than that described by Kuhn in her study. There were few connections between students' ability to argue in the non-academic and academic contexts.

However, one part of the interview provided some very interesting insights. Subjects were asked

Do you think that there are experts who know for certain why pupils do badly in school / why people who have been in prison return to crime?

[If no] Would it be possible for experts to be certain once and for all why pupils fail in school / people who have been in prison return to crime if the experts did enough studying and research?

How sure are you of your opinions compared to an expert?

Those subjects who answered that experts could not be certain and that they themselves were not as certain as an expert were labelled as "evaluators" following Kuhn's (1991) classification. It was found that this evaluative epistemological position was associated with:-

success in forming arguments on real world topics
 success in analysing evidence on real world topics
 the ability to elaborate two or more points of view in an essay
 intrinsic satisfaction in essay writing.

This finding is crucial. It suggests that there are some students who understand that there can be no right answers to the complex questions with which they are faced but that there are some answers which are better than others. There is thus some point in having an argument about these answers. Therefore, this realisation might be termed a "disposition to argue". It is at the moment purely a matter of speculation as to how this disposition is achieved. Nevertheless, the number of argument categories in both the academic and real world domains to which it is related is striking.

It is in this area of argument skill that an explanation seems possible as to why some students find it hard to include appropriate primary evidence in their essays. No direct association was found between the evaluative epistemology and use of evidence in Classical Civilisation essays. However, it did emerge

that those who found one of the evidence passages difficult to analyse tended to say in their questionnaire answers that they found it difficult to select appropriate primary source material. Furthermore, those students who were scored as less good at including relevant primary material in their own essays were less likely to spot appropriate uses of primary evidence in the exam essays they were asked to assess. Taken together, these findings suggest that students fail to include appropriate primary material not solely because they are lazy and do not listen in class but because they have genuine difficulties in understanding how evidence fits into arguments. By itself, merely exhorting them to use evidence will not address this central difficulty they have with developing argument.

Where Do We Go From Here?

There are really two questions. Does the way in which Classical Civilisation teachers traditionally operate need to be changed? If the answer to this first question is "yes", then what needs to be done?

The first question needs to be asked for the following reason. Much of this article is rather negative in tone and tends to suggest that the experience of A Level students is dreadfully impoverished. It is clear however that for many students this is not the case. They gain high grades, they become sufficiently interested in the ancient world to choose to study the subject at degree level, they write essays from which they gain intrinsic satisfaction and they become adept at developing and criticising arguments. If some students do not develop these skills, that is simply the price to be paid for maintaining rigorous academic standards.

In response to this criticism, I would suggest that there is enough here to suggest that there are things which are structurally wrong with the way in which academic courses at A Level operate and that students do well despite rather than because of this structure. To illustrate the point, consider the assessment objectives for the UCLES syllabus. The second of these objectives is

To use this information to construct a clear and logical sequence of arguments in appropriate English.

If most students in their writing do not go through a meaningful process of planning in which ideas are developed and evidence is collected but produce work in a hurry which ranges from one point to another with little overall purpose, then one of the fundamental aims of the course is being undermined.

Even if one does not accept the argument that there is something structurally wrong with the learning experiences of A Level students, then there is always the argument from expediency. Few Classics teachers are in the position to turn away students of average ability on the grounds that they might not get much out of the course. In many institutions, the continuation of employment for Classics teachers depends on their ability to take on students who may not initially have much aptitude or interest in the subject and to give to those students the experience of success. Furthermore, from the time of Socrates, our subject has been concerned centrally with argument and rhetoric. At a time when specialists in many subjects are concerned about the role of spoken and written argument within their subjects, we are in a unique position to contribute to the debate and to move educational practice forward.

What, then, do we need to do? There can be no doubt that the options with which students will be presented at 16+ will change radically in the next few years and that politicians will

continue to argue over the nature and purpose of A levels. It may turn out that in the future pupils will not be required to write the A Level essay as we have traditionally known it. That is for the long term.

Some Short Term Suggestions

i) Getting Off To A Good Start

Evidence from my study, as well as anecdotal evidence from colleagues in other institutions, suggests that students receive obscure and contradictory advice about planning their writing. This need not be the case! It should be possible for teachers within a Classics department to agree on what they are looking for in students' writing and to agree on the advice which students are given. It should also be possible for departments across an institution to agree on what they tell their students. If anyone works somewhere where such co-operation has been made to work, I would be very interested to hear from them!

ii) Promoting Different Forms Of Writing

Most of the writing which sixth formers do is in the form of essays which are submitted when a topic has been covered. Writing in a different register at different points of the course might help to develop the idea that writing can be used to transform knowledge rather than to record what you think. For example, Mitchell (1994 p70) shows how students can write dialogues to explore ideas they find challenging. How about asking students to write a dialogue between a Stoic and Epicurean in which they discuss the demands put on them by their beliefs? Or how about an imaginary dialogue between somebody who thinks Agamemnon deserved it and somebody who doesn't? These exercises need not replace the essay. Rather they focus students' minds on specific subject content, force them to consider rival interpretations and illustrate the knowledge transforming possibilities of academic writing. These benefits can then be developed in essay writing.

iii) Assessing Other People's Essays

When young children write stories, they can call upon stories they have read or been told in the planning and development of what they write. It is unlikely that an A Level student will ever read another essay carefully and critically unless asked to do so by a teacher. Not only will reading other students' work provide the student with rhetorical strategies and devices which she or he can apply to her/his own work but it also offers the teacher the chance to show what s/he means by a good essay.¹

iv) Student Presentations

Divide up a question and ask each student to take a section and to find some quotes to be used for that section. The quotes have to be shared with the whole class and their significance explained. Several benefits can result. Students have to select quote material of appropriate length; they are limited by how much they can fit on to the board! Discussion of the quotes they unearth can show them that different interpretations of the same passages are possible. At the very least, they leave the lesson with a decent set of quotes which can then be incorporated into an essay.

v) Collaborative Planning²

Set the essay question, then ask pupils to develop a plan for it in groups. The idea behind this activity is not that an essay

planned by a committee will necessarily be better. Rather, it brings into focus what the purpose of planning should be and enables the teacher to discuss the merits of rival approaches to a piece of work.

vi) *Comparing Opening Paragraphs*²

Set a question, ask the class to consider what they might want to put into their essay consulting their notes as appropriate and then ask each student to write the opening paragraph of the essay on a large piece of paper. These can then be displayed around the room and the strengths and weaknesses of each introductory paragraph can be considered. Again, the idea is not to produce an essay by committee but is rather to give students the experience of what other people do and to focus on the purpose of an introductory paragraph and to show how the way in which an introduction is formulated affects the rest of the essay.

References

- Bereiter C. and Scardamalia M. *"The Psychology Of Writing: Composition"* LEA Hillsdale NJ 1987
 Kuhn D.
The Skills Of Argument Cambridge University Press 1991
 Mitchell S. *The Teaching And Learning Of Argument In Higher Education* University Of Hull 1994

¹ I have two sets of essays, one on Athenian Democracy and one on Metics I could make available to anyone who wished to take up this suggestion.

² I am grateful to colleagues with whom I worked at the JACT INSET day at Coilege London in November 1995 for these suggestions.

Simon To

Mr Tombs would welcome the views of colleagues; please write to him at Grey Court School, Ham, Richmond, Surrey TW10 7HN.

ORATIO VALEDICTORIA MCMXCVI

Roger Davies

O Arelates - insolitus ut sum publice dicendi ita et gaudeo tot auditores tam doctos conspiciens et lugeo quod hic cursus meus paene est perfectus. nam hos quinque dies intentissime audivistis, suavissime cecinistis, labores libentissime suscepistis. neque ullos novi viros - nec mehercule feminas - incundiore hilariores et, ut dicit Catullus noster, venustiores. forsitan igitur vobis pauca de studiis nostris audire placeat: quod animus non horret meminisse (mirabile dictu!) incipiam.

primum omnium Ricardus¹ ille qui latrat nos tam lepide docuit quid nobis esset agendum in Museis cum discipulis nostris. tum professor ille Scintilla², vir summi ingenii, disertissime nobis adhibuit imagines mirabiles in harena deserta inventas quas nos* Aegyptii olim pinximus. eheu! venit enim mihi in mentem recordatio de amicis meis Barbillo et Aristone qui illic perierunt.

postridie mane noster amicus Tristramus³ sine faecibus taurorum disseruit quemadmodum lingua Latina ad curricula nostra accommodaretur his temporibus minime cultis. inde ille Professor Cantabrigiensis⁴ facundissime nobis locutus est de illo Nerone eripiendo. puto tamen Cornelium Tacitum cum sentiis eius consensurum fuisse. tum ille qui est doctus⁵ monumentis antiquitatis nobis ostendit picturas aulae ubi fortasse habitabat rex Cogidubnus. postridie mane situs ipse et officina discipulorum nos maxime delectaverunt.

gratias quoque illi doctori Martiis⁶ (vel 'iter fac'!) qui nobis picturas de historiis fabulosis Graecorum ostendit et quomodo pictores poetasque Britannicos affecerint.

neque ullo modo tacere velim de illa Maria⁷ quae nobis demonstravit picturas et tabulas moventes de illa regina Cleopatra factas ab amicis nostris trans Oceanum habitantibus.

postrema nec minima illa Patricia Historia⁸, quae nobis tam saepe est locuta, nos certiores fecit de omnibus novis illius cursus Cantabrigiensis quem paene nos omnes tam profunde amamus.

gratias ago maximas omnibus magistris et magistrabus qui

alios magistros magistrasque docebant. quot ingenia in saecula etate nostra habemus - erant multi circuli diversi, scaenae - in genere spectaculi maxime teneor - musica canora, saecula dotibus⁹ regentibus et claviculis sonantibus. velim vos ornate nominatim commemorare sed tempus iam fugit. non potest abire tamen sine paucis verbis de coquis nostris¹⁰. quas cum sumptuosissimas nobis praebuerunt, praecipue heri vestra Trimalchio ipse eam amavisset. nec obliviscar illius securae mensae panis butyriique!

nunc denique paene ad perorationem adveni; unum tantum restat quod dicam: quantam voluptatem, quantam hilaritatem quantum auxilium mihi dederitis. ut dixit Plinius noster, quantum tum lusimus, risimus, studuimus.

spero vos omnes ferias iucundissimas acturos, donec incolumes perventuros. valete: qualis artifex abeo!

- 1 Richard Woff gave a talk on Children and Museums
- 2 Professor Brian Sparkes spoke on Egyptian Murals and Portraits.
- 3 David Tristram
- 4 Dr. Chris Kelly spoke on 'Nero - a Rescue Mission'
- 5 David Rudkin the archaeologist at Fishbourne arranged a visit to the site next day.
- 6 Dr. Jenny March showed slides on Greek Mythology
- 7 Maria Wyke spoke on Cleopatra.
- 8 Pat Story on 'Recent Developments in the CSCP'
- 9 David Parsons, President of ARLT.
- 10 The catering was of an unusually high standard.
- * At this point the Director was attired as an Egyptian being just about to sing the Cleopatra song from the 'Salad Days'!

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