

The Classics and their Interpretation

Jasper Griffin

Last year we listened with pleasure and profit to a presidential address by a Headmaster of a comprehensive school. He pointed out and illustrated ways in which the study of the ancient world in the classroom could be made relevant to the problems and interests of a modern, multi-cultural society. This year you have gone for something different: a speaker from what appears from the outside to be an ivory tower but from the inside is another part of the coal-face.

I am spending my life on the teaching of classical literature. What for? What is the point of my activities and those of many of you? In broad terms we should agree, I suppose, that it is to transmit and to keep alive the culture of the ancient world - *vitai lampada tradere*; to see that what has survived so long and contributed so much to the Western world shall not cease in our time to exercise its fascination on a fresh generation.

What, then, has the literary scholar to contribute? If my activity is to be a serious one, it must have at its heart the intention of recapturing the sense of the work as it originally was. But that, difficult as it is to achieve, is not the end of the matter. The work also has an interest for us in our own time, and that cannot be simply exhausted in the establishment of an original sense - or senses, for audiences were not monolithic in those days, any more than they are now, and Ovid read the *Aeneid* in a different way from Augustus.

Early audiences of the *Iliad* found it fascinating, among other things, as a handbook of heroic genealogies; the Catalogue of Ships in Book Two surely shows that the poet shared that taste, and one for mythical geography as well. We can observe that taste, without feeling obliged to give it the same sort of importance for ourselves as the picture in the poem of human life and death, and the profound humanity of the meeting of Achilles and Priam in the last Book. That, too, was part of the original meaning of the *Iliad*. Our own time suggests new questions and fresh emphases. The rise of feminism will of course leave a play like *Medea* looking rather different; the collapse of Marxism and the rise of a cool unpolitical postmodernism will affect our view of the *Aeneid* or of Augustan elegy.

I plan to give a few examples of the ways in which ancient poetry has been interpreted over the centuries. We can find extremely different ones. That does not deliver us from the obligation to look for the truth: it helps to show how difficult that search really is. I shall end with a few remarks on the reasons why I think our studies are worth while.

I begin where everything starts, with Homer. His poems have been on the syllabus of schools and universities for 2500 years; it follows that for all that time there have been reasons produced to justify that position. The reasons have varied very widely, and no doubt the capacity of the epics to look so different, to return such varied answers to the questions asked of them by succeeding generations, is one mark of their greatness - which must surely include some measure of complexity.

Before 500 BC the Homeric poems were already causing embarrassment to the high-minded. "Homer and Hesiod have alleged of the gods whatever is most shameful among men: thieving and adultery and cheating one another". So said Xenophanes, whose own idea of the divine was austere non-anthropomorphic. But there Homer was, already immovable on the syllabus. What to do?

Pedagogic embarrassment was the mother of allegorical interpretation, which appears in Greece at the same time. When Athena flattens Ares and Aphrodite, in *Iliad* 21, no theological feathers need after all be ruffled - we see only Prudence showing its natural hostility to Recklessness (Ares) and Lust (Aphrodite). When Hera holds Artemis by both wrists and boxes her ears, we are to see that the moon may be obscured by dense air. Of course, something must be lost, and

so bloodless a reading is a pale shadow of the episode as vividly narrated by Homer. We are looking forward, not with all that much gusto perhaps, to the allegorical poetry of Prudentius and the Middle Ages.

Plato objected, of course, to the Homeric presentation of the divine. But he took a further step in objecting also to the Homeric presentation of the human. It disgusted Plato that people wept over the sorrows of Hecuba: it was not *true*, and it undermined the stiff upper lip which he wanted all Greeks to maintain. Homer, therefore, had to go. Aristotle took a soberer view. He enjoyed and admired both Homer and Attic tragedy; he could not allow Plato to condemn them to the dustbin. Embarrassment now became the parent of more intellectual children: the doctrine of *catharsis*, which explained that weeping for the sorrows of poetical persons was actually good for you, and the argument that poetry was in fact *truer* - deeper, more universal than the truth of history. So much for the unvarnished incident which actually occurred. Homer can remain on the syllabus, both in moral and in epistemological terms.

Most people in the ancient world did not read or quote Homer with such highbrow thoughts as Plato or Aristotle. An Athenian gentleman in Xenophon tells us that his father wanted him to be a good man, and so he made him learn *Iliad* and *Odyssey* by heart. Part of the paternal wish, apparently, was that his son should master the arts and techniques in that way: for "You know, of course, that Homer in his wisdom has had something to say on almost every human skill..." And the son claims to understand household management and public speaking and generalship, and how to be a king, and how to drive a racing chariot. The Homeric poems thus become a universal encyclopedia - and what could be more obviously at home on an educational syllabus than that? In more recent times, under the influence of Marshall MacLuhan, it was suggested by Eric Havelock that the epics are "an oral encyclopedia", giving a preliterate society detailed instructions on everything from the launching of a ship to the performance of a sacrifice.

The epics also showed what a man should be like. Not indeed like the tricky survivor Odysseus as much as the gallant, impossible Achilles. The great Alexander took that lesson to heart. But others in the hellenistic world preferred to draw a very different lesson. We find it set out in the Second *Epistle* of Horace's First Book. Homer, says Horace, is a better teacher of moral philosophy than the professional moral philosophers, and what he shows us is the disastrous effects of the passions: Agamemnon and Achilles go wrong and suffer the results of anger, Paris embodies the consequences of yielding to lust.

Seditio, dolis, scelere atque libidine et ira
Iliacos intra muros peccatur et extra.

That seems to me a line of interpretation which has much to be said for it: whatever the *Iliad* does or does not contain, it is a most striking fact that all the greatest heroes come to grief, as a result of the tension between pure "heroic" self-assertion, the drive which makes a man a champion warrior, and the interest of the community he champions: so Agamemnon, so Achilles, so Hector, who is killed and dooms his city because he cannot face the shame of retreat. The *Song of Roland* makes a similar point about Roland's refusal to blow his horn to summon reinforcements until it is too late.

Less to most modern tastes, perhaps, is the sort of interpretation which seemed natural and important to the Neo-Platonists of later antiquity; but we must remember that they, too, were looking in the canonical texts of their culture - the syllabus again - for what to them was most important in the world of thought. Thus for them the visit of Odysseus to the Underworld represented the process of separation of the soul from the body, which the philosopher should practise in this

life, and the Cyclops stood for the life of sense-perception, which should not be merely blinded by an act of violence - that is why Odysseus has to suffer for it - but overcome by reason; and so on. The monad, dyad, and triad were represented respectively by the shape-changer Proteus, by the Sirens, and by the three-fold division of the world between Zeus and his brothers. All the cherished Neo-Platonic hobby-horses are thus to be found in the Homeric poems.

These ideas seem to us very far removed from Homer. Are our own Homeric interpretations equally fantastic? I do not think we are obliged to think so. The poems themselves do give evidence that the problem of heroism is explicitly an important subject. It is expressed in the big scene in Book Nine; Patroclus says to Achilles in Sixteen that he prays never to nurse such anger as that which his friend is nursing; in Eleven, Nestor criticises Achilles by saying that no one will be the better for his anti-social prowess. So too the instructions of Nestor to his son about chariot-racing really are in the text, and good advice too; though we can understand why, in the context, his son completely disregards them, loses his head, and fouls Menelaus. So are the accounts of conducting sacrifice, launching a ship, and all the rest.

The Neo-Platonists, by contrast, have to say that the text does admittedly seem to be concerned with quite different things from those which their analysis detected; but that there need be no resemblance. "Symbols are not imitations of what they symbolise", says Proclus; in fact, they may be the opposite, and what is disgraceful may stand for what is good, and vice versa. The presence of apparently shocking bits of mythology, says Philo, may be a positive sign of the presence, at that point, of deep truths, concealed from the ordinary reader. Such statements, and such a method, show that the need of the reader that the text should contain deep Neo-Platonic truths has taken precedence over the question whether there is any reason to suppose that such ideas really were put there by the poet. The problem of intention presents itself again. Otherwise the reader - whether Neo-Platonist or Stalinist writing in the old DDR - may simply be bringing out of the text the content which he has put there himself, like a fisherman proving the contents of a pool by pulling up out of it fish which are attached to a line from his pocket.

Time will not permit me to pursue the interpreters of Homer through the Romantic period, in which travellers - mostly British - proved his fidelity to life by discovering, in the Levant, people and societies which closely resembled those of Homer, and of the Pentateuch; for Homeric and Biblical enquiries often went hand in hand. At that time it was truth to Nature which was admired, and the Homeric poems, admirably natural to Romantic taste, are often compared to those of Ossian, another untutored genius.

Robert Wood, the diplomatist and traveller, from whose book F.A. Wolf derived the idea that the Homeric poems are oral poetry, regarded the poet as "unrivalled as the Father of History... without him, no just ideas can be formed of the state and true character of primitive society".

By another route and for a different society Homer again becomes a historian; not, now, a narrator of events, whose narrative is more universal, more philosophical, than ordinary history, but a social historian, true to a society which did really exist.

In the nineteenth century the romantic ideas of the late eighteenth gradually set into a justification for something which did not involve leaving one's study or changing one's ideas. The Homeric poems, conceived of as Lays like those of Celtic or Germanic poetry, were now stretched out on the operating table of a self-consciously scientific *Altertumswissenschaft*, and every Homerist in Germany sharpened a knife to dissect ("analyse") them. Wolf had given the signal, asserting in the famous *Prolegomena* that the stories of Odysseus' wanderings were composed piecemeal; then "Later, in an age more polished and richer in the arts, somebody noticed that by forcing these episodes into a single great continuous body by a few excisions, additions, and changes, they could be made as it were into a new and more perfect and splendid monument". This observant "somebody" had left his traces in the faults and inconcinnities with which the poems bristled, and on which attention now fastened. The word was received with joy

in all the cities of Philistia. Great literature was, after all, produced by somebody noticing that odd bits of verse which were lying about would fit together; and the most respectable occupation for a scholar was finding and exaggerating the defects of great literature and finally - o delight - using them to dismantle the original and replace it with a work of one's own composition. In the words of a Victorian poet, Would we not shatter it to bits and then Remould it nearer to the heart's desire? Such a composition was conventionally known as "the original *Iliad*", die *Uriliad*.

In the end, as we all know, the Analysts were disheartened by their inability to reach agreement and finally overthrown by the oral theory, as developed and supported by Milman Parry. A Romantic, he loved to fancy that as he listened to his Yugoslav *guslars* he was in the same situation as Homer's own listeners. Robert Wood, in the eighteenth century, had attached importance to reading the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* "in the countries where Achilles fought, where Ulysses travelled, and where Homer sung". The difference was that Parry supported his intuition and observation with detailed study and columns of tabulated formulae. The other side of the Romantic interest in Homer, its intimate connection with the Old Testament, found an exotic and exaggerated Victorian descendant in the conviction of Mr. Gladstone, argued in five bulky volumes, that the Homeric poems contained precious relics of the period when "the covenant of God with man had not yet fallen within the contracted forms of Judaism for shelter, but entered more or less into the common consciousness, and formed part of the patrimony of the human race". Homer thus complements the Sacred Records. Gladstone thus finds himself explaining the absence in Homer of the rules about Sabbath observance; experience of his own time showed how easy it was to lose sight of those rules. It will not be possible to pursue at equal length the history of the interpretation of other classical authors. A few words can be said about Virgil, by way of indication of the breadth of the field.

The *Aeneid*, we know, was an instant success. Augustus, well pleased, quoted it: the line which is mentioned as being on his lips comes, it may not be impertinent to observe, fairly early in Book One. The poem was put on the syllabus of schools at once. How was it read? Ovid assures us that the most popular part was the forbidden love of Aeneas and Dido. He would, perhaps; but the evidence of art and of quotations supports his claim. It is Dido and Aeneas who are illustrated on the mosaic from Low Ham; it is over Dido's unhappy love that St. Augustine reproaches himself for weeping more than over the suffering of his Redeemer. Such an emphasis must have been in some tension with the interpretation of the poem as a straightforward paean in praise of imperialism. Many are the writers of the Middle Ages who enter with plangent sympathy into the tragedy of the Queen of Carthage, including Chaucer, who includes her in his *Legend of Good Women* and has no doubts about condemning Aeneas:

For on a nyght, slepyng, he let hire lye
And stal away unto his companye,
And as a traytour forth he gan to sayle
Toward the large contre of Ytale...

Dante, however, on what does appear to be another hand, sees in Virgil the authoritative guarantor of the Empire of his day, the successor to the Empire of ancient Rome, as he says in his *Convivio*. In his treatise *On Monarchy* Dante actually derives Rome's right to rule the three continents from the three marriages of Aeneas in Virgil's epic: Creusa in Asia, Dido in Africa, and Lavinia in Europe. But in the *Comedy* Virgil has become a much more complex figure, standing among other things for "that humble Italy, for which died the virgin Camilla, Euryalus, and Turnus, and Nisus of their wounds". Empire is not now quite so simple, but still Virgil remains, in the end, its partisan.

The greatest of the poet's English translators, Dryden, took a rather similar view. Aware that Virgil was criticised as a sycophant for his relationship with Augustus - this seems to have been something of a British speciality, both Virgil and Horace being given much more flak

for this here than in the rest of Europe - he defends him at length in the long dedication to his translation of the *Aeneid*. The poet, he says, despite his "republican principles", on due consideration of Augustus' qualities, "concluded it to be in the interest of his country to be so governed; to infuse an awful respect into the people towards such a prince; by that respect to confirm their obedience to him, and by that obedience to make them happy. That was the moral of his divine poem". His Aeneas had the same qualities as Augustus. "These manners were, piety to the gods and a dutiful affection to his father, love to his relations, care of his people, courage and conduct in the wars, gratitude to those who had obliged him, and justice in general to mankind".

It is a far cry from that statement, so characteristically robust, to the defences of Virgil which in the nineteenth century were put up by his admirers against a growing barrage of dislike. Shelley and Byron were for the prosecution, Coleridge tepid, Blake and Landor energetically hostile. Independence, original genius, Greek: these were the slogans of the hour, and by them Virgil could hope for little grace. The Victorians who admired his poetry looked for and found more Victorian qualities: pathos, sensitivity, tenderness. Matthew Arnold spoke of "a sweet, a touching sadness"; William Morris translated the *Aeneid* in a way which J.W. Mackail greeted as showing that the original is "not only the crowning achievement of classical Latin but the fountain-head of romanticism in European literature". Tennyson greeted Virgil as "thou majestic in thy sadness at the doubtful doom of human kind". Two more generations, and T.S. Eliot is proclaiming Virgil the most mature, most central, least provincial, of all European writers; in fact, the only truly classic poet. Not much sympathy with romanticism in his famous essay *What is a Classic?* His contemporary Robert Graves, in extreme contrast, denounced Virgil as "The Anti-Poet", equally lamentable as poet and as man; a time-server in politics, and as a homosexual doomed to have no Muse and so to be poetically sterile.

So much for this whirlwind tour. What are we to make of it? Is literary judgment and discussion, in the light of so much disagreement, a waste of time? Or are we to settle for the sad acceptance that we are just making it all up, but that in some strange way it is still a rational and valuable activity? a hope as touching, perhaps, as the hope of the Neo-Platonists that somehow Homer (despite appearances) really did contain the ideas of Proclus - so interpretation in a mode of radical deconstruction really is (despite appearances) somehow worth while.

Let us postpone an answer until we have run an eye, in a yet more cursory style, over a related question: What of the interpretation of the historical periods which most concern us? I suggest two examples: Athens in the fifth century, and Rome in the times of Cicero and Augustus. There are voices nowadays raised to say that classical studies should concentrate more on areas which have been thought comparatively marginal: on the Eastern frontier of the Empire, on Judaea, on Christian Egypt; but it is hard to believe that the periods of Pericles and of Caesar will ever cease to be central, for all except specialists, for those interested in the ancient world.

Most of you, probably, were brought up, as I was, on ideas not too far removed from the old cliché about the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome. Athens resisted the power of the barbarian East, showed the world what democracy could do, and established liberty; brought the arts to classic perfection, and by questioning all things made it possible for life to be based on reason instead of - what is the English for *Urdummheit*? - instead of (in the milder phrase of Gilbert Murray) the inherited conglomerate. I do not need to tell you that any such sanguine picture is now sadly naive. The Athenian democracy is exposed as an oligarchy which excluded women and foreigners, and which was unabashed in its reliance on the labour of slaves. The very notion of a classic period, or of perfection, in the arts, is found meaningless; and many people nowadays really prefer archaic or naïf art to the productions of Phidias, or of Raphael, for that matter. As for the idea that some peoples are barbarians - and that we, or the Greeks, could simply be right to call them so - that is of course the merest racism. The Parthenon itself is (in the words of Mr. Waldegrave) a monument to successful imperialism. Sexist, racist,

imperialist: so much for Periclean Athens.

It will not be difficult to fill in a similar story for Rome of the late Republic and early Empire. No longer illuminated, for most British enquirers, by the once overwhelmingly important fact of the birth, in this historical setting, of Christ, the period presents a dark picture indeed. A selfish and ruthless oligarchy, destroying itself in struggles in which principle played no part, gives place at last to a centralised tyranny, the effects of which were tempered only by its lack of efficiency; and a meaningless opulence is enjoyed by a dominant class, which was in reality no different from the old Republican aristocracy it had destroyed with so much trumpeting. Of the stern Republican virtues which so impressed our predecessors, of austerity and patriotism and public spirit, no more talk, now, than of the historic mission and heroic virtues of Augustus. As for Virgil's glorification of Emperor and Empire -

ipse sedens niveo candentis limine Phoebi
dona recognoscit populorum aptatque superbis
postibus; incedunt victae longo ordine gentes,
quam variae linguas, habitu tam vestis et armis -

Great Caesar sits sublime upon his throne,
Before Apollo's porch of Parian stone;
Accepts the presents vowed for victory
And hangs the monumental crowns on high.
Vast crowds of vanquished nations march along,
Various in arms, in habit, and in tongue -

that causes an embarrassment from which we take refuge, perhaps, in invoking irony, or ambiguity, or intertextuality. So: the question presents itself again, in very similar form. Not only, Why are we studying the past? But also, more specifically, Why *this* period of the past? After all, there are plenty of others.

The poet Horace, so often helpful, has a memorable tag:

dum vitant stulti vitia, in contraria currunt:
fools, avoiding one extreme, rush into its opposite.

Once scholars gave the Athenians the benefit of every doubt. The splendour of fifth century art and literature dazzled their eyes and prevented them from seeing, or at least from admitting that they saw, the inegalitarian sides of a society which proclaimed *isonomia*. A taste sure of itself and of its preferences did not hesitate to salute the emergence of classic art. Those achievements justified Athens in spending the tribute of her allies on the adornment of their city; justified, in fact, the holding down of an empire. Now persons of the kind so sharply characterised by Horace, the bien-pensants, the well meaning, the *stulti* in fact, reverse the indicators and call it progress. Because the democracy of Athens was not complete, it did not exist at all. And so on.

One of the most resonant of the later poems of Auden is "Vespers". At evening the poet meets another walker, his opposite:

'Both simultaneously recognize his Anti-type: that I am an Arcadian, that he is a Utopian.

'He notes, with contempt, my Aquarian belly: I note, with alarm, his Scorpion's mouth.

'He would like to see me cleaning latrines: I would like to see him removed to some other planet.

'Neither speaks. What experience could we possibly share?

'Glancing at a lampshade in a store window, I observe it is too hideous for anyone in their senses to buy: He observes it is too expensive for a peasant to buy.

'Passing a slum child with rickets, I look the other way: He looks the other way if he passes a chubby one...

And so on. The Arcadian poet dreams of living in Eden, an unpolitical place of beauty and pleasure; his anti-type dreams of living in the bracing moral rigours of New Jerusalem:

'In my Eden a person who dislikes Bellini has the good manners not to get born: In his New Jerusalem a person who dislikes work will

be very sorry he was born...'

The contrast is developed with wit and grace; the Puritan and the aesthete regard each other with timeless hostility. And in the end, what comes of it?

Are we left with nothing more than the recognition that different types of mind and of person exist, seeing the world in different lights, looking for different aspects of reality, looking away from the parts which do not suit their temperament and mind-set? Auden concludes his poem with a more interesting and more profound meditation. The paths of the two crossed because they are accomplices who, in spite of themselves, cannot resist meeting.

'To remind the other (do both, at bottom desire truth?) of that half of their secret which he would most like to forget, forcing us both, for a fraction of a second, to remember our victim (but for him I could forget the blood, but for me he could forget the innocence)...'

'For without a cement of blood (it must be human, it must be innocent) no secular wall will safely stand.'

What is the relevance of this fascinating poem to our own questions? It is, I think, to suggest that our task as interpreters of the ancient world is not complete when we have viewed our subject either with the eye of the Arcadian, who overlooks the dark and brutal sides of the past for the sake of the beautiful things it produced, or with the Cromwellian eye of the always politically correct, for whom no high aspirations or splendid artefacts can palliate the facts of injustice and inequality.

The *demos* of Periclean Athens was not composed of ascetics and saints, nor was it consistently progressive in its attitudes and beliefs. It did not regard its women-folk as political animals. It was aggressive, and it could be cruel. In dealing with its history, we are not in a delightful world of unmixt fantasies. But we must also remember that it brought into the world something which was, as far as we can see, new: effective power in the hands, not of noble families, not of military force, but of a large body of men, most of them humbly born and far from rich. We can see the short-comings of their democracy, as we can see the omissions in the ringing phrases about all men being born equal, on the lips and pens of the slave-owning gentlemen of Virginia who wrote and hailed the Declaration of Independence. But we do not find it so easy to point, in the long stretches of history that lie between, to more satisfactory - less unsatisfactory - examples of an ideal which in all that time hardly anyone has regarded as anything but what Alcibiades called democracy in Sparta, to please the Spartans: "acknowledged foolishness". And the Athenian poet Aeschylus created, in *The Eumenides*, one of the very few great works of literature to give whole-hearted support to the idea of democracy. In a century like ours, in which the devil of totalitarianism has so often had, on the level of high art, the best tunes, that is not something to be despised or forgotten.

You can, I expect, see how the argument will go with Ciceronian and Augustan Rome. The robber barons of the late Republic, who fought with each other and exploited a subject world, present a theme to the historian as exhilarating, perhaps, as it is depressing. It is accompanied by a tremendous literary achievement: the creation of a Latin prose which could do justice to the grand manner of Plato and to the subtleties of Hellenistic thought. Consideration of the Latin, say, of the newly discovered inscription about the trial of Gnaeus Piso, prepared by the Emperor's own quaestor and personally checked by the Emperor, shows how extremely hard it was, even for the highly educated, to write with clarity, let alone elegance, in Latin. Cicero's exertions - and they were very great - bequeathed a style, both to Rome and to many centuries of later Europe, which made possible the lucid, orderly, and handsome expression of thought.

The age of Caesar exhibits a proud and dominant aristocracy struggling with an historic role which has become too much for it, and trying to reconcile legality and the constitution with the facts of power. The age of Augustus shows one solution to those problems. It is also interesting for the attempt of the Princeps to recreate patriotism on a new basis, to revive the arts in a way which could make the citizen proud of his society, and to establish a great age in his own time. His successes are noteworthy: the city of Rome glorified and made the model for all later capital cities; for a hundred years, no more war-

lords marching on Rome; a citizenry which was in general pleased with his achievements. The cost was also not insignificant: an upper class of which an important part was alienated and resentful, and a constitution resting on untruths; a problem, never to be solved, of the succession; a growing rigidity imposed upon society; a classicism in the arts which all too soon could find no room for originality or development.

I said that we need stereoscopic, not monocular, vision to see and communicate truth about the past. That of course means constant self-awareness and openness to a range of views. Very well, we are thus on the way to something which can be defended as intellectually respectable: the understanding of a period of the past; or, to return closer to my original questions, an important part of the literature of the past. But: why these periods, why these works of literature?

These are not simple questions, and we have little time left. Only indications can be given of the reply. In the first place, we have seen that these works and these periods have already given rise to very varied responses and interpretations. Their history is a great part of the intellectual history of the West; and while it is true that we might have been born in China, say, the fact is that we ourselves come from that tradition, and that it is therefore closer and more important to us than the other traditions which have existed in the world. By entering into that history of interpretation we too are placing ourselves in terms of that history. More than that: the Roman Empire and the democracy of Periclean Athens are for the modern world mythical times. Their image haunts the imagination and the consciousness of the later world, recurrent in argument as in art. We define ourselves by reference to them.

They also are areas in which great questions are memorably asked and discussed. Problems of civic duty versus personal conscience were given classic form in the stories of Socrates and Antigone. The morality of imperialism, the status of the arts, the nature and limits of democracy: these questions also are inescapably raised by the age of Pericles. The careers of Cicero and Caesar present problems of loyalty, of the opposing claims of sophisticated moral philosophy and of public life: should the wise man enter politics? Should one choose, in the extremity of civil war, to betray one's country or one's friend? What should be the limits of personal power? How does one keep one's self-respect when confronted by absolute power? When is tyrannicide, when is suicide, the only honourable course?

The hard and accurate study of any past society can pay purely intellectual dividends. So does the study of its language. The study of societies in which the central problems of social morality were memorably raised and discussed has, in addition to the pure training of the mind, moral and political resonance. I add that the societies of classical antiquity are of a size and a complexity which make their study hard but not impossible; the evidence is not overwhelming, and it is not inaccessible or baffling. I add again that, as we have just said, they are linked with our own world by an unbroken chain.

Finally, and by no means least important, they are times which produced great works of visual and literary art. It is of the nature of such works that every succeeding time sees them somewhat differently: hence our varying interpretations. Great literature must also possess, I think, certain characteristics. It must be more than "pure" literature, if by that is meant exclusively formal and verbal dexterity and elegance. It must be about something recognisable as human life. It must, I should be prepared to say, contrive to be true to what the audience can accept as real, and also to go beyond it, to enlarge it, to broaden our sense of what it is to be human. Homer and Aeschylus and Phidias and Virgil can do that for us. As we try to do justice to that achievement, learning from each other and from the scholars and writers of the past, (and not simply contrasting their benightedness with our enlightenment), constantly changing and advancing our perceptions, constantly trying to come closer to that elusive sense, we work out in practice the real justification of our studies: the interpretation of the classics.

Pragmatics and Classics

('er, no it's not about DIY, actually...')

Geoffrey Horrocks

Introduction

Simon Goldhill's spirited defence of the inevitability of a 'theoretical' approach to the reading of literature in general and of Classical literature in particular (JACT *Review* 10, 1991) prompted the editor to ask me to write a complementary piece surveying the development of 'pragmatics' and related disciplines over the last decade or so and to assess how far such work might fruitfully be exploited by Classicists, not only those whose interests are primarily linguistic but also literary scholars.

Language study these days ranges from the highly technical (e.g. formal syntax and semantics) to the almost wholly informal (e.g. conversation analysis), and newer branches of the subject, many with a strong theoretical orientation, constantly threaten the position of old faithfuls. Literary study similarly comprises a spectrum of approaches from 'old-fashioned' humanistic criticism to 'hard-core' deconstruction. Consequently linguists often find it hard to talk to other linguists, literary scholars to other literary scholars, and both fields have split into rival camps each presenting itself as the saviour of its respective subject. The fragmentation within linguistics is too complex to discuss here other than to say that it transcends any simple dichotomy between 'progressive' vs. 'conservative'. Within Classical literary circles, however, it seems, at least to an outsider, that the parties have staked their claims to greatness on the basis of either (a) preserving proven traditional values and preoccupations against the alienating onslaught from theory-crazed purveyors of incomprehensible drivel or (b) demonstrating the narrow-minded sterility of traditional philology and its inevitable demise unless refreshed by regular infusions of controversy based on interdisciplinary approaches and new theoretical perspectives. *Qua* linguist, I can only observe that if dialogue within a field can be difficult, dialogue across disciplines can be even harder, with prejudice (bedfellow of ignorance, as Aeschylus might have put it) and misunderstanding thick on the ground.

There is, however, one issue which seems in recent years to have provided a focal point around which many species of linguist and literary scholar might in principle gather together without feeling too uncomfortable. Within linguistics practitioners of pragmatics, discourse analysis and sociolinguistics (i.e. those at the 'softer' end of the language study spectrum) have all laid fresh emphasis on the fact that the production and perception of language are in part processes specific to particular sociocultural and situational circumstances. Similarly many literary theorists and historians have sought to demonstrate both the culture-relative character of the criteria by which texts are classified as 'literary' and the consubstantiality of literary texts with the social, political, religious, philosophical and cultural context in which they are/were written and read. If such 'contextualisation', involving the creative extension of scholarly attention beyond the words on the page, can bring groups of linguists or literary critics together, could it not also promote a dialogue *between* linguists and literary scholars? Despite the fact that linguists have tended to concentrate on 'ordinary spoken language' rather than on 'literary texts', there are some enthusiasts who think so, and the discipline of literary pragmatics has begun to develop on the basis of this belief. It must be admitted, however, that their programme to date remains largely programmatic; there is much terminological refinement and confident assertion of future productivity, but rather less as yet in the way of illuminating new analyses of texts. A considerable challenge, then, awaits those with the relevant knowledge and the confident (but hopefully not hybriatic) expectation that their inventiveness, when applied in this direction, will bring worthwhile rewards.

What is pragmatics, then?

Before considering the content and potential of literary pragmatics, however, I must first say something about 'ordinary' pragmatics. I should confess at the outset that I share with Simon Goldhill the view that a 'theoretical' perspective is inevitable in any intellectual discipline, even if the categories and principles of the 'theory' involved are tacit or taken to be self-evidently reasonable, natural and commonsensical: what you find depends at least in part on how and why you are looking, and any self-respecting intellectual has a clear duty to look at the *how-and-why*, including any hidden presuppositions, of any given enterprise. Such methodologies, of course, may simply grow out of common practice and tradition and remain more or less unexamined, or they may be in varying degrees deliberate and self-conscious constructs.

The central question here, of course, is the nature of the use and understanding of spoken language, which I take to involve a special type of 'theory'. In this connection we might note that (a) language use involves a (perhaps surprisingly) high degree of mutual understanding and agreement between speakers/hearers about what is going on in any normal discourse, but that (b) the processes by which this shared understanding is achieved are almost wholly tacit and unexamined. Putting the matter differently, it is not the experience of the average listener that, when faced with an utterance in a particular context s/he is reduced to a state of *aporia* by the potentially boundless number of theoretically possible and mutually conflicting readings available. On the contrary, speaker-hearers seem to share a 'theory' of how to construct and sustain a viable discourse based on rapidly and mutually accessible increments of knowledge; if this were not so, effective oral communication would simply break down. The central issue of pragmatics, then, is whether an explicit (i.e. consciously constructed) 'metatheory' can be devised to account for the 'natural' theory unconsciously applied to the production and interpretation of utterances by speaker-hearers. The question of whether this latter is a culture-specific construct learned and adapted by each generation of speakers, or whether it should be regarded as a manifestation of particular neurophysiological properties of the human mind/brain, is not one which I wish to address here beyond observing (a) that the evidence for a biologically determined 'core' inferencing system is non-negligible and (b) that it would be foolhardy to deny *a priori* that any such system might be particularised in certain respects to the socio-cultural environment of the relevant speech community.

This is perhaps the time to make explicit the customary distinction between semantics and pragmatics. Semantics is concerned with those aspects of meaning determined by the language system itself, i.e. with specifying the aspects of word-meaning which are in no way context-dependent together with the rules for combining such word meanings to give the meanings of larger structures (ultimately sentences). For example, if *Achilles killed Hector* then inevitably *Hector died*, and this follows because the 'core' meaning of *kill* contains that of *die*, and no amount of contextual manipulation can alter this fact. The meaning of a sentence can in fact be thought of as a specification of the conditions which the world would necessarily have to meet if that sentence were to be a true description of it, and the meaning of each word as the contribution that word makes to determining the set of conditions involved. Thus for the first italicised sentence above to be 'true', it would have to be the case that there were at the relevant time and place two individuals named *Hector* and *Achilles*, that *Achilles* caused an event to take place, that that event was *Hector's* undergoing a change of state, that that change of state involved a transition from his being alive

to his not being alive, and so on. Note that a *sentence* from this point of view is a purely theoretical construct devised by linguists for the purpose of defining such concepts as grammaticality. Sentences necessarily lack a context and their meanings are exclusively 'truth-conditionally' determined in the manner outlined above.

But, we may ask, is it really plausible that there are aspects of word-meaning which remain constant in the way supposed? While it is certainly legitimate to have doubts about the clear-cut notion of necessary truth which underlies the customary approach to the formalisation of semantic relationships, it is nevertheless the case that massive multiple ambiguity, of the kind that would inevitably follow if there were no stable core (or prototypical) word meanings, is not a problem that routinely faces speaker-hearers. Indeed, if things were otherwise, and 'core meanings' were simply an article of the pious linguist's faith, there would be no basis for effective communication at all, let alone for the recognition that in a particular situation a particular word or phrase was being used ironically, metaphorically or in other non-prototypical ways. It seems inevitable, then, that we conclude that words do have more or less stable prototypical senses (determined by relationships of similarity and contrast with the senses of other words) and more or less stable denotations (things 'correctly' described by them).

Nevertheless, even if the statement expressed by the sentence *Brutus will greet Caesar on the Ides of March* can be associated with a more or less determinate set of truth conditions, it is equally clear that when this sentence is actually uttered by someone on a particular occasion with a particular intention in mind it can be interpreted in a host of different ways. Is it a warning, for example, or a promise, or simply a prediction of the future? Clearly everything here depends on who is talking to whom, what background knowledge they share, and so on. Pragmatics is that branch of linguistics concerned with *utterance* meaning, i.e. the meaning of spoken (and *n.b.* written) linguistic objects as 'used' by people to convey information on particular occasions and in particular circumstances, and it is the task of pragmatic theory to devise a framework of analysis which brings to light the largely unconscious principles which are deployed in settling on appropriate utterance meanings in a given context. As already noted, it is not the case that any utterance can be used to mean any thing in any situation; semantically determined core meanings interact with the overall context in ways still to be determined not only to eliminate automatically an indefinitely large number of impossible readings but also to make certain possible readings more accessible than others. For dialogue to proceed as it does, speakers' communicative intentions, or something near enough to them, must be swiftly and efficiently recognised.

Pragmatics therefore constitutes denial of the 'simple code' model of communication whereby a thought is encoded by a speaker (or writer), transmitted orally (or in writing), and then decoded by a hearer (or reader) so that the hearer (or reader) comes to share the speaker's (or writer's) thought. Obviously communication is in fact a largely inferential process whereby the hearer reconstructs from a variety of linguistic and contextual cues an approximation of the speaker's thought; this process may be more or less successful, and misunderstanding is a fact of life which any adequate pragmatic theory has to allow for. What pragmatic theory envisages, then, is a set of principles for constructing utterance interpretations, principles which, in combination with core meanings, are restrictive enough to eliminate wholly impossible readings, but which are not so restrictive that they deny speakers the pleasure of using language creatively, amusingly, or ironically, or hearers the pleasure of recognising speakers' inventiveness or wit (even if they do sometimes 'get the wrong end of the stick', albeit temporarily). In short, a great deal more is usually meant and understood by an utterance than what its overt form, literally interpreted in truth-conditional fashion, can ever convey, and it is the task of pragmatics to explain how such non-code-based communication works.

Before illustrating the kind of model that has emerged in recent years, however, it is worth pointing out that the successful transfer of such a general approach from 'ordinary spoken discourse' (conversation) to the domain of 'literary discourse' (certain types of written text) carries with it certain expectations. Given that a literary text is a very particular kind of cultural artifact, it will inevitably be the case that the 'context' constructed for its interpretation will be very much richer and more complex (and indeed more open-ended) than the sort of rather trivial context typically required for the understanding of a simple conversation. There will, for example, be considerations of genre and tradition and consequential audience expectation to be added in as a contextual basis for the construction of interpretations. Nevertheless, the fundamental assumption will be that the interpretation of utterances, whether of 'turns' in a conversation or of 'sentences' (i.e. written utterances) in a literary text, will proceed by essentially the same inferential processes and be subject to the same general constraints. The reader/recipient will therefore bring to bear what knowledge s/he has of any generic conventions (whether of turn-taking in a conversation or of the role of the chorus in a tragedy), any specific knowledge of the speaker/author and his/her attitudes and values, and whatever else s/he happens to have by way of 'relevant' cultural, political, personal etc. background. The result in both cases ought to be the elimination of impossible readings and the ranking of more accessible interpretations on a scale of relative 'strength'. The use and understanding of language, in other words, will be taken to be a fundamentally uniform process that combines literal meanings and contexts to derive rapidly a set of plausible and accessible interpretations as a basis for continued comprehension of, or participation in, any form of discourse.

Naturally, the more self-consciously stylised or oblique the language involved, the more 'work' the reader/recipient will have to do off his/her own bat, and the more the resultant interpretations will become his/her own constructs rather than more or less guaranteed re-creations of authorial intentions. Factors such as the possibility of re-reading texts, making detailed comparisons between different portions of texts (or between one text and others), and temporal and/or cultural distance between an author and his/her readers can only add to the potential complexity. But come what may, there ought to be a 'cut-off point' for all readers (not, of course, exactly the same point for all) at which the 'natural' accessibility of readings ceases and further 'interpretation' becomes a more or less self-indulgent game. In these circumstances it is easy to see why those who see modern theoretical approaches to literature as constituting precisely such a self-indulgent game might turn to pragmatic theory as a basis for constructing more 'principled' readings of literary texts based on the recognition of authorial intention as calculated from the relatively high accessibility, according to the principles of the theory, of the interpretations proposed. Whether such an approach can be given real substance remains, as noted earlier, a largely open question. It is, however, rather ironic that 'radical' approaches to utterance interpretation in the field of linguistics can in this way come to be associated with a 'conservative reaction' to the 'progressive' reading of literature.

An example of pragmatics in action

Since there is clearly no prospect of my developing any such theory here, I propose to round off this piece with a few simple illustrations of how pragmatic theory might deal in practice with simpler kinds of discourse and then simply leave it open to the reader to consider whether there is the potential here for the kind of application to more literary discourse that its more enthusiastic proponents envisage. Consider the following extract from Terence's *Adelphi* (175 ff.), which, as a 'dramatic' dialogue, lends itself reasonably naturally (*mutatis mutandis*) to the kind of analysis applied to 'natural' dialogue:

(The pimp Sannio has just been punched by Aeschinus' henchman Parmeno)

- Sa: quid hoc reist? regnumne, Aeschine, hic tu possides? 175
 Aes: si possiderem, ornatus esses ex tuis uirtutibus.
 Sa: quid tibi rei mecumst?
 Aes: nil.
 Sa: quid? nostin qui sim?
 Aes: non desidero.
 Sa: tetigin tui quicquam?
 Aes: si attigisses, ferres infortunium.
 Sa: qui tibi magis licet meam habere, pro qua ego argentum dedi?
 responde.
 Aes: ante aedis non fecisse erit melius hic conuicium: 180
 nam si molestus pergis esse, iam intro abripiere atque ibi
 usque ad necem operiere loris
 Sa: loris liber?
 Aes: sic erit.
 Sa: o hominem impurum! hicine libertatem aiunt esse
 [aequam omnibus?

The key concept here is that of *conversational implicature*, and an understanding of the principles that generate such implicatures can explain a wide range of apparently unrelated phenomena such as (i) why Aristotle had problems with the apparently axiomatic proposition that "if P is possible then not-P is possible", (ii) why Moore's Paradox is paradoxical (cf. the unacceptability of *Socrates corrupted the youth of Athens but I don't believe he did*), (iii) how and why tautologies like *Colin is Colin* can be meaningful, (iv) how rhetorical 'figures' like metaphor and irony work, and (v) why Sannio responds (l. 175) to the assault upon him with what, at face value, is a fatuous question.

The basic idea is that in seeking to understand, dialogue inferences are constantly drawn on the basis of a combination of 'what has been said', the immediate/accessible context (including any knowledge believed, rightly or wrongly, to be shared) and certain general assumptions about the essentially cooperative nature of verbal interaction. To give one simple example, faced with the exchange:

Q: How about that pint?

A: How's your philosophy revision going?

we do not immediately assume, all things being equal, that A has gone mad, or has failed to hear Q's question or whatever, but, despite superficial appearances to the contrary, seek to interpret A's remark as somehow constituting a reasonable answer to Q's question. In other words, we assume that dialogue is fundamentally a cooperative venture in which speakers normally try to keep to the point and to make their intentions manifest to their listeners, and of course it is precisely because this is so that we can (at least potentially) recognise non-cooperation when we encounter it. In this case, then, given that questions are prototypically requests for answers, we need to ask to whom the answer to A's question is relevant. It is clearly not relevant to A, as would 'normally' be the case (e.g. if he had asked *what time is it?*), since the use of such a 'straightforward' question in this context would be manifestly uncooperative. The assumption of cooperation can only be maintained here if we take it that the answer is in fact relevant to Q, and further that A already knows enough about Q's situation to know that the answer is relevant to him/her in a particular way. Thus if A knows that Q has not even started revising philosophy we see that A's question above is being used to remind Q obliquely of this fact and to warn him/her of the likely consequences of frittering time away in the bar. Utterances of this type, where the form suggests one force (a request for information) but the context etc. requires another to be understood (here a reminder/warning), are known as indirect speech acts. None of the relevant interpretation is 'asserted', but it can all be readily inferred given the assumption of cooperation and the relevant background knowledge: utterances, like gestures, can be used to 'mean' a great deal more than, or even something completely different from, what their conventional literal meanings suggest.

Turning finally to Sannio's response to the physical assault

instigated by Aeschinus, we can see that his second question (regnumne. . . ?) is being used to draw Aeschinus's attention to the fact that he has behaved outrageously. Since it is clear that both participants in the dialogue already know perfectly well that there are no kings in Athens, the assumption of cooperation requires Aeschinus to appreciate that the answer to Sannio's question (i.e. 'no') is in fact intended to be relevant to him, and to function in context both as a reminder that he is just an ordinary citizen and as a warning that he has transcended the bounds of acceptable behaviour and will have to face the consequences. The use of this oblique form of complaint is very much more 'effective' than an overt complaint would have been (cf. *I say, Aeschinus, that's not on!*) because the question form (a) puts the ball firmly in Aeschinus' court by demanding a 'reply' in a way that a simple complaint would not have done, and (b) succeeds in conveying a great deal of relevant information very succinctly and with (?an attempt at) wit. It is, of course, typical of such 'oblique' utterances that they require the drawing of many more implicatures (many intended, some perhaps unintended) than their more 'direct' counterparts, and it is precisely this fact which justifies their use in place of the latter and which makes them an interesting linguistic phenomenon.

We may take it that Aeschinus' resort to a hypothetical form of reply, 'if I were king, you would be decorated according to your merits', while effectively constituting an admission that he has 'got the point' (he isn't king, and so has no right to behave as he has), nevertheless allows him to maintain the offensive in a way that any straightforward admission of his guilt would not. By setting up a 'possible world' distinct from the one 'factually' established in the play, Aeschinus can retain his unjustified position of superiority and explore the consequences (i.e. more trouble for Sannio). The apodosis of the counterfactual conditional, furthermore, is clearly 'ironic', though doubtless the phrase was already something of a cliché in this use: to 'decorate someone according to their deserts' would normally be used in a positive context in which the merits of the recipient of the decoration were manifest, and the irony stems from the 'echoic' use of this same phrase in a context in which it is clear that Aeschinus believes Sannio to have no merits whatsoever. Much irony derives from such 'echoing' of positive phraseology in manifestly negative contexts, and its detection requires the listener (i) to recognise the phraseology and its normal force, (ii) to appreciate that the normal force is inappropriate in the current context, and (iii) to draw a/some relevant implicature/s.

This perhaps constitutes enough of an introduction to pragmatics in action to form a basis for any interested readers to continue with an interpretation of the piece along similar lines. The key to much of what follows is Aeschinus' wilful non-cooperation with Sannio, his deliberate refusal overtly to acknowledge the force of the implicatures which Sannio invites, indeed virtually requires, him to draw. Thus in l. 177 (*Sa. nostin qui sim? Aes. non desidero*) Aeschinus fails completely to offer the sort of answer that Sannio's question invites: cf. the drunken judge's *Do you realise who I am, officer?* to the policeman holding the breathalyser. Once again, though, we have to acknowledge the normally cooperative nature of the conversational enterprise in order to appreciate that Aeschinus is not playing the game so as to avoid making any concessions to (the for him wholly contemptible) Sannio.

Conclusion

Failure to see that what people do, and can do, with language is very far from being 'obvious' and 'self-explanatory' is the principal barrier to the achievement of any real understanding of the knowledge and skill required to attain an adequate level of linguistic performance. But once it is acknowledged that implicatures are routinely and instinctively drawn by everyone, and further that they are not drawn randomly but in line with some natural concept of relevance shared by all speaker-hearers and determined by some context-specific scale of accessibility, we are faced with the rather daunting task of trying to make the procedures involved explicit. And if we believe that

understanding 'simple' spoken dialogue is not fundamentally different in kind from the process of understanding other forms of discourse, including more obviously literary texts, we can then go on to investigate the plausibility of this 'uniformitarian' hypothesis by seeking to analyse a wide variety of appropriate material in terms of the concepts and categories already established. The prospects are quite exciting, but the idea that the methodology will produce results radically different in kind from those achieved by any other method which recognises the role of context in interpretation is almost certainly misguided.

Some basic bibliography

It remains to suggest a few books which might usefully be consulted by anyone who would like to pursue these matters. The first two are general introductions, the third explores possible extensions to literary discourse, and the fourth presents a radical alternative to conventional pragmatic practice:

- (1) Stephen C. Levinson (1983) *Pragmatics*, CUP
- (2) Jacob Mey (1993) *Pragmatics: an introduction*, Blackwell
- (3) Roger D. Sell (ed.) (1991) *Literary Pragmatics*, Routledge.
- (4) Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson (1986) *Relevance*, Blackwell.

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the broad area of the Colosseum and the Arch. The money taken is swiftly slipped into their hands (and cars) or to the souvenir sellers who line the outer walls of the Forum, half of whom are simply there to launder stolen cash. As one sits by the Arch of Constantine, a famous architectural palimpsest in its own right with reliefs of Hadrian, Trajan and Marcus incorporated in the later structure, it seems somehow appropriate that all the city's worlds - its petty crime, its visitors, its locals at the *rite de passage* of marriage - should converge there amidst the ruins.

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¹Text ed. R. B. C. Huygens, Leiden, 1970, and translated by John Osborne as *The Marvels of Rome*, Toronto, 1987.

²S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, London, 1961, Standard Edition XXI, pp.70-1.

³See *Natural History*, Book 36, Chaps 15, 24, 28 and 35.

⁴Text in R. Valentini and G. Zucchetti, *Codice Topografico della Città di Roma*, Rome, 1940-53, vol. 3, pp. 3-65 and translated by F. M. Nichols as *The Marvels of Rome*, New York, 1986.

⁵Text in Valentini and Zucchetti, vol. 3, pp.67-110.

The Latin Study Pack

Helen Price

After reading reports in last year's Autumn Review about the study pack for 'Reading Greek', and Pat Story's Independent Learning Manual to accompany the Cambridge Latin Course, it was clear that other people had identified the same need that the J.A.C.T. Latin Committee had a couple of years ago, when it decided that a Self-supported Study Pack would be helpful for mature students of Latin. This had become apparent because of a leaflet we had devised and distributed, pointing out the value and interest of learning Latin at any age, and offering help to would-be learners in finding tutors or courses. The response had been most encouraging, but it became clear that many mature students did not want the expense or restriction of regular lessons with a tutor. What they wanted was to be able to go at their own rate as time allowed, checking their work as they went along and perhaps having the occasional encounter with a tutor to sort out any problems they could not solve themselves.

Early on, we rejected the idea of a Latin Diploma similar to the Greek Diploma. We had to choose a course book which would appeal to older learners and prepare them, if they so required, for existing public examinations. After much research, we decided on "Reading Latin", both for its subject matter and because it was already being used for beginners at the J.A.C.T. Latin Summer School at Bath and had been found to be successful. Of course, there were some aspects of the book we didn't like - show me six classicists asked to evaluate anything who will fail to find fault! - but overall we felt this to be a good course for the people we had in mind. Necessary permission was sought and we started work.

From the beginning we decided not to translate the Text; this would have been an enormous task, both in terms of time and the size of the final volume. We felt that it was not so necessary in view of the fact that at the end of each Section of "Reading Latin" there are very many Exercises as well as a Test Exercise which would enable students to check their understanding of the latest piece of Text.

Instead we concentrated on providing a guide to the Course. This consists of a simplified introduction to Grammar - essential for students of Latin who, we suspect, will be approaching an inflected language for the first time - as well as suggestions as to which Exercises will prove most useful (and the order in which to do them) and answers to almost all of them. It was found that some are so open-ended that it is impossible to provide a key.

The Study Pack covers Sections 1-4 of "Reading Latin". At the end of it students will have covered most of the grammar necessary to enable them to read texts in the original and to cope with a GCSE examination in classical Latin. We have been very encouraged to hear that "Reading Mediaeval Latin", written by Dr. Keith Sidwell, one of the authors of "Reading Latin", is now with CUP, and we hope that our Study Pack may thus find a wider use.

We found the task of producing a key fascinating at times, deadly at others. To work through a large number of exercises - "Determine

which of these nouns is in agreement with the given adjective", or "Pick out the datives in this list", or "Form and translate 3rd singular and 3rd plural forms of the future of the following (22) verbs" took me back to my school days, where omissions and mistakes in just such exercises often evoked the comment "Careless". Whereas one might offer a slightly flamboyant translation to a class when in a devil-may-care mood, and think it rather fine, it was quite a different matter to have this inscribed in black and white, for all to mock. But a translation without any signs of life would surely be failing to transmit the pleasure of reading Latin, and missing the tone of the author being read - Plautus, a comic. How literal should one be, how colloquial?

'Reading Latin' encourages its users to read aloud; we were very concerned that people working on their own would be deprived of hearing Latin read correctly. Initially therefore, audio cassettes were prepared; an enormous amount of time and effort was put into this enterprise, and so it was very disappointing to find that the recording was not as effective as we had hoped.

When we had finished a draft of Section 1, we tried it out on the beginners' group at the J.A.C.T. Summer School, and on adult beginners at Madingley Hall; we were most encouraged by its reception. The students at Bath were sent the key before the Summer School and that group got further in the course than any previous beginners' group. The students also made very helpful comments about such things as layout, type face and headings. Another fillip at this stage was the news that the Open University was going to introduce Latin as a half unit in 1994, using "Reading Latin" as the course book.

The heavy commitments of the Latin Committee members and certain hold-overs on the publishing side have made it impossible to have the whole booklet ready as soon as we had hoped, but it is now available (see below). Thanks to the generosity of bodies like Oxford and Cambridge Universities, J.A.C.T. Greek Project and the Roman Committee, we have been able to get this project off the ground and hope that it will help those people who have been denied the opportunity of learning Latin - which in these days of the National Curriculum seems to include an increasing number of school children, especially in the state sector. Despite the demands on timetable time, it seems that some schools wish to offer Latin to establish their academic credentials; this booklet is already proving to be of service to sixth formers and students in tertiary colleges.

Helen Price is Chairman of the J.A.C.T. Latin committee and teaches at Westonbirt School, Gloucestershire.

If you would like to receive any further information about the Study Pack, which is available on disk as well as in print, please write, enclosing an SAE, to:- Lorna Kellett, Stubbs Green, Shotesham All Saints, Norwich NR15 1YA.

Classics and Information Technology in Secondary Schools

Bob Lister

The steady growth of information technology (IT) over the last ten years has not been welcomed by Classics teachers in secondary schools with unreserved enthusiasm. Some classicists barely acknowledge the existence of computers, and take pride in not knowing how to switch one on. Others, while conceding that computers may have their use in subjects such as Mathematics or Science, can see no benefit in having pupils use them in Classics lessons. Others again, while happy to use computers, resent the part that IT has played in the fierce struggle for space on the timetable, which has left many Classics departments having to accept a reduction in their lesson allocation, especially at Key Stage 3.

Ten years ago there were practical reasons for teachers not using computers in their lessons; there were relatively few computers in schools. In 1984-85 there was, on average, only one computer for every 60 secondary school pupils¹. Many, if not most, of the computers were sited in a computer room which was reserved for much of the week by the Business Studies, or similar, department. In addition, the pupils' computers skills were far less developed, the computers were often slow and difficult to operate, teachers were still coming to terms with the possible uses that could be made of standard applications such as word-processing packages, and there was little educational software available.

The outlook is quite different now. By March 1992 the ratio of computers to pupils had come down to 1:13; computers are spread more widely round schools, and some schools have invested heavily in lap-top computers which can be very easily moved from room to room (or taken home, by staff and pupils); pupils are becoming sophisticated computer users at an early age (on a recent visit to a primary school I saw a Year 2 class (six year olds) writing poems straight on to the computer, adding graphics from a central bank before printing out the result on a colour printer for a classroom display *without any assistance from the teacher*); teachers across a range of subjects are making imaginative use of standard packages to help pupils improve their work; there is a range of computer material now available in the field of Classics, from Yale University's Perseus CD to independently produced grammar and vocabulary testing programs.

Classicists need to take advantage of these improvements in IT opportunities, and take steps to counter the impression that Classics and IT are mutually exclusive. There is statistical evidence to support the view that classicists are shunning IT. In February 1993 the Department for Education issued a statistical bulletin examining the provision and use of IT in schools. This survey was carried out on a representative sample of 869 primary and 553 secondary schools. 34 of the 432 secondary schools that replied to the survey had Classics departments. Figures showing different departments' use of IT (see below) do not reflect well on classicists, with 28 out of the 34 Classics departments making no use of IT in their teaching.

Further, there is evidence that even when Classics departments are using IT, headteachers are not being made aware of the fact. As part of the survey headteachers were asked to state whether departments were using IT or not in their teaching, and whereas they replied in the affirmative for 96% of English departments, and 80% of History and Modern Language departments, the figure for Classics, departments was only 7% - when the actual percentage in figure 1 is 17.6.

Many of the IT activities undertaken in the English or History classroom (such as word-processing a story or producing a newspaper using a desk-top publishing (DTP) program) could just as easily be

used in Classics lessons. To expect GCSE or 'A' level pupils to do their coursework or set text translation on word-processor is not to introduce IT into the classroom merely for its own sake. In the case of coursework, working on the computer makes it easier for pupils to organise their thoughts and produce a presentable final copy. Pupils taking 'A' level Latin or Greek, preparation of set texts is likely to be a significant part of their work, involving a good deal of time from the moment they first attempt to make sense of the original through to the completion of their final polished version. Pupils who have a word-processed translation will find it much easier to make alterations and will have at their disposal useful computer tools such as an electronic thesaurus to help them refine their translation.

If Classics teachers integrate simple word-processing tasks, such as those I have suggested above, into their teaching, they will be giving themselves a useful weapon in the fight to maintain the position of classical subjects in the school curriculum. They can argue that they are making a contribution to the teaching of National Curriculum IT in the way recommended in the draft proposals², where it is suggested that half of a school's IT provision at Key Stage 3 should be covered not through discrete IT lessons but as a cross-curricular strand. In order to use this weapon effectively, however, departments need to ensure that all IT activities are clearly written into the departmental scheme of work, with direct reference, wherever possible, to the IT programmes of study.

With classes that have a good grasp of word-processing and have started to use DTP packages, it is possible to set more demanding tasks. Pupils should be happy to work in groups to produce, for example, the front page of a newspaper, mixing text and graphics. This can be done for a wide range of topics from the Trojan War to the eruption of Vesuvius. A software program is available³ which enables the teacher to write his or her own news items, which can then be relayed to pupils via computer screens at set intervals. This activity requires the use of a well-equipped computer room and takes at least two hours, but, if it can be arranged, is a demanding but enjoyable exercise, and the finished newspapers can be very impressive.

In addition to activities making use of software already on the computer, teachers now have access to a range of Classics computer materials, many of them written by full-time teachers. Julian Morgan⁴, for instance, has brought out six programs, four tied in closely with National Curriculum History programmes of study (Key Stage 2 The Greeks and Key Stage 3 The Roman Empire) and two for pupils studying Virgil's Aeneid at GCSE. These are written for Apple Macintosh computers and need HyperCard 2.0 at least to run. Andrew Wilson⁵ has written a number of programs for the Archimedes, including verb and noun testing (Latin and Greek) as well as a guide to the Agora and an introduction to Greek vase-painting. I know of their work through personal contact, but there are many others working in this field whose materials have not reached a wide audience because until now there has been no directory of Classics software. J.A.C.T. is in the process of filling this gap with a software directory (nearing completion).

Most of the more ambitious software is being developed in the United States where there is more aggressive funding for Humanities research and development, and there is a bigger market for computer software. Two such developments are Transparent Language and the Perseus project.

Transparent Language is a program designed to help students read foreign language texts at speed, and texts include works in French,

Spanish, German ... and Latin⁶. Unit I and Unit II of the Cambridge Latin Course is available (in both Apple Macintosh and PC format) in this series. The program consists of the Latin stories together with a number of 'help' windows, any or all of which you can have open at the same time, so that if pupils do not understand a particular word, they can highlight the word and the relevant information will appear in the open 'help' windows. For example, if, in the sentence "*coquus in culina dormit*", pupils were troubled by *dormit*, when they highlighted the word they could find out.

- rootword (sic): *dormio*, -ire fourth conjugation
- the word meaning "is sleeping"
- the word grouping: Subject(s) + Verb(s)
- the sentence or clause meaning. "The cook is sleeping (sleeps) in the kitchen."

At the same time as the pupils highlight *dormit*, *coquus* becomes underlined to indicate the subject/verb grouping.

The screen presentation is rather austere, and does not provide pupils with much incentive to think for themselves. Nevertheless, although this program might not be used much in a 'standard' classroom, in the event of a pupil joining a group late or being away sick for an extended period, it could prove invaluable. It remains expensive, however, at \$140 for the master program and \$50 for each Unit.

The Perseus project has brought together a collection of interactive sources and studies on Ancient Greece. This includes the whole of Aeschylus, Apollodorus, Herodotus, Homer, Pausanias, Pindar, Plutarch, Sophocles and Thucydides in the original and in translation, together with an intermediate Liddell and Scott and morphological analyser; colour photographs of 149 vases, 133 items of sculpture and 527 vases; The Golden Age of Athens in the Fifth Century, an historical overview; an interactive map of the Greek world together with 23 documented sites, and a further 114 sites with photographs only. All this material is contained on a single CD⁷, a medium with which pupils are becoming increasingly familiar and which provides users with easy access to large quantities of information through high speed search and find facilities. The CD is a good value for money at about £108 (including VAT), but it is only available for Apple Macintosh computers.

Pupils taking Ancient History "A" levels could undertake individual research projects on a wide range of topics without the department having to spend a considerable amount of money on the equivalent material in printed form, if Perseus were available in the school library. Alternatively, teachers could make their own 'pathway' through the CD to create, for instance, a guide to the site of Olympia (mixing photographs with ground plans and extracts from Pausanias). Such a guide would provide very useful preparation for a school visit to Greece.

There are one or two major projects underway in this country. J.A.C.T. has been collaborating with Past Forward, a company that helped produce materials for the Yovik Viking Centre, on a CD on the Roman Empire. Although under the draft proposals the Roman Empire is set to become an optional element of National Curriculum History, the presence of high quality materials should help persuade schools to continue teaching it. In schools where Classics is strong, of course, the CD should be useful to a wide range of pupils.

There are a number of other CDs⁸ that schools may already have in the library: Groliers Encyclopaedia, popular with many pupils because

articles can be found quickly and information can be easily transferred from the CD to one's own disc; Microsoft Art Gallery, containing 2000 paintings from the National Gallery (including a significant number with classical connections); and the Oxford English Dictionary, which is very expensive but an essential reference tool for word addicts. With Classics under continued threat in many schools and an increasing number of students finding an interest in the ancient world later in life, IT should be central in the development of new ways to teach the subject. The case for more IT in education has been cogently argued by the National Commission for Education⁹.

"The great potential of educational technology lies in its capacity to provide flexible and supportive learning environments. The technological possibilities are rapidly becoming more sophisticated and potentially will have a profound effect on teaching and learning.

"..IT is already enriching the quality of learning. The use of computers removes some of the laborious and unproductive work involved in collecting data. It aids concentration and allows learners to work independently at their own speed, and, where work has been well planned by the teacher, to work for longer without needing support or prompting. Pupils can review their own progress without feeling threatened or fearing mistakes. It also encourages co-operation, collaboration and communication between pairs or groups of pupils and, by improving the presentation of work, builds confidence and motivation, not only in the use of IT but also in the subject in which IT is used."

Out of 68 boys this year in one independent secondary school, 32 owned their own machine or had regular access to one at home. This is a sign of the times; within ten years, computers will be as common as calculators. There is nothing to be gained by pretending that computers do not exist or have nothing to contribute to the learning/teaching process. Computers are not a substitute for but a complement to the classroom teacher, and if exploited to the full can play a significant part in securing the survival of Classics in schools.

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¹Statistical Bulletin, HMSO February 1993.

²Information technology in the National Curriculum, SCAA May 1994.

³News simulation, by Brent Robinson, Department of Education, University of Cambridge.

⁴Julian Morgan's programs can be obtained from JProgs, 81 High Street, Pitsford, Northants, NN6 9AD at £35 a program, or £5 for a demonstration disc.

⁵Andrew Wilson is Head of Classics at Bedford Modern School, Manton Lane, Bedford, MK41 7NT. Vases, the Agora and Aeneid II cost £5. The Odyssey £15 and the Greek and Latin grammar testers £25.

⁶Transparent Language (Latin) is available from Bill Gleason, Resource Center, North American Cambridge Classics Project, PO Box 932, Amherst, Mass. 01004-0932, USA.

⁷The Perseus CD can be obtained only through Yale University Press, 23 Pond Street, London NW3 2PN.

⁸Available from many computer outlets. Approximate cost of the discs is: Groliers Encyclopaedia, £115; Microsoft Art Gallery, £39, Oxford English Dictionary, £425. All prices exclude VAT.

⁹Learning To Succeed, Heinemann 1993.