

Some Problems in Teaching Advanced Level Classical Civilisation

Stephen Thomas

Since undertaking to run the JACT Advanced Level Classical Civilisation Bureau, I have become, somewhat to my consternation, an agony-aunt and instant expert in how to teach the subject. I do not feel happy in either rôle; nevertheless the flow of requests for help and advice from people setting up courses in their schools is constant, and prompts me to consider two questions of importance to practising and intending teachers: the first is 'What is the nature of this course, and how does it relate to courses in Classical Studies at other levels?' and the second 'What help is available to the pupil and the teacher involved in the course?'. These are the topics dealt with in this article, but it will also be evident that I have in the back of my mind that the course may be under attack from some as yet unidentified quarter – university departments, it may be, anxious that over-exposure should not ruin their own chances of survival, or admissions tutors concerned about the rigour of the subject. I will not pretend that I shall counter such imaginary attacks; rather I hope to allay any such fears through my belief that the subject can be meaningfully taught at all levels – a spiral curriculum or (as John Sharwood Smith put it) 'the distillation of elements which can then be gradually enriched'.

The Classical Civilisation paper serves three distinct groups. It is taken as a third 'A' level by those who are following a more traditional course in Classical languages, and offers an alternative to the Ancient History paper. Secondly it is taken by pupils who are new to classical studies as one of a range of 'A' levels which may include both Arts and Science subjects. Thirdly it is being taken by students who have been involved in classical studies from Foundation Course upwards through 'O' level or CSE courses, and who now wish to take their studies to a higher level. This last group may be unusual given the present difficulties facing classics teaching, but in the author's experience is not unknown.

The syllabus is for the most part literary in emphasis (the main exception being the Art and Architecture topic); pupils are required to read quite large selections of literature in translation and to show their appreciation of both genre and individual example, and of the purposes and methods of the various writers, and to show some detailed knowledge of a prescribed section of the reading and an understanding of the place of these works in the development of western European culture. The syllabus requires in-depth study and is a tall order to put it mildly, but it is possible for a candidate to be successful in the examination while concentrating on just four topics, by making sure that he or she has a detailed knowledge of the texts. It is possible also to substitute a dissertation for one of the topics.

We have some information about the circumstances under which the subject is being taught. The Bureau recently conducted a survey among teachers of the syllabus which revealed that the average number in sixth-form groups was eight or nine and that the majority of schools were able to provide about four and three-quarter hours of tuition per

week for them. For an Arts subject in a maintained school this is not at all bad. The problem seems to be that there is a awful lot of background and information which needs to be got across in order that the pupils may make sense of the reading. If the pupils' other subjects are unconnected, then time is the most important factor. This lack of connection can sometimes be a benefit to Classical Civilisation since skills learnt in other subjects can be applied to the course. The subject is being taught solely by classics teachers, so that knowledge and expertise in the field are by no means lacking: what is missing is a sense of confidence both in one's ability to put the subject across, and in the ultimate value of what one is doing.

What then do teachers in this situation require? I will suggest some possibilities for consideration by both teachers and anyone else who wants to see the syllabus better served. The first need is for a course-book: the syllabus is wide-ranging and each part is related to our cultural heritage, but the pupils need an idea of how classical civilisation hangs together, an over-view of its nature as well as a review of its constituent parts. The book might deal with such concepts as justice, war, morality and so on. You may object that there are plenty of such books around; I would argue that none of them is sufficiently closely linked to the demands of the course nor suited to the potential 'client'.

The second need is for commentaries. The pattern, the ideal, has already been established by Malcolm Willcock's commentary on the *Iliad*, but there is a need for much more. The Bristol Classical Press have announced that the first in a new series which they are commissioning will be available shortly. It is important that these commentaries are accessible to Sixth Formers: they must contain a great deal of straightforward explanation and analysis, particularly of those things which to the experienced and well-versed classicist may seem self-evident and simple, but which are certainly not so to the newcomer. Without being patronising they should be thorough and helpful.

Many teachers have found that they have had to work hard to produce a reading list of other ancient authors whose work helps the pupil to understand what is in front of them, or to set a particular work in its context. We might illustrate this point from the Satire topic: a teacher might use the idea of contrasting views of life in town and life in the country as a theme in Satire, as an example of how the same idea reappears in different works; but on what evidence is the pupil to base his generalisation when the reading set only actually contains two or three?

Finally the teachers themselves need help: bibliographies, articles, examples of good work, monographs, sets of notes – all these have their place, and the Bureau attempts to provide them. The service it provides (and I can say this as its secretary) is woefully inadequate. It would be less so given the kind of resources I have suggested. Perhaps also teachers should be more willing to share ideas and pool resources, and the Bureau would be the logical coordinating

point for such activity.

This article is really about the kind of help and support classics teachers would like to have from academics as well as from their own ranks in the preparation of materials. I suppose that there is a danger that such assistance might be unwillingly given because of a mistaken idea that non-linguistic classics courses in advanced education may be spoiled by too much exposure in schools. I mentioned earlier in the article that it is now not unknown for pupils to follow classical studies courses throughout secondary school – a few may even have had some exposure in their primary schools. Is there a danger that such pupils will become bored? I think not, first because there is never enough time to cover everything. I will not take readers' time with detailed syllabuses, but one only needs to look at any selection of topics at any level to see that it is neither recommended nor possible to do the lot. The second reason is that at each level there is a distinctness of approach: teaching about the theatre to a mixed-ability third year group is different in context and emphasis from one's approach with a first year or a fifth year. Thirdly there are

certain concepts which can only be introduced as such at certain stages of development and experience. Fourthly there are the changes of teacher and establishment which can induce fundamental changes in attitude in the pupil, and lastly there is the question of 'activity' – the part the pupil plays in coming to terms with the subject. This might involve tutorials, seminars, classes and so on at one level, but also discussion groups, personal research, museum visits, the production of plays or even holidays in Italy or Greece. Given these variants it seems to me unlikely that the student would find anything repetitive or dull.

If, as I hope, my remarks are construed as a plea for more classical studies at all levels, then it is also vital that we attend to the other question, i.e. resources without which this potential growth area will be stunted and will fail for lack of sustenance.

STEPHEN THOMAS
teaches Classics at
Queens' School, Bushey,
Herts.

JOHN BEVAN

ST. FRANCIS, GREAT DOWARD, ROSS-ON-WYE,
HEREFORDSHIRE HR9 6DY
Tel. Symonds Yat (0600) 890878



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Classical Civilisation as a Degree Subject

'Vitio parentum rara iuventus'?

Stephen Hill and Penny Murray

In essaying this title it is very difficult to avoid appearing to do little more than offer a defensive response to a mass of critical statements to the effect that degrees in Classical Civilisation represent a lowering of academic standards in the face of a decline in the number of applicants who are suitably qualified to undertake a traditional honours degree in Classics. It has been argued in defence of Classical Civilisation as a degree subject merely that it attracts students into Classics departments, effectively subsidising the continuation, by increasingly small numbers of participants, of what these departments have been doing for centuries. Such arguments are clearly based on the unacceptable premise that there can be stratification within the student body, with those pursuing Classical Civilisation being second-class citizens. Canning may have seen the necessity of calling 'the New World into existence, to redress the balance of the Old', but Classical Civilisation ought not to be seen as a knight in somewhat tarnished armour coming to the rescue of an elderly maiden aunt in reduced circumstances. The recent introduction of television cameras to the House of Lords has served to restore public awareness of that venerable institution, but at the cost of such remarks as 'It was quite fascinating: I thought that all those who spoke had died years ago'. Classics must not be allowed to reach such a state of moribundity, but if Classical Civilisation cannot be justified as an academic discipline in its own right then it should not be studied.

Our problem is exacerbated by the fact that some of the harshest critics of Classical Civilisation as a degree subject are to be found among the ranks of Classicists themselves. It is, accordingly, all the more important to seize the opportunity to be positive about this more recent branch of the subject. If we cannot convince our own number, it is pointless to attempt to convince anyone else that Classical Civilisation is a proper subject. What follows, then, is not an *apologia*, but rather an attempt to set out the positive reasons for studying Classical Civilisation at a university.

We must declare an interest here, since the Joint School of Classics at the University of Warwick does not, in fact, run a traditional Classics degree, and never has. Our degrees, therefore, cannot be justified by the negative argument that they exist to preserve pre-existing Classics degrees. When the idea of establishing a Classics department at Warwick was originally propounded, the proposal arose from a faculty which already included Classical scholars (especially in the departments of English and Philosophy) and which felt the need to have all aspects of Classical studies represented both by colleagues and by resources in the University Library. The Faculty of Arts clearly believed that a Classics department was a necessary academic resource. But the issue of what degrees such a nascent department should offer gave rise to interesting questions which are still, for us, vital issues: 'What is the point of having degrees in Classics at a New University, and, assuming that there is a point, how should these new degrees relate to existing ones within both the Faculty of Arts at Warwick, and Classics depart-

ments at other British universities?'

The fact that the Faculty of Arts actually saw Classics as a necessary element in its programme within a New University is eloquent testimony to the fact, so often conveniently ignored, that Classics is not some species of academic dinosaur, not a subject without relevance to the modern world. An appreciation of Classical culture and institutions is fundamental to our understanding of the world in which we live today. No analysis of modern literature, politics, law or society can divorce itself completely from Classical precedence. In this respect Classical Civilisation as a subject is of particular relevance, especially since it is founded upon interdisciplinary principles, and because it sets out to explore the Classical world as an entity. The subject is not restricted to the study in the main of the fifth and first centuries BC, but embraces a time scale which can reach from Minos to Justinian.

Since the staff within the Arts Faculty at Warwick saw a department of Classics as a necessary resource, it was reasonable to argue that students, too, should have access to the subject through availability of library resources, contact with Classics students, and participation in Classical options. But in a faculty in which the emphasis has always been upon comparative studies and in which the departmental structure was not entirely rigid, it seemed important that if Classical degrees were to be introduced, they should include more than languages and literature in order to reflect fully the range of interests within the other degree subjects in the faculty. There was a feeling, too, that it was important not to provide another traditional Classics degree since there were plenty of these flourishing in other universities already. One obvious response, given the balance of existing interests at Warwick was to establish a degree in comparative literature embracing English and Latin, which could be available to students with 'A' Levels in both subjects. This course was adopted, but since these issues were being faced at a time when the 'A' Level in Classical Civilisation was still something of an innovation, the further decision was taken to establish at Warwick another degree which, as well as suiting the considerations set out in the previous paragraph, should lead onwards from the 'A' Level in Classical Civilisation.

It was important, therefore, to consider what possibilities, which might not automatically be available in a traditional Classics degree, were offered by Classical Civilisation as a degree subject. The arguments which applied then are still more relevant today. The most obvious distinction arises from the fact that candidates who enter universities with 'A' Levels in both Greek and Latin can be assumed to be capable of proceeding directly to the analysis of Classical literature in its original languages, since they have already read a number of set books at school. But students with Classical Civilisation at 'A' Level may actually have read considerably more Classical literature in translation, and, although still lacking the linguistic skills to undertake detailed literary analysis, may actually have a better integrated grounding for the study of the general phenomenon of Classical history

and culture. The beauty of the 'A' Level curriculum for Classical Civilisation is that in the time which would otherwise be spent teaching languages teachers can take a broader, more thematic view of Classical literature, as well as introducing such new subject areas as art, architecture and archaeology, whilst historical studies can be properly integrated with literary studies, thus avoiding the perennial problem that Ancient History, by which we mean Classical History, because it has an 'A' Level in its own right, has tended to become divorced from the study of the literature which provides its main source material. One of us well remembers having Latin prose criticised at both school and university because they were excessively 'Tacitean': such comment might now be taken as a compliment, but the point being made at the time was that there was a divide between literature and history and that anyone aspiring to a decent prose style would do well to emulate Cicero's forensic oratory. The separation of history and literature would have puzzled Tacitus exceedingly.

As a model Classical Civilisation relates closely to other recent curricular developments towards interrelated, interdisciplinary, studies. Classical Civilisation, in other words, can be seen as a subject which represents a reaction to the much narrower definition of Classics as a fundamentally linguistic subject, which has prevailed for so long and has, in the last twenty years, been in danger of killing the subject. We call to witness here the gentleman who met a Classicist in an Oxford street and who is credited with the remark: 'I read Tacitus for my prelims: the only comment my tutor ever made was about Tacitus' unusual use of the dative.' The development of Classical Civilisation as a serious subject was a necessary step forward. Far from representing some form of defensive reaction, it marks a change of emphasis in our approach to the subject as a whole and complements, rather than replaces, the traditional approach.

The great virtue of Classical Civilisation as a subject is that it enables us to view a formative culture from a variety of points of view. Classical civilisation as an academic subject must be based on more than translations of literary texts: it should include equally hefty doses of history, philosophy, art history, and archaeology. These subject areas must be related within the overall course structure, and should not be too divisively defined within it. Thus the history should include a large social element, as well as the more familiar diet of politics and military matters which so often attracted the interests of the ancient writers. In other words, by breaking away from a model of Classics which is centred on the literature of the Classical era, it is possible to take a much broader view of Classical culture. Authors like Pliny the Elder who have been relatively ignored within degree structures in the past because their writings do not, perhaps, rank them among the supreme stylists of Classical antiquity, can be included in the syllabus for Classical Civilisation because what they have to say is of such interest. Under the umbrella of Classical Civilisation it is possible to undertake at undergraduate level projects which formerly were possible only as final-year special subjects, or else tended to be consigned to infrequently taught MA programmes. An undergraduate in Classical Civilisation who has an A Level in that subject can make interesting contributions to a seminar on, say, Classical Athens precisely because he has been brought up with a solid knowledge of its art and architecture, and has been taught to look for the links between Thucydides and Aristophanes, or Euripides and Plato, in a way which is rarely possible in the limiting confines of the few set books which a student who has 'A' Levels in Greek and/or Latin can

be expected to have read.

We have, thus far, avoided mention of language teaching in the context of Classical Civilisation. One great virtue of the subject, which ought to be stressed much more often, is that it is very motivating. Precisely because the students can be thrown into the deep end in terms of lecture and seminar material, they will themselves quickly discover the need to gain the linguistic skills which are necessary for Classical research. In other words, instead of being introduced to a relatively narrow subject, which may well appeal only to those who find language work fascinating in its own right, students are immediately given a taste of the rewards which can be gained from a solid knowledge of the Classical languages. It is very much easier to teach those languages to students who are motivated to learn them: teachers and students alike are then engaged in a healthy, enjoyable academic experience. In practice, of course, the discovery of the value of linguistic work can and should be forced upon students. A degree in Classical Civilisation which did not include compulsory language work in the first year would, in academic terms, be a very impoverished affair. Not all students will aspire to, or be capable of, reading Thucydides in the original during their second year, but many will, and the opportunity must be available. Those involved in such teaching at university level are often pleasurably surprised by the dedication of students who have themselves decided that they wish to learn the Classical languages, and who derive a great sense of satisfaction from the process of doing so. 'Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.'

The fact that the traditional order of events has been reversed by introducing language work at a relatively late stage does not, then, necessarily mean that Classical Civilisation is some sort of academic 'soft option'. The application which is required of a student who is to make a success of demanding linguistic work, often involving two new languages, as well as mastering the varied other disciplines which are embraced by Classical Civilisation, ought to secure its respectability. We should like, therefore, to consider briefly the range of other demands which are made upon the student of Classical civilisation. Language work need not be the only practical accomplishment offered to such students. The Warwick degree includes a substantial dose of practical archaeology. We are fortunate in having an important Roman site only three miles from the Campus. The Lunt Roman Fort is owned, and run as a permanent Visitor Centre, by the Coventry City Museum which allows us to run research excavations at the site. Warwick students have been involved in research excavations at the Lunt for the last five years, and are thus actively involved in the collection of new evidence in what is still a growing part of their subject. Roman Britain is a core (compulsory) course for second-year students of Classical Civilisation, and digging at the Lunt is a compulsory part of the course, in which students of all years can also be involved. The Roman Britain course also involves classes in such practical skills as drawing pottery and small finds, fieldwork and surveying, and computer programming. These activities provide a practical variation in the standard pattern of academic work, and are appreciated by the students for social reasons, since the whole department can be involved. Students who have been involved in digging during successive years can be promoted to act as Site Supervisors. Employers, too, seem to be pleased to discover Classics graduates who do not conform to the stereotyped image of the dry Classical scholar who rarely

peers over his Liddell and Scott to see what is going on in the outside world. Surprising numbers of our students have found careers in computing because employers have felt that their achievements in learning difficult languages, when combined with some quasi-technological and supervisory experience, rendered our graduates particularly suitable as trainee computer managers. But archaeological skills are not merely technical; the interpretation of archaeological material is a cognitive process requiring judgement as well as knowledge and practical skills.

The degree structure for Classical Civilisation allows much more scope, too, for the study of one aesthetic aspect of the Classical World which complements the study of ancient literature and history, and yet has links with the more mundane aspects of Romano-British archaeology. We refer, of course, to the study of Classical Art and Architecture which is so often subsumed under the general heading of Classical Archaeology. As with archaeology in general, this is a subject area upon which whole degree courses can be founded. Within a degree in Classical Civilisation art and architecture can play an important integrating rôle. The study of the artefacts of the Classical world illuminates our understanding of its history and literature, and allows the full development of a multi-disciplinary approach to thematic subjects. We offer two simple examples, which must represent many others. A course on the age of Augustus, which brings together the study of Augustan literature in both verse and prose, with the complex political, military, social and religious history of the period, gains enormously in structural and academic terms if it includes a survey of the monuments of the period, which range from portraits and wall-paintings to grand architectural and sculptural schemes. This sort of integrated approach leads students to the full understanding of the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*. Similarly the study of Classical drama is greatly enriched by an understanding of the architectural context in which the plays were originally performed.

The integrated approach benefits literary and historical courses alike. We may illustrate this point by relating some experiences of interviewing potential students. We have met far too many sixth formers who were studying Greek and Latin, and who thought that the first performance of the *Oresteia* was carried out beneath the Parthenon, or expressed surprise upon being told that Vergil and Livy were contemporaries, and that there might be reasons for studying them together. The examples are ridiculous, but not extreme, and it must be of importance to note that sixth formers studying Classical Civilisation are much less prone to this sort of misconception. Still more bizarre responses can confront the Admissions Tutor who suggests that Greek and Roman History are part of a continuum. The observation that Socrates and Camillus were contemporaries is usually greeted with frank disbelief, but it is a regrettable fact that sixth formers studying Classical Civilisation are more likely to know who they were, and why they were important, than those studying Greek and Latin. Our conclusion from this is that Classical Civilisation is a worthwhile, distinct subject which actually has certain advantages for students who wish to proceed to courses in Classics at university level. What is lost in linguistic terms is often compensated for by a much more balanced grasp of the multifarious aspects of our knowledge of Classical antiquity. We do not see how this can be an altogether bad thing. Both approaches to Classics, surely, are viable and respectable academically. Both, if you like, for in the last resort this is the best justification for studying Classics, train the mind.

It is a quintessential part of the nature of Classical Civilisation as a degree subject that it forces students to think laterally, and to forge for themselves links between the various disciplines which are constituent elements of the subject. It is this process of synthesis which gives the subject its academic propriety. We believe that this is also the justification for our next point which some may regard as heterodox. We have stressed our belief that linguistic work in the first year is a necessary part of any degree in Classical Civilisation. We are equally convinced that the issue of whether students continue this work into subsequent years should be a matter for consultation. There will inevitably be some students whose inclusion in more advanced courses of linguistic instruction would serve to hold back the development of those gifted with genuine linguistic ability. It seems entirely reasonable that such students, issued with appropriate warnings that research and teaching in the Classics are avenues which are unlikely to be open to them, should be guided in the direction of courses which concentrate upon historical and archaeological matters, where access to texts in the original classical languages is of less critical importance. In these circumstances those with linguistic aptitude and motivation can be driven forward at accelerated speed, but all students are engaged in the study of a serious academic subject. Our experience at Warwick has shown that there is no predictable correlation between overall intelligence and linguistic aptitude: some of our brightest students, who have proceeded to enter competitive and demanding professions, have not always been the most gifted linguistically. They have themselves often concluded that whilst they could achieve passable results in language-oriented courses by dint of great application, this application would cause a consequent decline in their performance in other aspects of the subject which they did not wish to jeopardise, and would therefore decrease the sense of satisfaction and achievement they derived from doing what they were good at, well.

The degree in Classical Civilisation which we offer at Warwick has evolved in response to the various constraints which we have tried to set out. The basic philosophy which has determined our thinking has been an interdisciplinary one, but because we have not adhered to a model which is based upon literary foundations, we do insist that all students attend core courses in Ancient History in all three years. This ensures coherence and continuity since the Hellenistic period is as prominent in our syllabus as the more familiar 'Classical' periods of Greek and Roman History. Students in the first year are obliged to attend courses in history, literature and philosophy, and also to study one or both Classical languages. We accommodate all levels of linguistic experience in both Greek and Latin, providing courses for students who enter with 'A'-level or 'O'-level qualifications, or none. In the second year students are obliged to take a course in Art and Architecture, and the Roman Britain course, as well as a core course in Ancient History. Second-year students can opt to take one or both languages, and what are now honours language and literature courses are conducted at a very intensive level. Other options available to both second and third-year students cover Greek Drama, the Age of Alexander, and aspects of Late Antiquity. In addition we have a series of optional courses which look in depth at the history and archaeology of specified provinces of the Roman Empire, taking a broad historical perspective which tackles regional issues from Prehistoric times through to the end of Classical Antiquity or even into the Middle Ages. The last-mentioned courses enshrine a broadly-based,

thematic approach which we would like to apply to the study of all areas of the Classical world: considerations of time forbid, but by providing such tastes of integrated material we can expose students to the methodologies of research in an area in which graduates of Classical Civilisation are uniquely well qualified.

In the third year all our students take part in a Special Subject. We chose the Graeco-Roman city as our theme for this course, which involves a traditional written examination as well as submission of a 10,000 word dissertation, because the study of urbanisation in Classical antiquity seemed to us to be central to a degree entitled Classical Civilisation. The subject allows us to introduce students to new disciplines, including sociological analysis, encourages wide-ranging, fertile seminars, and enables students to pursue, through their dissertations, whatever aspect of the broad conspectus of disciplines contained within Classical Civilisation appeals to them particularly. Thus dissertations have been presented which range from the highly thematic, covering such subjects as exile or Panhellenism, to the systematic analysis of the history or monuments of individual Classical cities.

It is an implicit assumption that all students will at some stage be obliged to participate in a course from each discipline which is represented within our degree structure, and that in the course of their second and third years they will specialise in different areas within the overall subject. Because we attach great importance to the language-based courses, there is considerably more choice within the structure for students who continue their study of Greek and Latin into the third year, by which time all students, including those who started a Classical language in the first year, will be engaged in literary analysis using original texts.

The system is not perfect: there is, after all, a limit to what can be packed into three years. But we feel confident that students will emerge with a sound general understanding of Classical institutions, which has built upon what they learnt for their 'A' level; that they will have carried out academic work at a detailed and respectable level; and that they need not feel that their degree is in any way inferior in content or difficulty to others, whether Classical or not, with more ancient titles.

To return to our main theme, Classical Civilisation is a worthy subject in its own right, and one which demonstrates that those who teach Classics are prepared to adapt their approach to their subject in order to suit the innovations in modern educational thinking. Through this activity the future of the whole subject is ensured, because standards and seriousness are preserved whilst the subject's general attractiveness and relevance are enhanced. In Classical Civilisation we have a vital educational model which we ought to be proud of: the subject allows access to all the disciplines which are represented by Arts degrees as well as providing an opportunity for an introduction to some of the technological skills which are becoming increasingly highly prized. Such combinations and breadth are rarely offered in other degree subjects, and Classical Civilisation has the advantage over Combined Honours programmes, which embrace several subjects, that its content is cohesive and closely integrated. Classical Civilisation, as we have said, still 'trains the mind' and still confers the 'advantages of a Classical education': both processes are accomplished without diminution of academic standards.

We can still have confidence in Horace's prediction (*Odes* I.2):

*Audiet civis acuisse ferrum,
quo graves Persae melius perirent,
audiet pugnas vitio parentum
rara iuventus.*

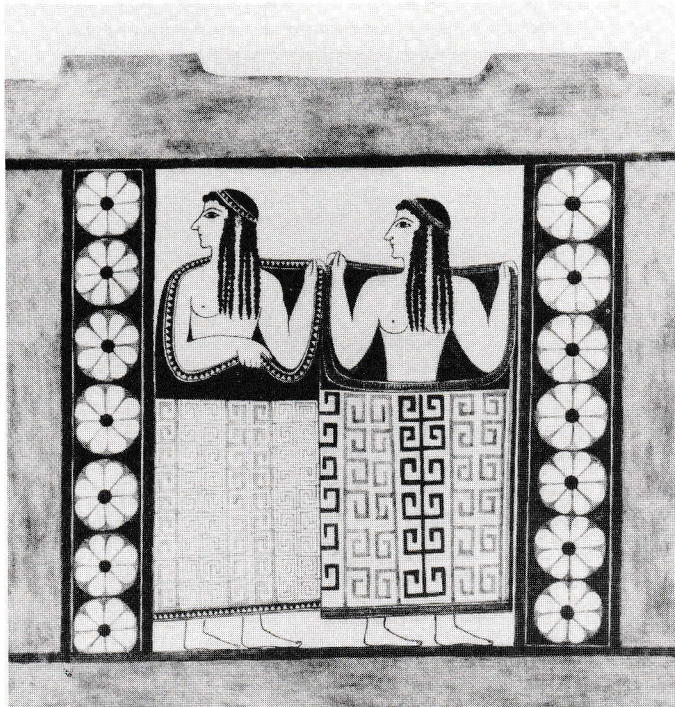
STEPHEN HILL AND PENNY MURRAY
are lecturers in the Joint
School of Classics,
University of Warwick.

Postscript

Penny and I thought this out together, but I had to compile it, since Penny is currently in Rome. I am, accordingly, entirely responsible for all infelicities of style or content. I should like to take this opportunity to thank my other long-suffering colleagues who read the draft of this piece and made useful comments, and, above all, I should like to acknowledge my debt to my students, many of whom also read this in draft. I am most grateful to them for their comments and support, especially since they have to endure the consequences of our views on Classical Civilisation. Finally I would like to emphasise that this is meant to be a discussion paper, and we hope that readers will send us their comments. The 'A' level syllabus for JACT Classical Civilisation has not developed since its inception: we would like to see some movement now in the direction of the inclusion of more thematic material to complement the existing elements which are, with a few notable exceptions, based on set texts. We have set out our reasons for believing that Classical Civilisation is a vital and substantial degree subject: we believe that a more thematic syllabus for the A Level would be entirely in keeping with the philosophy which underlies the subject, would increase its attractiveness in schools, and would, therefore be a beneficial change in the interests of both schools and universities.

STEPHEN HILL

Clay metope from the temple of Apollo at Thermum in Aetolia, around 625 BC, probably representing the maddened daughters of Proetus of Argos. From *The Cambridge Ancient History, Plates to Vol. III*, reviewed on p. 29.



Classics, the Academy, and the Community

Fannie J. LeMoine

Study of the classics has changed dramatically in recent years. It has also remained the same. How both these statements can be true will, I hope, become clear in the following pages. The report begins with a brief description of what the field of classics covers and how it developed before the twentieth century. It then examines how the subject matter of classics has expanded and how methods of teaching and research have changed. The conclusion contains a few suggestions for integrating study of the classics with the cultural life of the community.

Classical Studies in Past Centuries

The field of classics is intimately linked to its subject matter, the culture, history, art, and literature of the ancient Greco-Roman world. Its development as a field of study reflects changes in education and evaluation of past history that have occurred in the West since at least the tenth century AD.

Knowledge of classics has always been based upon the great authors of the Greek and Roman past. Yet the canon of authors and texts considered worthy of preservation has varied. In the middle Ages the list of *auctores* or authorities read in the curriculum included many Latin writers who would not now be cited so frequently, such as Boethius, Martianus Capella, Donatus, Statius, and Sedulius. But it also included authors who have traditionally formed the basis of appreciation of our Roman cultural heritage such as Virgil, Horace, Cicero, and Ovid. As Curtius says in *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*,¹ 'The selection of authors studied in the medieval schools includes pagan and Christian writers. The Middle Ages makes no distinction between "gold" and "silver" Latinity. The concept "classical" is unknown to it'.

The number of Latin authors considered part of the curriculum increased steadily into the thirteenth century. During subsequent centuries knowledge of Greek also increased in Western Europe, as did the presumption that histories of the past should be divided into periods and classified by distinct, descriptive categories. The canon of authors on the curriculum changed to reflect both these developments. More Greek authors appeared as regular reading in the curriculum. They replaced some of the later and now less acceptable Latin authors, especially Christian and pagan writers from the late antique period.

Every reading list reflects judgements made about the value of the past and what is worth passing from one age to the next. For the medieval student the list of curriculum authors clearly provided examples of style and substance considered worthy of imitation and transmission. Yet the special meaning given to our understanding of the term 'classical' or 'the classics' arises out of the establishment of the principles and characteristics of selected periods of Greek and Roman literature and art as formal standards by which other art and literature should be judged. In the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries, study of the classics increasingly became the reading of Greek authors from Homer to Aristotle and the mastery of Latin authors from the later Republic and early Empire. In other words, the authors fell within fairly sharply defined

temporal limits that tended to surround and highlight Athens of the fifth century BC and Rome of the first century BC and the Augustan Age. The great authors from these 'golden' periods of the past are still standards to which epic, drama, lyric poetry and oratory are compared. Those authors remain the core of any classics curriculum. But a contemporary classicist's perspective on the canon of authors and texts has widened significantly.

New Findings, New Methods

The discovery of much new material has radically altered our view of the temporal and geographical limits of classical culture. It has also transformed our understanding of individual authors and entire literary and cultural traditions. The discoveries at Knossos, Pylos, and Mycenae of clay tablets, inscribed in a script called Minoan Linear B, are celebrated events in twentieth-century archaeology. The decipherment of Linear B by Michael Ventris clearly established the language of the tablets as Mycenaean Greek. The ability to read these texts has expanded our knowledge of the origins of the Homeric epics as well as the beginnings of classical Greek art, mythology and religion. It has shown the kind of cultural exchange that existed between the mainland of Greece and Crete and has raised intriguing possibilities of contact and influence between Mycenaean civilisation and other ancient cultures of the Near East. In short, our understanding of the chronological limits of the Greek recorded past and our understanding of the geographical and cultural boundaries separating Greece from Asia and the East have opened onto a new historical dimension far more vast than the lofty plains of Troy.

Less dramatic but just as significant for an understanding of the classical authors are the ongoing discoveries of new papyri fragments. New fragments from the Greek tragedians have given us, for example, an entirely new perspective on the development and use of the chorus by Aeschylus as well as deeper insights into how and by whom ancient Greek poetry was read and studied. We now have more nearly complete texts and more fragments of known and unknown authorship than our not-too-distant ancestors possessed and we are able to elucidate those texts with richer historical and archaeological evidence. Through new editions and revisions we also have greater access to works that have not been lost but had been neglected.

Greater access to neglected works forms part of the constant attempt to understand and appreciate the entire continuum of literary and cultural history in the ancient world. The attempt has resulted in extensive reappraisals of the art and literature of periods formerly ignored or relegated to the hinterlands of scholarly enquiry.

In recent years the Hellenistic and the late antique periods have benefited especially from intensive, scholarly re-evaluations. The models used to describe these periods and the assumptions made about their respective societies and cultures have been profoundly altered. For example, Roman society of the late third and early fourth centuries AD used to be described as a rigidly stratified, armed camp. Stress was placed upon the defensive posture of the emperors and the frequent, Draconian measures to control prices, to force

people into the professions of their fathers, to fix obligations and services to the state, etc. Movements away from realistic or naturalistic representation in art and the increasingly hieratic quality of portraiture were taken as further support for a model of society seen as static, defensive and rigidly controlled. Pagan authors of the period were regularly dismissed as decadent custodians of an exhausted literary tradition. Christian authors were viewed as separate, problematic purveyors of the classical tradition and in some cases lacking both literary and theological inspiration.

Revised Views of the Latin World

This descriptive model of the late antique world has been modified in almost every particular. The oft-repeated measures attempting to stabilise and control various aspects of life, work and public commitment revealed the desired aim; the repetition also suggests the lack of success in achieving that aim. Other indications point to a society in flux and dynamic change. Changes in art, literary inspiration, literary theory, religious persuasion, models for heroic or virtuous behavior, attitudes toward civic responsibility, in assessment of the sacred and the profane, in conceptions of place and understanding of time are only a part of this period of transformation of the Roman world.

One specific example will suggest the breadth of this revision and illustrate the energetic expansion of classical scholarship beyond the old chronological frontiers. Peter Brown, in his work, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*,² argues convincingly that we must replace the traditional 'two-tiered' model of late antique Christianity which separates the enlightened religion of the learned elites from the superstitious beliefs and practices of the ignorant masses. He posits a much more dynamic and unified view of the interplay of religious ideas and practices and contends that the cult of the saints cannot be relegated to the category of popular religion grudgingly accepted by the clerical elite. Rather it is central to the religion of the period and to a new distinction between God-given 'clean' power, deriving its authority from the holy, and the 'unclean' power flowing from the coercion and violence of everyday life.

The prominence of the cult of the saints in the poetry of the period suggests the depth of inspiration drawn from these religious beliefs and practices. Prudentius and Paulinus of Nola are only two of the most prominent poets of good family and high station who celebrate the saints. Paulinus's famous poem that links St Felix's Day, celebrated in the midst of winter (January 14th), with the transforming joy of a heavenly spring renewing the soul at every hour provides testimony for the strong devotion to the saints, as can be seen in these lines.

Spring opens the voices of birds —
My tongue calls St Felix's Day its own spring
For in this light even the winter blooms
For joyful people. Black chill
May lie around wintry frost; the year bestiffened in whiteness,
The light within kindles happy joy
Creating this spring inside me,
Sadness is gone, an exile from the heart;
The winter of the soul is past.

Studying the Complexities of Ancient Societies

The subject matter covered by the field of classics has also expanded to embrace the entire history of the transmission of classical culture and its many reinterpretations. Interpretations of the classical myths such as those of the *Oedipus* or the *Oresteia*, the influence of classical authors and self-

reflective investigations of the effects of learning and teaching classics have all found their places in the contemporary classics curriculum. Especially prevalent are concerns with groups traditionally defined as 'outsiders' or 'incompetents', women, children, brigands, slaves, peasants, and those on the fringes of society.

Viewed from one perspective, the methods used to train classical scholars have varied very little from antiquity to the present day. The basis of scholarship rests in the ability to read and comment upon Greek and Latin texts with linguistic competency, historical accuracy and critical appreciation. Philology, linguistics, history and literary criticism have, however, undergone thorough transformations; and the ancillary skills associated with classical scholarship have developed an enormous degree of sophistication. Epigraphy, the study of inscriptions, has contributed extensively to our knowledge of the complex relationships that held the fabric of ancient society together. For example, the many inscriptions that record aspects of the patron-client relationship show how central that interdependency was for the individual, the community and the entire ancient world. The obligatory gift-giving and the assumptions of mutual service and benefit obviously have far-reaching social and economic implications. Understanding the intensity of that relationship is also important for any deeper appreciation of, to cite a specific example, the cult of the patron saints in later antiquity. Numismatics, the study of coins, palaeography, the study of manuscripts, papyrology, archaeology and art history are all fields essential to the maintenance and further development of classical scholarship. Each in its own area contributes enormously to the evidence we assemble in order to envision the rich, multifaceted world of antiquity. Citing these fields first suggests the continuing dominance of philological and historical criticism in study of the classics. But there is also widespread use of methods and approaches drawn from other fields. Anthropology and the history of religions have given much to the study of Greek and Roman mythology and the interpretations of myth. The influence of new theoretical models can be seen in a number of recent books and articles on a variety of ancient topics. James Redfield's *Nature and Culture in the Iliad*³ is perhaps one of the best recent examples of a work combining close critical reading of the text with new insights drawn from the social sciences.

Teaching the Classical Languages: The Problem

Many classicists have turned their attention to the most pervasive problem in the study of classics and the one which new methods of language teaching hope to address. John Slaughter, a former Director of the National Science Foundation, warned of 'A growing chasm between a small scientific and technological elite and a citizenry ill-informed, indeed uninformed, on issues with a science component.'⁴ Most classicists confront a similar chasm between the small group of scholars who have devoted their lives to the difficult task of mastering the languages and ancillary disciplines needed for study of the field and the great body of students and citizenry who are either uninterested or unaware of the 'classical' component in their contemporary lives. Courses in translation and classical civilisation are the most easily visible and readily available means of bridging the gulf. But many classicists are committed to the benefits and values of study that can only be acquired through some mastery of the ancient language itself.

Statistics drawn from the 1980 SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Tests) show that high school students who have studied Latin score significantly higher than other students. Such

statistics cannot be dismissed with the presumption that Latin students will of course be among the privileged elite possessing advantages of background, money and/or academic talent. First, Latin students score higher than those taking some other foreign language. Second, the success of the FLES (Foreign Languages in Elementary Schools) programs nationwide indicates how much benefit Latin can be for the disadvantaged student. The FLES program introduces and encourages the teaching of Latin in the elementary schools of some of our most economically troubled cities. As the statistical survey and summary of the programs by Nancy A. Mavrogenes in the *Elementary School Journal* demonstrates, Latin does provide great help in the development of reading skills and language arts. Recently the National Endowment for the Humanities has recognized the success of these programs by its award of \$75,000 to Brooklyn College of the City University of New York to support the Latin Cornerstone Project. The project is designed to introduce Latin into the city's elementary schools and to develop a new Latin curriculum for the fourth through sixth grades (i.e. ages 10-12).

The statistics mentioned above are only the most obvious and perhaps the least meaningful sign of the academic benefits and intellectual joys derived from the study of a classical tongue. Learning any foreign language helps the student master higher forms of the native language and recognise the native language as only one linguistic system among many. Learning Latin seems to convey special benefits because of the clear differentiation of grammatical categories and the need to develop a rather sophisticated awareness of linguistic operations. W. H. Auden expressed these benefits eloquently in the following statement:

The primary value of the old 'classical' education was not that it enabled its pupils to read Latin and Greek in the original — only a very small percentage did so after their school days were over — but the feeling for and understanding of the English language which it conferred. To spend many hours a week translating into and out of two languages so syntactically and rhetorically different from English gave one a comprehension of how our own language works, which cannot, I believe, be obtained in any other way. It was not the potential novelists and poets who profited most . . . but those who were going to be lawyers, politicians, journalists, scientists, etc., those, that is, who needed language as an impersonal instrument. Since classical education was abandoned, I don't think that the language of poets and novelists has deteriorated, but the language of public life, the press, and the average educated man has.

Why then has the study of classics declined steadily from the beginning of this century until the last four or five years? Many answers to that question touch upon broad and important changes in American life and education. Two factors, however, have special relevance to the teaching and study of Latin: the popular and pervasive association of chalk-dust with the notion of the classics and ill-conceived efforts to dispel the chalk-dust by trivialising the subject and patronising the student. Karen Bowden, in 'Continuing the Dialogue: The Ancients and State Programs', summarises the first factor well:

We may be discouraged by a very strong association with the classroom which classics, particularly *the* classics, carry. We may . . . continue to associate the study of antiquity with the student and with the rigor and discipline of formal study.⁵

The rigour and discipline of formal study are absolutely essential for any real mastery of Latin and, indeed, of other subjects. Rigour and discipline are not equivalent to pain

and boredom nor should rigour and discipline be sacrificed to trivialisation, lack of challenge and poor-quality entertainment. Many students would prefer discussing the great archaeological finds of this century to building a catapult or clipping recipes for a Roman banquet.

Teaching Classical Languages: Promising Approaches

In recent years some intriguing developments have occurred in the teaching of classics. They range from computer-assisted instruction to experiments with living language and using total physical response to improve language learning. New textbooks and combinations of traditional and newer approaches are being tried with differing amounts of success. The advantages of computer-assisted instruction, for example, are easy to list. The student benefits from instant correction without the judgmental associations of grading and correction by the teacher. The student is in control of the learning exercise, can repeat material as often as necessary and can progress as quickly or as slowly as desired.

In brief, the field of classics is fertile and bearing good fruit. The field has expanded enormously both in geographical and chronological terms. It has borrowed methods from other disciplines and developed new directions in teaching and research within the discipline.

Two of the major strengths of the field derive from its long history. First, most classicists are aware of their own role in establishing and maintaining an educational tradition. As readers of texts that have been read and enriched by many interpretations, classicists recognise how much richer and more varied the great texts of antiquity have become because of the commentaries, interpretations and influence of earlier readers. The *Iliad* of today is more complex than the text cited by Plato's contemporaries. We can hope that it will be even richer and just as beautiful for our descendants. A second strength derives from the study of an entire society and culture. Classicists are forced to acquire some knowledge of all facets of ancient life, and they are regularly encouraged to build models of past society from the information they possess. The penchant for model-building is essential for furthering our understanding of the past and applying that understanding to the present and possible futures.

The Classics and Public Concern

Clearly, formal study of the classics is difficult to integrate within the cultural life of the community. Yet the classical period has much to offer on topics of great concern in the present day. Let me conclude with three examples. Most of us who are involved with education are extremely concerned about what has been called 'the rising tide of mediocrity in the public schools'. The pursuit of excellence as an uncompromised ideal is a hallmark of classical culture and one that might well be examined in our democratic age and state.

From classical culture we have acquired the name and concept of 'barbarian'. The various periods of our past in which cultures have established their identities by contact with the other, the different or the inferior are frequently viewed as major turning points in history. The conflict between Greeks and the barbarians of the East (the Persians) gives us the beginning of a distinctly and consciously European perspective on human affairs. The conflict between Roman and barbarian and the new synthesis that emerged in Carolingian Europe mark another major change in orientation. The discovery of the new world and the development of the American frontier are more recent events, and conflicts between our own cultures and differing cultures of the

Third World in our midst have just begun.

Another aspect of ancient culture which touches upon one of our pressing modern concerns is the attitude toward aging and the aged. In early Roman society the old man (*senex*) had ultimate authority in his household and carried great weight in society and government, as the name and composition of the Roman *Senate* indicate. At the same time Plautus in some of his plays directs especially sharp criticism at old men who behave inappropriately. The most obvious example is the randy old man in the *Casina*, whose roving sexual designs are hilariously foiled by the quick wits of his wife and servants.

The facets and dimensions of a society's attitude toward a group and the criteria the society itself uses to define the group should be carefully considered. Simplistic statements about the aged or women or children in past ages contribute to simplistic statements about groups of people in our own age. For example, the enormous differences in women's freedom and authority from one period to another in the Greek and Roman world need to be part of any perspective on women's history. The degree of visibility and the legal rights some women achieved in late antiquity are not commonly known.

Networks and systems of support, mechanisms for transferring power, long-standing concerns for justice, civic responsibility, and a meaningful life are only a few of the many topics upon which the classical world has something to say. That world must find its voice and speak in this age.

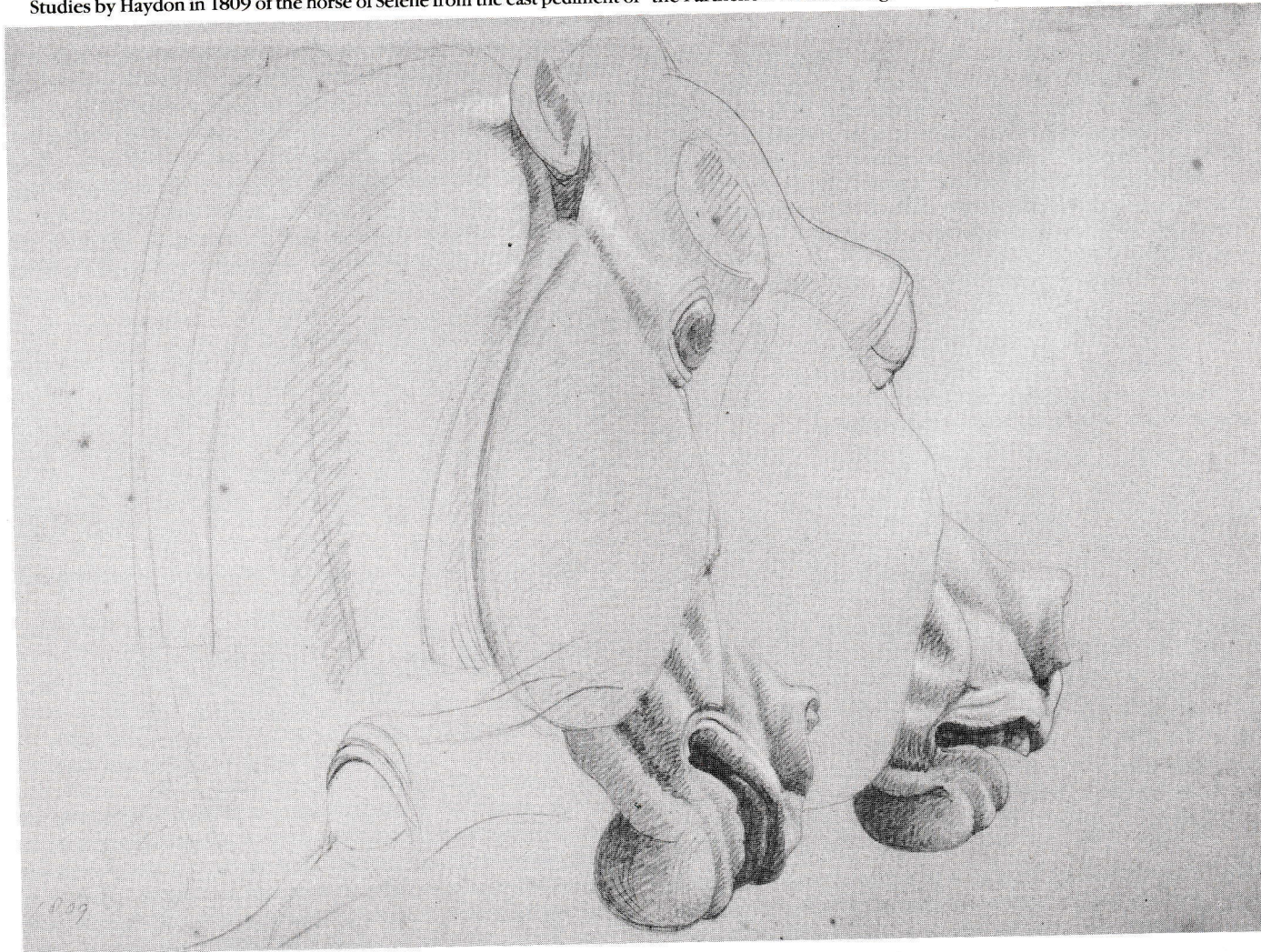
FANNIE J. LEMOINE

is Professor of Classics and Comparative Literature at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. This article appeared in the *New England Classical Newsletter* of October 1984, and we are grateful for permission to reprint it.

Notes

- 1 New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, 1963, p.49.
- 2 Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- 3 Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1975.
- 4 *A Nation at Risk: The Imperatives for Educational Reform*, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983, p.10.
- 5 *Federation Reports*, January/February, 1983, p.10.

Studies by Haydon in 1809 of the horse of Selene from the east pediment of the Parthenon. From *The Elgin Marbles* by B. F. Cook (review pending).



Latin and the age of the micro-computer

R. A. Jarvis

The readers of the *JACT Review* may find of interest the following article, which was published in *The Times Educational Supplement* of 30th November 1984 in a much reduced form. It represents an account of just one of the experiments that are being tried up and down our land in an effort to find a secure place for Latin in the curriculum of our schools. It differs in approach from other such experiments in two ways. Firstly, the school in which this work is being done has evolved from an ordinary Secondary Modern School in a semi-rural area. Because of this, Latin has had to fight to make its place in the curriculum rather than simply to inherit, as it were, a Divine Right. There have had to be clear and firm grounds for introducing it at all. Secondly – and this is an idea which may not appeal to the membership of JACT – Latin is not being taught in the early stages for itself but as the handmaid of other subject areas.

A consideration of the attitudes of teachers of Classics thirty years ago helped us to find the grounds for the introduction of Latin. For one might well ask whether any of those who began to teach Latin, ever seriously considered what they were really doing. Those who turned their minds to such an abstraction as that, quickly satisfied themselves with ideas such as these: they were providing for gifted pupils what was required for entrance to University: they were supporting any who were anxious to study Modern Languages or Medieval History: the study of the Classics was playing its part – unique but vague – in the training of young minds. Small wonder that in such a spirit of comparative complacency we were caught totally unprepared when changes in educational thinking crept up on us. There were signs of this: the most obvious, easily recognised now with the gift of hindsight, was the smaller part Latin was to play as an entrance requirement for certain University courses. Alas! few of us saw them. Many men of influence at that time regarded Latin as a threat: it was elitist and therefore divisive because it could not be studied successfully by the majority of pupils: it had to be discouraged. And so our cause was lost through our own inertia, or was it?

The small and sleepy market town of Baldock lies roughly equidistant from the Colleges of Cambridge and Luton Airport: though nestling between the A1(M) and the Weston Hills, it is not untouched by what men glibly call progress: after all it is part of the vast London overspill. But, perhaps because its inhabitants are not slick or cultured enough to be gulled by the fads and fancies of the so-called educational millennium, or to be enticed by the easy blandishments of radical novelty, they scorn to be among the 'novi homines' of this brave new world. Often the parents of prospective pupils of its only Secondary School openly rejoice to find a place which functions in a way that they recognise and recall from their youth, and with aims which they understand. So much that is called traditional has remained there – discipline, uniform, Christian assemblies, the pursuit of quality and a love of what is beautiful. These parents often reveal their sincerity by sending their children to the local school rather than any other. And so the very school which has long lingered in the rearguard of educational progress, would suddenly find itself among the vanguard, if progressive trends were to be reversed.

In September 1981 this school, which is an ordinary five-form entry comprehensive neighbourhood school, began what some would call an experiment, but what is regarded here as an attempt to improve the quality of what is offered to our pupils. It passes under the name of Latin but such a title is a timetabling convenience rather than an accurate description. The aims of the course, which is slowly evolving, should be stated and understood before reference is made to what is being attempted; for Latin is taught as an ancillary, not as an end in itself. What we are attempting to do might be summarised as follows:

- 1 to exercise the brains of the more able (the top 40% of the First Year's intake start the course) and enlarge their mental horizons:
- 2 to provide some sort of grammatical basis for the study of foreign languages – and if you think that this has been done in earlier years, in the words of a coroner to a young doctor, 'Go outside, young man, and guess again':
- 3 to cause pupils to think about their own language rather than simply write it – the cult of free expression ensures that this is necessary:
- 4 to widen vocabulary and increase understanding of words – the language of the tabloids and mobs of hooligans can be a little monotonous:
- 5 to provide material through which pupils are taught how to learn and are encouraged to be accurate and tidy in thought process and work presentation:
- 6 to offer some contact with a culture which played a large part in the development of our own and with a system of ethics which, though largely pre-Christian, still has much of relevance for today – in the words of a former Professor of Education: the provision of material which will give 'touchstones for the making of moral judgements'.

There are two quite different ways in which pupils may be brought into contact with the culture of Rome. The first falls within the scope of a normal lesson. Can a teacher really use, for example, the nouns *consul* or *castra* or *legio* without explaining to his class what a consul or a camp or a legion was? The enquiring minds of young people crave the richness of such explanations. To take another example – should one use expressions of time without reference to the Romans' calendar? The second way is rather more subtle and might even be called indoctrination. Roman ideas – *pietas*, *virtus*, *honestas* – can appear quite naturally in the work that is attempted. Roman Literature is full of stories that extol the old virtues: such Literature is a fountain of ideas for sentence work. As constant repetition in hearing the Authorised Version of the Bible or The Book of Common Prayer left an indefinable but indelible mark upon young people in days gone by, so there is ground for believing that children's minds may be influenced by spending time each week in the company of Roman values. Hillard and Botting may have offered rather more than has been recognised or

was intended. This sort of 'education through osmosis' could be a part of the 'hidden curriculum'. It is not, however, subject to proof or assessment in the normal way. A little later reference will be made to the part that other Departments in a school can play in imparting a knowledge of Roman culture.

The course itself begins in the first year of the school. The top two classes spend two periods a week (out of a total of thirty-five) reflecting on very simple ideas of Grammar – parts of speech, parts of a sentence, ideas of time, number, gender and agreement – and this, when covered thoroughly, may well occupy up to two terms. Then and only then is a word of Latin seen. The Latin is limited perhaps to a single declension and conjugation using a very small vocabulary. The sentences used have, at most, a subject, verb and object. Translation is undertaken both into and out of Latin: emphasis falls naturally upon processes of translation and upon accuracy. In the second year originally the top class continued the work with any pupils of the second class who wished to do so. More recently, however, it has been decided that the two classes who began the work in the first year should undertake a second year, if they show sufficient aptitude. They have two periods a week and slowly increase their knowledge of case usage, of adjectives, and of more declensions and conjugations. The emphasis remains, as before, upon the thought processes involved and upon accuracy of translation both to and from Latin. In the third year a free choice is given to those who have studied the subject for the previous two, provided that the results of that choice allow a sensible use of members of staff within the time-table. During this third year, having revised thoroughly the work previously done, the class moves on from the simple sentence and considers particular matters of syntax, e.g. prepositions, the verb 'to be', relative clauses, expressions of time and place. As previously, translation is undertaken both to and from Latin and accuracy is required. We frown upon 'Latin by guesswork' or paraphrase, as it is sometimes called, at this stage, believing that thorough understanding of a sentence translated should come before any attempt to refine the translation. At the end of this year Latin finds its place in the list of optional 'O' level courses.

The two matters of teaching materials and testing must now be mentioned. In the first year, when very simple ideas of Grammar are being considered, there is no need of a text-book; examples are plucked from the air or from the immediate environment of the lesson. Experienced teachers are unlikely to want a text-book to help them produce test material, for example, on the different kinds of nouns in English. Notes from the blackboard are taken down into exercise books, learning or written homeworks are set and dealt with rigorously as in any serious academic study. The exercise book becomes the pupil's text-book and record of work all in one. When the Latin is begun, vocabulary is deliberately limited to about a dozen common nouns of the First Declension and a similar number of verbs of the First Conjugation. The whole stress of the work is upon the understanding of the function of endings by writing them or recognising them in Latin. In the second year a course book, such as Hillard and Botting's *Elementary Latin Exercises* or Ritchie's *First Steps in Latin* may be followed. But such books are a convenience rather than an essential: any serious explanation that is needed, is given, with examples, by the teacher and copied into the exercise books. The same procedure is followed in the third year, by the end of which we hope to have dealt with: Active and Passive Voices, adjectives – agreement and degrees of comparison –, instru-

ment and agent, pronouns – demonstrative, personal and relative –, simple expressions of place and time, use of imperatives, participles and infinitives, simple direct questions and the jussive subjunctive. This aim, if achieved, provides a base or foundation for 'O' level work.

Testing is continuous: each homework is devoted to either learning something new or tackling a group of sentences either from English into Latin or vice versa. When the internal examinations come, questions are set on simple matters of Grammar and translation is undertaken both into and from Latin. The progress of a form is determined by its ability to cope rather than by the need to teach a particular point in the syllabus. The production of work of quality is prized rather than the ability to cover a wide area of grammatical or syntactical ground; a thorough understanding of what is being done is deemed more important than anything else. For these reasons examination papers are set yearly, based upon the experience of the class rather than on any preconceived notion of what the pupils should know at a particular time. The removal of the pressure inherent in the Grammar School system enables this to be so. It is perhaps fair to read into these statements the idea that for a Comprehensive School with children of the full ability range and with aims, of necessity, far wider than those of the old Grammar Schools, the major use of Latin in the early years is to help pupils to understand 'language'. If Latin is to be a 'language study' element, we believe that its place is in the early years of Secondary Education. This is especially so as many English Departments (for good reasons, doubtless) have abandoned the teaching of formal grammar as being unnecessary, difficult and boring. This statement should not be taken to mean that the Classics *can* have no other purpose, but rather that in a Comprehensive School one must look to the English Department to deal with all the mythology, the RE Department to deal with Roman religion and the Social Studies Department to deal with the more significant political or historical matters.

The old-style English Grammar lesson has been mentioned. What is being done here now goes rather further. To take a simple illustration: when considering the subject and object of a sentence, the child may learn to understand them in whatever way they are explained; but very often in times of pressure or haste, he will, as if by instinct, remember that in a simple sentence or statement the subject precedes the verb and the object follows it, thus making a hash, for example, of the understanding of the complement of the verb 'to be'. When however recognition of the relationships between verb and subject, and verb and object is moved away from the matter of word order because 'the Latin verb goes at the end of its clause' and so there is no short cut to the subject or object, a full understanding is necessary of the functions of subject and object and a pupil's failure to understand is quickly recognised. The whole tone of the work of the first two years is akin to a kind of game, involving a need to recognise and interpret an ending in Latin or conversely to show understanding of the idea of an object and to demonstrate how that idea is conveyed in Latin. It may well be that the biggest difference between what is being done in this school and in the old English Grammar lesson is that what is learned is then applied outside English and uses material in which the reality and completeness of the learning can be properly verified. How long the memory will retain that piece of learning is another matter – but even that can be helped, when other Language Department approach their subjects in a similar way.

This approach to Latin and its place in our curriculum

must, sadly, run contrary to the ideas of many people, who would like to make a place for it at the heart of a Classical Studies course. That idea has obvious appeal but the question of time within the school's week seems to come into the reckoning. How much time would we need for such a course? If Latin in this school uses up two periods out of thirty-five each week, how many periods would be needed by us to take on board a full Classical Studies with Latin course? Or, if only two periods were available, would there not be the danger of falling between two stools? Or perhaps, would not the course have to be diluted and lose its impact? The very lack of homogeneity in the idea or, if you prefer it, its hybrid nature might make its aims hard to establish in a teacher's mind, let alone in a pupil's or a parent's understanding. It is not so much a lack of merit in the idea that might bar its progress as the lack of practicability. One wonders how many teachers of Latin could show and generate equal enthusiasm for the two disparate parts – language and culture.

It is not possible after only three years to point to 'real' results or to draw any firm conclusions. It will be obvious that the length of time the course is pursued will influence the amount it achieves. We have no special faith in or understanding of statistics and in this case the numbers of pupils involved are not large. Perhaps then all that can be done is to record a series of facts without seeking to use them to prove anything:

- 1 Members of the Modern Languages Department have asked that the first year's work should be attempted by the top *three* classes, i.e. 60% of the first year's intake, because their work and progress, when the time comes for written rather than oral work, is facilitated by this study of Grammar. This ease of progress has been so marked that it has been suggested that the top class of our third year should be entered for GCE 'O' level French in July 1985, i.e. after only four years' study.
- 2 Members of the English Department have from time to time let slip encouraging comments, e.g. 'I wish my fourth year set had done your course. They would at least know what a sentence looks like' and 'Do you know I didn't have to teach my form the parts of speech. I get on so much quicker, not having to stop and explain everything'.
- 3 Pupils don't rush to escape from the course. In the third year, where there is a choice, about three quarters of the top class opt to continue the course. What will happen in 1985 when the third year's work will be open to two classes remains to be seen. We do not anticipate an increase in the number of pupils opting to continue because by that time the demands made by the subject may well daunt the less able.
- 4 Of parents who visit the school, some look back on their own school days and recall what Latin did for them – not 'to them', and say how glad they are that we are attempting this project: others make generous comparisons between the progress of children without Latin and those who study it.

These things are all factual: we refrain from drawing inferences because it is two years too soon and because the work is done in one school only. In addition we are not too sure that we can distinguish the effects of sound teaching and the influence of material of real value. Perhaps it doesn't really matter too much! We are encouraged by the support

of parents, who just because they don't claim to be cognoscenti in matters of this sort, are prepared to bow to our judgement when we say that we know what we are doing, even though we seem to be out of step with everyone else. We now have fifteen pupils in the fourth and fifth years studying for 'O' level examinations in Latin. If this 'straw in the wind' means anything at all, it suggests the possibility that Latin can be taught in this way and that, after the ancillary work is done, it may draw to it young people with particular talents. It is able to command enough attention to escape the name-tag of a 'Cinderella subject'. And that is splendid: but growth in popularity beyond this, although gratifying to individual teachers, would be unsatisfactory in that it would push the subject into an eminence for which it is not suitable.

The closing remarks of the last paragraph indicate the direction of our thoughts on the future of Latin here. We hope to establish the course that is now begun as an accepted and usual part of what this school has to offer: for we are sure that what we are doing is worthwhile – even necessary – and that we have started to achieve the aims which we stated earlier. We also suggest that work of a similar nature could, with profit, be undertaken in many schools. If, however, such a step were to be contemplated, a number of problems would have to be faced by those who manage the curriculum:

- 1 How is such work to be included without putting at risk the very important part played by English, Mathematics and the Sciences, together with the Social and Creative Studies that are offered in our schools?
- 2 Will it be possible to find qualified staff able to teach this subject without weakening the staffing in other subjects? (University Departments will have something both to say and to offer in this matter.)
- 3 Who is to determine (and how) which pupils would benefit from the first and second years of such a course, and whether indeed the quality of the school's intake makes such a course useful?
- 4 Are there any text books suitable for such a course and is there money available to introduce something new at a time of financial stringency?

Our pupils live at a time when more and more of their work and leisure time may be spent in front of a screen of one sort or another. For this reason their contact with other minds – and particularly adult minds – is being restricted – to their loss. This statement does not denote opposition to technological progress but rather a fear that that progress may destroy things of value without anybody noticing it. The work we have begun was born rather out of dissatisfaction with what we had to offer and concern that culture should not be swept away on the flood tide of change than out of the wish to attempt – Canute like – to delay the march of progress. Its first tottering steps have been taken and its first appearance welcomed by people who wish to see it mature as a complement to other teaching aids, not as an adversary. In the same way, in a quite different sphere, Science and the Christian faith are said to walk side by side rather than enter the lists in defiant opposition. When considering things of value, which might be destroyed by progress, we had in mind things like the nuances of language. For there is a special pleasure in the gentle conversation of people whose talents lie in expressing themselves accurately and whose riches are found in the wealth of their vocabulary

and the diversity of their ways of expressing themselves. Would it not be a disaster for our children and our grandchildren if such conversation and such talents were lost to them for ever?

It seems clear that the anxieties expressed here find an echo in other places. Quite recently there have been articles in the press concerned with the spending of such large amounts of money to buy computers for schools. Clearly computers are here to stay and there is an obligation on schools to make their pupils aware of them and to help them to understand a little of their working while leaving to employers the job of training in special skills. This can surely be done without destroying a balance between 'progressive ideas' and things of value and beauty. The course begun in this school, although not started for this reason alone, represents just one way of maintaining that delicate balance, by placing all its emphasis upon language – its variety, its accuracy and its individuality. It is interesting to learn that in North America there is a turning towards Latin. How far that will grow remains to be seen. Perhaps, then, teachers of Classics might reflect whether they are right to be so defensive, whether in fact there lies before us all the chance to make our subject arise Phoenix-like from the ashes of our own neglect and take up her rightful place again, this time as part of a modern system of education. For if we fail to do this, it is not just Latin that may be harmed: a small part of our culture is at risk because of the growing presence in our lives – working and social – of the voiceless wonder which could so easily influence or even dominate us.

R. A. JARVIS
is Deputy Headmaster and Head of Classics
at the Knights Templar School,
Baldock

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