

Reading Caesar's *De Bello Gallico* (or: Confessions of an Eng. Lit. Interloper) Colin Butler

De Bello Gallico is not just a classic of western letters, it is a *narrative* classic, and, thanks not least to its form, much of it stays in the memory. Here are three examples:

His rebus gestis, . . . ipse (Caesar) cum quinque legionibus et pari numero equitum . . . ad solis occasum naves solvit et leni Africo provectus media circiter nocte vento intermisso cursum non tenuit, et longius delatus aestu orta luce sub sinistra Britanniam relictam conspexit. . . . (V, 8)

Caesar cognito consilio eorum ad flumen Tamesim in fines Cassivellauni exercitum duxit; quod flumen uno omnino loco pedibus, atque hoc aegre, transiri potest. Eo cum venisset, animum advertit ad alteram fluminis ripam magnas esse copias hostium instructas. . . . Caesar praemisso equitatu confestim legiones subsequi iussit. Sed ea celeritate atque eo impetu milites ierunt, cum capite solo ex aqua exstarent, ut hostes impetum legionum atque equitum sustinere non possent ripasque dimitterent ac se fugae mandarent. (V, 18)

Omnium consensu hac sententia probata uno die amplius xx urbes Biturigum incenduntur. Hoc idem fit in reliquis civitatibus: in omnibus partibus incendia conspiciuntur . . . (VII, 15)

How close these events seem, despite their remoteness in time! Caesar has a gift for telling a tale, his virtuoso prose effortlessly enlivening his narrative. 'Ceteri enim,' writes Aulus Hirtius, who served under Caesar in Gaul and who provided the comparatively plodding Book VIII of *De Bello Gallico* after Caesar's death, 'quam bene atque emendate, nos etiam, quam facile atque celeriter eos (commentarios) perfecere scimus'. But narrative is as treacherous as it is seductive. It can record *facta* graphically and in sequence; but it is the idiom of realist fiction, too. As a consequence, modern readers need to be wary, especially if their formative influence has been English Literature, which, despite modest National Curriculum pressure, remains obdurately ahistorical. *How to read De Bello Gallico* needs to be thought about carefully.

Some years ago, Jonathan Miller – M.D. and opera producer – was on television discussing the status of works from the past, and, as I recall, he invoked the term 'afterlife' to help his argument along. I'll modify what he said, but the gist of it is this. You can look, say, at an old painting, and it will normally make sense of a sort. However, cultures change, so you will overlook or mistake things in it, which the painting's contemporaries would have spotted correctly. Conclusion: works from the past are always liable to misapprehension over time. Even if the scholarship is right, the *Weltanschauung* won't be.

Miller is essentially right, and no genre escapes his *aperçus*. Take music, for instance. The twentieth century's 'authentic' movement taught us a lot about tempi, pitch, instrumental sound and contemporary orchestration; but a modern authentic performance is an *ignis fatuus* in principle. Why? Because it requires the impossible: an authentic audience to experience it.

Nevertheless, 'afterlife' is a word of two halves, and it doesn't follow that 'life' has to be suspect, just because 'after' is. 'Life' has – or appears to have – a saving subjectivity about it that, *sans peur et sans reproche*, can overleap millennia. To return to my opening quotations, I, for one, find it hard to walk along Kent's North Foreland without experiencing a vivid apprehension of Caesar's nocturnal crossing of 54 BC – thanks to his description. The fording of the Thames (quite possibly near where Lambeth Palace now stands) has a similar effect on me: a mental image forms spontaneously, and I have this uncanny feeling of actually being

there as a witness. As to the mass burnings from Book VII, it is surely a dull person who does not respond to them. In addition to their scale, do they not have an immense existential sadness about them?

Such subjective responses effectively suppose that, while much changes over time, some things remain constant, and this assumption has a *locus classicus* in the preface Samuel Johnson wrote to his edition of Shakespeare's plays (1765). Shakespeare's *floruit* had taken place around one hundred and sixty years before, and, to the eighteenth-century Johnson, the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods of Shakespeare's working lifetime were as remote and different as Caesar's times are to us. So, the overwhelming question for Johnson was what it was that enabled Shakespeare to outlast his time, and his answer was the famous, 'Nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature. . . . the pleasures of sudden wonder are soon exhausted and the mind can only repose on the stability of truth'.

I agree. For example, I don't need Suetonius to tell me of Caesar that 'laboris ultra fidem patiens erat' (*Divus Iulius*, LVII): I can recognise for myself Caesar's capacity for endurance in *De Bello Gallico* and have no trouble loosely calling it timeless. Nor am I muddling Suetonian fact and Johnsonian/Shakespearean fiction here, for, regardless of whether purported *transcriptions* of reality or purported *equivalents* of reality are under discussion, a 'just representation of general nature' will still be, by definition, true to life. Moreover, Johnson's 'stability of truth' applies both to human characteristics (e.g., 'loyal') and to the characteristics of situations (e.g., 'urgent'). It follows, therefore, that any formulation, which is, in Johnson's sense, 'just' can provoke legitimate acts of recognition across time.

But now for some caveats. When I imagine Caesar crossing the Channel or the Thames, I have to accept that my imaginings, while vivid, are neither accurate nor complete: Caesar's prose takes me so far, but no further, and it's no good my claiming that intuition will make up the difference. Etymologically, 'intuition' means seeing what is really there (cf. 'intueor'), and that, I have to admit, exceeds my competence. So, unless I am strict with myself, my lively imaginative experiences will include a fair whack of self-deception.

As to Johnson, while what he says is true, it is also severely reductive. So-called universal traits of character and situation are all very well, but to rip them from the fabric of their time is, to the modern mind, to squander half their meaning. For example, a proper understanding of Caesar fording the Thames would include, in addition to separables like 'courage' and 'drive', knowing what he was doing there *qua* Roman – and not just any Roman – in 54BC; and 'there' couldn't be taken for granted either. As to fact and fiction overlapping, well, so they do, but there comes a point when their categorical distinctiveness has to be asserted as well. For example, Caesar fording the Thames in *De Bello Gallico* and Falstaff being tipped into it in *The Merry Wives Of Windsor* both flag up character traits, albeit different ones. But the primary difference is, obviously, not one of content but of types of writing.

A useful way of understanding that difference is indicated *en passant* by Friedrich Nietzsche in *Vom Nutzen Und Nachteil Der Historie* (*On The Usefulness And Disadvantages Of History* [1873/74]). While considering what he calls 'monumental' historiography, that is, writing up the great as figures for emulation, Nietzsche accuses it of approximating literature by writing for effect, thereby abating the hard reality of the lives and deeds it draws upon – what he calls the '*causae*'. Nietzsche admittedly had his own agenda, but his insistence on *causae* is justifiable in any case: simply, history is a record, but history has to be made before

it can be written up. Now, what dominates *De Bello Gallico* is, precisely, the actual making of events by real human beings (especially one); so its *causae* constitute much of its subject, and that is why, notably after Book I, it mostly reads dynamically. There is also slant, of course, but since process as well as product is Caesar's abiding concern, it must be ours as well as we read him.

II

De Bello Gallico – I lean here on F.E. Adcock's lucid *opusculum*, *Caesar As Man Of Letters* – derives from the first seven rolls of *C. Iuli Caesaris commentarii rerum gestarum*. These *commentarii* were possibly written, though not published, annually. Books I-VII appeared in 51BC or 50BC. As noted above, Aulus Hirtius supplied Book VIII later.

Commentarii are essentially factual and without literary pretensions, the latter more properly belonging to *historia*. Adcock writes: 'Literary merit is not their concern. They should be precise and clear ... and that is all (whereas) to the Romans, of Caesar's day and afterwards, *historia* was, above all, an achievement of literary art'. With regard to Caesar's motives, it may well be, as Adcock suggests, that Caesar had in mind 'the form of immortality which Roman aristocrats prized, the memory of their services to the state'; that those same aristocrats set store by 'military skill and success'; that Caesar 'sought to make his (greatness) impossible for others to deny, underrate or leave unrewarded'; and that he had his eye firmly on personal advancement. Nevertheless, the central fact remains that what these *commentarii* document principally is Caesar in action – his *res gestae*. Time and again, Caesar describes military-cum-political situations requiring courage, speed, supplies, resourcefulness and superior tactical intelligence in locations, which are culturally different and more or less geographically remote from Rome.

All of this influences what Caesar says and how he says it. To take his famous style first. It is essentially functional, as befits *commentarii*; yet his contemporaries saw it as so enhanced as to rival eventual *historiae* by other hands – 'nudi enim sunt', says Cicero of Caesar's *commentarii* in the *Brutus* (262), 'recti et venusti, omni ornatu orationis tamquam veste detracta. Sed dum voluit alios habere parata, unde sumerent qui vellent scribere historiam, ineptis gratum fortasse fecit, qui illa volent calamistris inurere, sanos quidem homines a scribendo deterruit; nihil est enim in historia pura et illustri brevitate dulcius.' (It is worth adding here that Caesar was a respected orator as well as a soldier and, of his oratory, Cicero had just said, 'Caesar autem *rationem adhibens* consuetudinem vitiosam et corruptam pura et incorrupta consuetudine emendat' [261] – my italics.)

In his preface to Book VIII, Aulus Hirtius, too, writes that the excellence of Caesar's *commentarii* is likely to make future historians redundant, but he makes an important addition: 'Erat autem in Caesare cum facultas atque elegantia summa scribendi, tum *verissima scientia suorum consiliorum explicandorum*' (my italics). This brings us back to Caesar in action. Inseparable from his *res gestae* is 'ratio' – the well thought out plan – and if *res gestae* account for much of the detail Caesar includes, 'ratio' typically accounts for the way details hang together; hence the coherence as well as the 'angle' he brings to distances, terrain, tides, fords, fortifications, times of day, intelligence, morale, supplies, numbers, reinforcements, Gallic fighting practices and his own rôle as the hands-on man in charge. Explaining the unfamiliar to the folks back home covers most of the rest, and vocabulary like 'his rebus cognitis', 'natura loci' and 'celeriter' recurs because the same sorts of consideration recur. A spade for Caesar is precisely that, and *le mot juste* is good enough.

Once all this is taken on board, the way to read *De Bello Gallico* virtually prescribes itself. Given Caesar's means-ends mentality, small details matter as much as the big stuff, so *total* understanding becomes the aim, not localised flashes of interest. My first quotation, de-romanticised and in context, documents the nature and number of the forces Caesar had with him on a potentially dangerous (though this time better prepared) second expedition to Gaul-friendly Britannia, and wind, tide and a temporarily frustrated daylight landing are all part of its purpose-

driven logistics. My second quotation concerns the practicalities of getting short (II, 30) Roman foot-soldiers across a defended river which was also a territorial frontier, speed and surprise being part of Caesar's available arsenal. My third quotation describes the initial consequences of a calculated tactical choice in a military context, namely, a scorched earth policy – and, yes, the Bituriges should have burned Avaricum, too, except that their *own* sentimentality got in the way. In sum, it seems to me that, if you lead with your imagination when reading *De Bello Gallico*, distortions inevitably ensue and crucial details fail to register properly. But if you try to think *with* Caesar, then you can really start to appreciate its greatness and his.

III

In his Editorial to last summer's *JACT Review*, Michael Northey rightly lamented both the ubiquity of poor English and the widespread abandonment of Classics in schools. My guess is that these phenomena are, directly or indirectly, related. I can't speak for Greek, but Latin, in addition to promoting great richness of vocabulary and extended mental horizons, is a mental discipline of the first water; and when, repeatedly, I observe stunted vocabulary and parochialism in the young, not to mention the rise of soft subjects in education and the determined softening of others, I can only regret that Latin is officially withheld from so many.

All of which is intended to emphasise the important fact that *De Bello Gallico* was written in Latin and should ideally be read in Latin, not only because reading it in Latin removes obvious barriers but also – I am tempted to say pre-eminently – because Latin is not English. 'Nous ne parlons plus les langues mortes,' Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) observes in his ground-breaking *Cours De Linguistique Générale*, 'mais nous pouvons fort bien nous assimiler leur organisme linguistique'. Indeed we can. And we should. Let's see why.

Ferdinand de Saussure, a French-speaking Genevan Swiss, was one of the founding fathers of modern linguistics. He believed that a language is, like chess, a self-contained system. 'La langue est un système,' he declares, 'qui ne connaît que son ordre propre'. And – important for us here – that order will vary from system to system. Grammar investigates language 'en tant que système de moyens d'expression', and if you are wondering *what* is expressed, Saussure also says that language is 'une système de signes exprimant des idées'.

Now, 'signe' is common currency these days, together with its companion terms, the 'signifiant' and the 'signifié', to the extent that you cannot, in some circles, call yourself educated until you have mastered them. The 'signe' is a composite, an inseparable pair consisting of the 'concept' as it forms in the mind (I see no effective difference in the *Cours* between 'concept' and 'idée') and its 'image acoustique' – the discrete sound or sounds you use to express it. The 'concept' is the 'signifié', and the 'image acoustique' is the 'signifiant'. Additionally, Saussure is adamant 1) that no ideal language ghosts behind individual real languages, 2) that writing is 'une traduction constante des images acoustiques', and 3) that language is not a nomenclature. 'Le signe linguistique unit non une chose et un nom,' he asserts, 'mais un concept et une image acoustique'.

Although the *Cours* is – regrettably – epistemologically silent, it yields instructive ways of looking at Latin and at *De Bello Gallico* in particular. First, Caesar's 'concepts' will not have originated in a cultural vacuum or an ideal language, but, like yours and mine, they will inevitably have been conditioned by a range of personal and cultural determinants. Second, his written words, either latently or patently, will necessarily be replete with those 'concepts' in virtue of being their secondary expressions. In other words, his Latin is a gateway to his world. Third, and immensely important, grammars, while internally systematic, are not all the same. This makes for differences, which are educationally productive. Consider these lines from Book IV (24):

At barbari, consilio Romanorum cognito praemisso equitatu et essedariis, quo plerumque genere in proeliis uti consueverunt, reliquis copiis subsecuti nostros navibus egredi prohibebant.

They are not English by other means: not only are they lexically different, they are grammatically different as well, which is why you can look up all the words in a dictionary and still have trouble with the meaning. For example, even if you know what an ablative absolute is, you still have to spot not only that there are two, not one, after the first comma (an editor's?) but also where the division between them *has* to be – and that means coping with the combination of a singular and a plural noun as well, and not letting your eye run on too fast, either. You might find the next phrase more readily intelligible if you align its word order to that of English, though to do that you need to understand why 'quo' and 'genere' relate to each other here and why they are in the ablative (the English 'to use' + direct object doesn't help much). And then there are the suspensions. It takes a practised reader to retain 'barbari' in order to make sense of 'reliquis copiis subsecuti'; and I fancy more than one beginner has made 'nostros' the object of 'subsecuti', then wondered what to do with 'prohibebant'.

Need I go on? It is as plain as a pikestaff that mastering Latin, in addition to all other benefits, means acquiring and applying thinking skills that are agile, precise and versatile. Getting there can admittedly be a

slow and painstaking process – no bad thing, perhaps, for youngsters convinced that instantaneity is the measure of all things. But the German proverb puts it well: 'What is learned slowly is forgotten slowly'. A grounding in Latin lasts a lifetime.

Select Bibliography

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Dr Colin Butler (City of Norwich School and Cambridge) was, until his retirement last summer, Senior English Master at Borden Grammar School, Sittingbourne, Kent. His interest in Latin is personal and derives from a sound education.

Carry On In Atrio Shelley Hales

When I was 12, our school, a grammar grudgingly turned comprehensive, started teaching us Latin. Caecilius est in tablino, Metella est in atrio, Cerberus est in horto. The opening of the *Cambridge Latin Course* went to some length to drive home to us that the Caecilii were at home, thoroughly at home, in Pompeii. Accompanying slides demonstrated that this was fact. Caecilius is unusual amongst Pompeian inhabitants in having not only a name, but a face, a house and business receipts.

Caecilius and his family seemed to be genuine relics, a direct line back to 79 A.D. But, of course, Caecilius was only a sanitised phantom for our edification. Our textbook overlooked the seedy underbelly of Caecilius' activities to create a suburban bank manager, more Captain Mainwaring than neighbourhood loan shark. Descriptions of his house carefully omitted the pornographic paintings found in his back rooms. Imagine what Metella would have to say about that.

Nor had Caecilius simply been in his atrium, waiting for us to take up Latin since the eruption of Vesuvius. When Pompeii was first discovered, the city's unfortunate inhabitants were not at the forefront of anybody's mind. King Charles and his successor Ferdinand, Kings of the Two Sicilies, used the site primarily as treasure chest, looting it in order to decorate their palace at Portici. Nor were the Grand Tourists, who flocked to Naples to witness these art treasures, any more interested in the domestic arrangements of its inhabitants. They were aristocracies educated in the Classics. They thought themselves heir to the grandeur of Rome, not the fulleries of Pompeii.

Only the consequences of revolution and the rise of romanticism made Caecilius' rebirth more likely. French revolutionary fervour was translated to Naples in 1799. As in France, it triumphed only to succumb to Napoleon who invaded Italy, appointing the Murats as regents of Naples. It was under the brief jurisdiction of this family that Pompeian buildings began to be uncovered and investigated with concerted effort. At the same time, the romantic instinct for the melancholy and sublime increasingly attracted its practitioners to these exposed ruins of Pompeii, where they could brood on the cataclysm of the volcano and the doom of the Pompeians.

Lord Lytton's *Last Days of Pompeii*, published in 1834, told a tale of passion between two Greek occupants of Pompeii, Glaucus and Ione. On finding love, Glaucus turns his back on his over-indulgent Italian bachelor friends, in order to seek fulfilment with Ione in the nobility and glory of their classical heritage. Unfortunately, other characters have their eyes

on the couple. The evil Egyptian Arbaces cannot relinquish Ione so easily, nor the femme fatale Julia her love for Glaucus. Their attempts to thwart the affair appear to go well. Glaucus is in the amphitheatre with a Christian, about to be fed to the lions, when Vesuvius blows, spelling doom for Arabs and Italians and freedom for Christians and Greeks, who rapidly see the light.

Lytton meticulously set his novel against the backdrop of the recent excavations: the Temple of Isis, the Amphitheatre and the House of the Tragic Poet could all be physically visited by the reader. More intriguingly, the visitor to Campania could even meet Julia. She was the remains of a woman found in the Villa of Diomedes, excavated in 1777. Several bodies had been found here: the remains of a man clutching money bags became Lytton's wealthy merchant Diomedes, the imprint of a bosom and some jewellery, his troublesome daughter Julia.

Julia's bosom stars again as the breast of the eponymous seductress *Arria Marcella* in a short story by Th  ophile Gautier. The hero Octavian, overcome by the sight of the imprint, decides to track its owner by stealing into the site by night. In the darkness, Pompeii comes alive; he recognises the bosom across a packed theatre and Arria seduces him only to be exorcised and reduced to dust as dawn arrives. Both these narratives exploit Pompeii to tell a story about the decadence of the Roman Empire. Pompeii is a dangerous, unstable place for both modern visitor and ancient inhabitant. The very part of the anatomy used to fire our imagination offers the perfect medium through which to picture a city of lust and greed that has to be obliterated, whether through lava or exorcism, in order to separate it from the Christian morality of the nineteenth century. Whilst these novels marked a fundamental shift in interest towards the inhabitants of Pompeii, they hardly created a vision suitable for the British classroom. Pompeii needed to be further tamed. The 1854 re-opening of the Crystal Palace in Sydenham went some way to achieving this. The new exhibition was designed to educate visitors in the art of the great civilisations of the world – Assyria, Egypt, Greece, Rome and so on. Next to the Roman Room was the Pompeian Court, done out like a Pompeian house. Proudly the guide-book explains, here is a house worthy of a place at the centre of the empire (rather tellingly denying to make explicit which empire it means). The link between Pompeii and domesticity was further emphasised by the intended function of the Court as the exhibition tea rooms. Whilst the middle classes could only stroll in

awe through the Roman room, they were invited to make themselves thoroughly at home in Pompeii.

The effects of the industrial revolution and an increasingly professionalised middle class had created a definite sense of the domestic in Victorian Britain. As people went out to work, so they became more aware of what it was to be at home. Domesticity became a cherished part of life and the nuclear family was championed as the moral bedrock of the nation. Whilst the emperors and generals whose portraits dominated the art of Rome might serve as inspiration for the leaders and elites of the Victorian nation, the houses of Pompeii provided the middle classes with their own antique heritage. The Pompeii Court was timely, reflecting new modes of access to the ancient world. Though not necessarily classically educated, the middle classes were able to travel and they read excavation reports in newspapers and illustrated magazines. They were also eager patrons of artists such as Alma-Tadema, who specialised in scenes of Roman families relaxing in Campanian peristyles.

Back in Italy, excavations increasingly concentrated on individuals and the everyday. Fiorelli, superintendent of the excavations 1863-75, perhaps did most to fire our own imaginations of life and death in Pompeii. His technique of pouring plaster into cavities containing the decayed remains of the casualties of Vesuvius brought back to light their last attitudes. These casts of men, women and children, which litter Pompeii today, give us the illusion of meeting with the ghosts of the past. We can even find Cerberus: the cast of the dog asphyxiating on his back is one of the most evocative images of Pompeii.

In the twentieth century, archaeological, social and intellectual developments across Europe conspired to celebrate Pompeii precisely as a backwater. The city became increasingly attractive to post-imperial, feminist and Marxist thinkers looking to turn attention from the fat cats of empire (ancient or modern) to hitherto overlooked sections of society. Meanwhile, Pompeii had become open to mass tourism and Latin was

adapted to the comprehensive system. These new generations of school children would be spared learning Latin, Billy Bunter style, from Caesar or from artificial sentences that served to demonstrate Roman generals' grasp of both military technique and the ablative absolute. The banker Caecilius Jucundus offered a more immediate paradigm for the middle-class family.

The characters of the *Cambridge Latin Course* would have to appeal to a much wider demography than the traditional prep. school audience. The characters were clearly influenced by popular culture's take on the Roman world, a kind of soft focus *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*. Launched almost simultaneously with the CLC, Frankie Howerd's *Up Pompeii* had transferred the Sondheim musical to the suburban setting of Campania and his vision was pure Home Counties. The orgy scenes reflect not Lytton's vision of the depravity of a decadent empire but *Carry On* slap and tickle. The mood is transferred to the household of Caecilius, with Grumio and Melissa a counterpart to Howerd's Lurcio and Scrubba. Metella's raised eyebrows on the arrival of Melissa serves as a pale intimation of her husband's support of pornographic artists.

The success of the strategy clearly paid off. At the end of term, we left Caecilius vanishing under the ash, Cerberus faithfully by his side. After that, there was some glass blowing in Alexandria, I vaguely remember, before the series brought us to Britain. But Roman Britain was a strange world that couldn't hold our attention and I can't recall the plot, though I think it was skulduggery. Home was back in atrio with Caecilius and Metella.

Shelley Hales

Lecturer in Art & Visual Culture, Department of Classics & Ancient History, University of Bristol

I did it on the Job Henry Wickham

I have it on good authority that Charles Clarke's anxiety dream runs like this: Latin has become a National Curriculum subject, taught to all children at Key Stage 2; a sudden increase of qualified Classics teachers is needed; but where are all these teachers to come from and how can they get qualified? Charles Clarke wakes up in a cold sweat and, with a brief 'eheu', files his fears away for another day.

You would think he had other things to worry about. But for Head Teachers and Heads of Department in schools all over the country, recruiting qualified Classics teachers is a serious problem. Of course, for independent schools, in which the vast majority of Classics teaching takes place, a teaching qualification is not strictly necessary: the problem is of getting the staff at all. But with more and more schools insisting on employing only qualified teachers, and aspiring teachers wanting to be trained and to have a qualification, recruitment is turning into a life-threatening (or, at last, subject-threatening) issue.

I faced this situation myself. After 11 years of professional opera-singing, which took me constantly away from my young children, I decided four years ago to dust off my Oxford classics and teach Latin. Not surprisingly, though, I could not afford to take a year off work to pay my way through a teacher training college. Some research was required.

I decided to make enquiries as to how I could get a job teaching Classics whilst getting some kind of qualification in-service – but I was amazed at how difficult it was to find anything out. I discovered that QTS (qualified teacher status) is distinct from a PGCE, although the latter conveys the former, and that if you have been teaching in a large

department for several years you may be able to apply for QTS. But I was confidently assured that if you wanted a PGCE, or if you didn't get a job in a large department, the only option was to do a year's teacher training at Cambridge or London. This was depressing to hear, as I had set my heart on prep school teaching, where one full-time teacher is considered a large department.

The IAPS (Incorporated Association of Preparatory Schools) came to my aid, however, and I was told about the in-service PGCE course run by CfBT (Council for British Teachers), an independent 'education provider'. This was timely information, as I had just accepted a job as one-man head of Department at Chinthurst, a Surrey prep school. I enrolled on the 18-month PGCE training at the same time as starting my new post. I would say at the outset that this is not a route for the faint-hearted, especially if, as is likely in Classics, the department is small. The minimum requirements are for candidates to have a degree qualification in the subject they are teaching, to have a reduced (maximum 80%) timetable in their post and to be passed as suitable on an initial visit by the assigned tutor. In addition, they must have a mentor on the staff, ideally in the same department, who will observe lessons regularly and monitor progress. The demands on time, on colleagues' sympathy and on the mentor's friendship are heavy. Motivation can thus become a real issue: you've got to *want* to finish this course. Six months down the line, you may justifiably reason that you've already got the job, so what's the point? That is where the school, tutor and publican may have to do their best. On the plus side, the course is free: Classics may rarely be taught in the

maintained sector, but it is a shortage subject nevertheless, so teacher training is supported by the government.

The CfBT PGCE course is ratified by the University of Surrey, Roehampton and comprises a number of different elements. As I have already mentioned, each candidate is assigned a tutor, in my case Robert Montgomerie, previously Head of Classics at Rugby. I first met Robert on an induction week, the first of three residential weeks held at Roehampton during school vacations. The tutor is responsible for ensuring that each candidate completes the course and he thus chases up the written elements of the PGCE: 5 assignments of 2,500 words and one project of 5,000 words, all nominally based on the government 'Standards 4/98', a grisly schedule of competences which I grew to loathe. (All written work, observation, residential attendance etc. must be cross-referenced to the Standards.) Other written requirements are DLMs (distance learning materials), 8 each of subject-specific and general educational information, which must be worked through; a reflective diary; and records of lessons observed.

The great strengths of the course, as of all teacher training no doubt, are the observation and teaching practice. Obviously, as you already are *in situ* you are likely to be relatively confident from the outset in your teaching. To be observed by your mentor regularly, however, to observe other lessons and to discuss issues arising are the best ways to improve and to reflect on classroom practice. (This is not just an issue of initial training. It is surprising that more schools do not adopt 'shadowing' – teachers observing, but not appraising, each other – as routine.) Mentors are supposed to observe once a week; once a term the tutor will visit and observe for a day; meetings afterwards are to be written up.

In addition you must undertake teaching practice in a different school. For most PGCE students this will be in a maintained school, but for Classics this is rarely possible. Importantly, the age-range for the training specified in the course does not correspond to the usual independent school division between prep school and senior school so candidates need to fill in the gaps. Prep school teachers wanting this PGCE need to demonstrate competence in the 11-16 age range, and thus must be observed teaching up to the level of GCSE or beyond. In Classics, the PGCE requirement to do teaching practice in a large thriving department, teaching Latin and Greek to GCSE and beyond, has outweighed the requirement to do this practice in a maintained school. I did my teaching practice at Charterhouse School, where the job of observing fell to Jim Freeman, Head of Classics. Again, I was visited and observed there also by my mentor and tutor, and myself observed many Classics lessons.

Along with the observation and teaching practice, studying for a PGCE requires a serious acquaintance with a lot of what is frustrating with a modern education: endless form-filling, tedious explanation of procedures, some staggeringly inept lectures (one on PISIs – school assessment measures – still makes me scream in frustration every time I think about it.) Yet there is a *forsan et haec* here: you learn not to be scared of edu-

speak and of the paperwork, you're used to being observed and can take, and make, constructive criticism. Thus the PGCE is a very reassuring qualification and an excellent preparation for inspection. Indeed, the PGCE course itself was being inspected while I was taking it, so I had several visits from an HMI and various other educationalists. By the end of the 18 months my Latin boys felt rather short-changed if there weren't another couple of adults in the room.

At the end of these 18 months, when I had completed all my teaching practice and had all my written assignments assessed, I received a final visit from Robert Montgomerie and my work was signed off. A few weeks later I received confirmation that I had been awarded the PGCE and gained QTS. I still had the computerised Literacy and Numeracy tests (another story) and an induction year to complete, but effectively I had completed teacher training whilst running a one-man prep school Classics department, without bankrupting my family or losing my mind.

Is the in-service PGCE an all-purpose solution to the problem of recruitment? Chris Woodhead would say so: in his recent book *Class War* he advocates the dismantling of all teacher training institutions in favour of in-service training. I'm not completely convinced. Certainly it is suitable for people like me who are not put off by having to go straight into the classroom and improve on the job; people like me, indeed, who can't afford to take a year out to retrain. If this scheme is more widely publicised, perhaps more erstwhile classicists will choose to become teachers; perhaps schools will have more confidence in seeking staff other than via the usual routes; perhaps the false perception that it is impossible to teach Classics outside the South-East (London and Cambridge) can be corrected. On the other hand, there will always be aspiring teachers, especially I imagine recent graduates, who will prefer to train and get qualified before taking on their first teaching job.

To do an in-service PGCE you need an understanding school, a dedicated mentor, a fair degree of confidence, an ability to take criticism, a healthy self-critical streak, and an account at Oddbins. And time – lots of time. I understand the CfBT PGCE course is now being contracted to one year: this will mean an even heavier workload during the course. But the advantages of the course are enormous and should be appreciated by all schools having difficulty recruiting. A couple of years on, in a new post with a larger department, I would now have no hesitation in appointing a classicist without QTS to train in-service to teach in my department. The answer lies here, Charles Clarke: you can sleep easy at night.

Actually, I must confess I lied about that anxiety dream. What really causes him sleepless nights is Virgil for Key Stage 3 and whether to test Greek accents in the SATs.

Henry Wickham is Head of Classics
at King's College Junior School, Wimbledon.
Contact addresses: CfBT – www.cfbt.com
Roehampton – www.roehampton.ac.uk

Sparta – 'Not such a Great Power': A Reassessment 556-404

John Arnold

From the formation of the Peloponnesian League about 550 to the defeat of Athens in 404, Sparta was considered the super land Power of Greece with the reputation of never surrendering and with a long series of victories on the battle-field. This article aims to show that Spartan power was not as great as is usually thought, and that her victories were usually achieved with the help of allies. Moreover there was the odd defeat and even surrender. It must be added that Sparta was entirely dependent on her allies for cavalry and war ships. Furthermore Sparta had a poor record in siege warfare. Therefore the major thrust of this article is to assess Sparta's effectiveness as an operator on the battle-field. For convenience this

assessment is divided into four sections: first the early period down to 500, second the Persian wars, third relevant events in the "Pentecontaetia", and fourth "the Peloponnesian War".

I:

It comes as something of a surprise to find Sparta struggling to overcome Tegea just before the mid point of the sixth century. Herodotus makes it clear that Sparta often came off worse (1:66-69). This was in spite of the fact that by now she directly ruled two fifths of the Peloponnese, was under the Lycurgan system and uniquely had an army of full-time soldiers.

This seems to have persuaded Sparta that she could not gain any more substantial amounts of territory. Rather she began a series of alliances that would later emerge as the "Peloponnesian League". The treaty with Tegea survived and was quoted by Plutarch (*Moralia* 292 B). In fact there was one more annexation of land shortly after this, when Sparta took Thyrea from Argos. However the war was costly in lives on both sides according to Herodotus (1:82-84).

The protracted episode of Sparta's expulsion of Hippias from Athens and further interference in Athenian affairs shows Spartan incompetence, weakness and failure. Herodotus tells us that Sparta's first attempt to remove Hippias was a disastrous failure. Anchimolius, the leader, and many Lacedaemonians were killed due to a reinforcement of Thessalian cavalry. King Cleomenes's subsequent success shortly afterwards in 510 was solely due to the chance capture of the children of the Pisistratidae. Otherwise Cleomenes would have given up the siege (Herodotus 5:64-65).

Sparta's reputation was further damaged by Cleomenes's next intervention in 507, when he attempted to set up an oligarchy in Athens under Isagoras. Cleomenes then found himself blockaded on the Acropolis with his small force by an outraged population. After two days he accepted a truce and left Attica with his force of Lacedaemonians – a surrender in fact (Herodotus 5:73).

Further embarrassment ensued for Sparta when Cleomenes's spectacular invasion plans failed in 506. The Peloponnesian army invaded Attica to set up Isagoras as leader, but disintegrated when the Corinthians refused to continue and were supported in this by Demaratus, the other Spartan king (Herodotus 5:74). As Spartan military strength was not tested here, this episode is of only tangential relevance, but Herodotus's remarks are instructive on Athenian confidence: "Threatened though they were from two sides at once, the Athenians decided to oppose the Spartans at Eleusis, and to deal with the Boeotians and Chalcidians later." (Penguin translation)

Cleomenes soon tried again to coerce Athens, this time planning to reinstate Hippias. (He claimed that a corrupted Delphic priestess had duped the Spartans into expelling the tyrant.) At the first recorded meeting of the Peloponnesian League, Herodotus reports that the delegates, following the long speech of the Corinthian Sosicles against the evils of tyranny, refused to support Sparta, and ominously warned Sparta against interfering in the affairs of any city in Greece. The proposed invasion was abandoned, the Spartan authorities feeling it was unwise or impractical to proceed on their own (Herodotus 5:90-96).

Therefore this whole episode of Sparta's intervention in Athenian affairs produced a military defeat under Anchimolius, a doubtful victory under Cleomenes, a subsequent surrender by Cleomenes, a collapsed invasion and a still-born plan for invasion.

II:

The Persian Wars obviously show the heroism and military prowess of the Spartans, but possibly not in quite these simple terms. It must be remembered that 700 Thespians and probably 400 Thebans remained with Leonidas and his 300 Spartans in the Pass of Thermopylae. Herodotus stated that Leonidas had kept the Thebans there against their will – a manifest absurdity in this situation. So his statement that the Thebans surrendered later must be regarded as highly dubious. The plain fact is that 1,400 Greeks defended the Pass of Thermopylae, even after the movement of the "Immortals" under Hydarnes to circumvent the Greek position. However it is the 300 Spartans who seem to have stolen all the glory.

An old theory, propounded by J.B. Bury (*History of Greece*, Bury and Meiggs 4th edition, p. 1737) states that Leonidas sent the majority of the Greek army to attack the Immortals as they descended the mountain track, while the Spartans, Thebans and Thespians defended the main pass against the rest of the Persian army. However the other Greeks failed to stop the Immortals, who were thus able to attack the 1,400 under Leonidas from the rear. Thus the Spartan king was not making a forlorn gesture of

defiance, nor following an oracle that Sparta must either suffer devastation or lose a king, but was pursuing a rational plan of defence, until the very last. In fact if Leonidas were determined from the first to condemn himself and his 300 Spartans to death instead of withdrawing, he would have been counteracting his own government's policy, which was to conserve forces for defending the Isthmus (Herodotus 7:220-234).

In the campaign that led to the battle of Plataea in the following year 479, the Spartans contributed 5,000 Spartan hoplites, 5,000 Perioeci hoplites and 35,000 light-armed Helots. The Athenians contributed 8,000 hoplites, while the total Greek force stood at 110,000 troops (both hoplites and peltasts). This gives a good idea of Sparta's strength at this time. Moreover Herodotus's narrative makes it clear that the Spartans with the Tegeans bore the brunt of the fighting, partly because they were matched against the Persians themselves, partly because the rest of the Greeks played little or no part in the direct engagement. In reality the battle of Plataea was in the end a "soldier's battle". Pausanias's plans had gone astray in the night withdrawal; but fortunately Mardonius was betrayed by Artabazus who refused to lead a large section of the invaders into battle (Herodotus 9: *passim*).

Two facts must be borne in mind in assessing Spartan military prowess: first the Athenians had defeated the Persians almost entirely on their own at Marathon in 490 and second, the Persian equipment according to Herodotus was inferior. The truth seems to be that even the best Persian troops could not withstand a charge of the hoplite phalanx on ground where cavalry could not be deployed.

III:

However Sparta's military strength is assessed during the Persian Wars, there is little doubt that she suffered a relative decline compared with Athens thereafter, and probably an absolute one. The "Pentecontaetia" of Thucydides is not the best source material, but it does support this view in general.

The first symptom of Spartan weakness was their failure to suppress the Helot revolt that began in 464 following an earthquake. The Spartans failed to take the rebel stronghold of Mount Ithome despite help being given from their allies – Thucydides (1:102-103) says the siege continued for ten years – and eventually had to allow the rebels to leave on terms, whereupon Athens settled the rebels in Naupactus. Although Thucydides's figure of ten years for the siege is disputed, Sparta was put out of action for a number of years, during which their ally Megara seceded from the Peloponnesian League and was garrisoned with Athenian troops, another ally Aegina was defeated and forced into the Delian League, while Corinth was defeated in her attempts to invade the Megarid and to assist Aegina.

In addition, Sparta had been unable to honour her promise to assist Thasus at the start of her revolt from Athens.

In this connection one should note Sparta's notorious weakness in siege operations. Herodotus had stated that the Spartans were repulsed by the Persian defenders from their fortified camp across the Asopus after the Battle of Plataea, and it was the Athenians who made the necessary breach (Herodotus 9:71). Then there was Archidamus's failure in 431 to take the border fort of Oenoe. Although Archidamus's policy, or supposed policy, was to act slowly in the hope that Athens might make concessions, Thucydides makes it clear that a serious attempt was made to take the place (Thucydides 2:19). Finally there was the repeated failure of Archidamus to take Plataea by storm in 429. Despite the presence of the Peloponnesian and Boeotian armies, Plataea defeated all attacks with her tiny garrison of about 500 men. In the event Plataea had to be starved into submission by a siege that lasted till 427.

These points illustrate Sparta's weakness in siege warfare, but to resume the main narrative, Sparta's first action after the Helot revolt came in 457. The details are meagre in Thucydides, but can be supplemented from Diodorus. Sparta led an expedition to northern Greece to rescue Doris from Phocian attacks, and then set up Thebes as leader of a Boeotian League as a counterweight to Athens.

After successfully completing these tasks, and almost as an

afterthought, Nicomedes decided to wait in Boeotia, as secret negotiations were under way with the anti-democratic party of Athens (Thucydides 1:107). It is indeed strange that for this whole campaign Sparta fielded only 1,500 hoplites, compared with 10,000 from their allies. This might of course be due to fears of Helot unrest. The Athenians showed their confidence by advancing into Boeotia to Tanagra to confront Nicomedes, just as in 506 they had advanced to Eleusis against Cleomenes. The Athenian army was 14,000 strong (including allies) and was only defeated after great losses on both sides. However, the real victors were the Athenians, who two months later completely reversed the position at the battle of Oenophyta by defeating the Boeotians. Athens seems then to have forced the cities of Boeotia and Phocis as well as Opuntian Locris into some sort of dependent alliance. The Spartans were unable or unwilling to challenge the Athenian success, and in 452 accepted a five-year truce (Thucydides 1:108 and 112).

The loss of the "Athenian Land Empire" as accepted by Athens in the Thirty Years Peace Treaty of 445 was hardly a result of any revived power in Sparta. The Land Empire had already been lost in great part due to oligarchic risings in 447-446, before Pleistoanax led an invading army from the Peloponnese. His rapid withdrawal was later attributed to bribery (Thucydides 2:21). In the ensuing Thirty Years Peace Athens surrendered what was left of her Land Empire, but retained Naupactus and Aegina. Naupactus was a threat to Corinthian ships, and Corinth was Sparta's strongest naval ally, while the transference of Aegina to the "Delian League" meant the loss of Sparta's second strongest naval ally. Moreover Sparta formally recognised the Delian League, whereas twenty years previously she had been prepared to subvert it by her promise of help to Thasos in revolt in 465 (Thucydides 1:101).

Whatever the power of Sparta's hoplite army in this period, it had hardly been tested in battle because of the Helot problem. Her victory at Tanagra was won by an army in which the Spartan army was a small fraction. Moreover it is likely that the number of full Spartan citizens was in decline whereas the Athenian citizen body was increasing. This factor was of vital importance for the impending Peloponnesian War.

IV:

The Peloponnesian War 431-404 reveals Sparta's obvious limitations as outlined by the Spartan king Archidamus himself (Thucydides 2:80-81). Sparta's strength lay in her heavy infantry, but as Archidamus observed there was little point in devastating Athenian territory as Athens could import necessities. Sparta was dependent on her allies for warships, cavalry and finance.

However though Sparta's heavy infantry was still regarded as the best of its class in Greece, were there enough of them? The hoplite force of Athens was now bigger than in the Persian wars. According to Pericles, as quoted in Thucydides 2:13, Athens had a field army of 13,000 hoplites and a reserve force of 16,000 hoplites, which included metics and the oldest and youngest soldiers. Myronides had shown in 457 what an effective force this could be when he repulsed a Corinthian invasion of the Megarid with these reservists (Thucydides 1:105-106). Spartan hoplite numbers had probably declined since the Persian Wars, when they fielded 5,000 full Spartan hoplites at Plateae, to possibly around 3,000 full citizen hoplites (see later arguments).

The famous incident of the 420 trapped Spartan hoplites on Sphacteria in 425 gives the first clue to this decline in numbers. Despite the fact that Athens had been severely weakened by the plague and that Attica had been repeatedly devastated, the Spartans offered an immediate truce and peace negotiations. One can only suppose that 420 represented a significant proportion of Spartan manpower. Although the peace negotiations collapsed, and Cleon duly captured the surviving 292 Spartans, Sparta ceased her annual invasions of Attica, fearing for the lives of the hostages. The fact that the Spartans were allowed to surrender after a heroic defence supports the earlier theory in connection with Leonidas that Sparta did not expect the unnecessary sacrifice of lives.

In the Archidamian War Sparta's only success was Brasidas's campaign in Chalcidice and Thrace. This was achieved without a single Spartan hoplite, because Brasidas's force consisted of 700 hoplite Helots and allied recruits. In the event Sparta only regarded these gains as bargaining counters for the Peace of 421. It was as Archidamus predicted, a dishonourable peace. Sparta abandoned her allies, leaving Megara in the lurch deprived of her port Nisaea, leaving the Aeginetans expelled and stateless, and Corinth without Sollium and Anactorium and still threatened by Naupactus. In fact it was a private peace between Sparta and Athens, designed to ensure the return of the 292 hostages. In fact since Sparta could not compel the Chalcidic states to return to the Athenian alliance, Athens refused to return either the hostages or captured Spartan territory (Cythera, Pylos, Sphacteria). Moreover in her desperation to obtain the hostages, Sparta even entered into a defensive alliance with Athens, which effectively caused the partial dissolution of the Peloponnesian League – so significant had the lives of 300 odd hostages become.

The operations of 418 show further Sparta's decline in hoplite manpower. However Thucydides apparently had the same difficulty in ascertaining Spartan numbers for the Battle of Mantinea because of Spartan secrecy (5:68). Two facts are important here: first in the campaign against Argos shortly before this, Thucydides states (5:57) that the Spartans deployed their whole army including Helots (and the danger now to Sparta was even greater), second just after the Battle of Mantinea Thucydides states that Pleistoanax was advancing with reinforcements of the oldest and youngest troops, but at Tegea on hearing the victory, returned (5:75). Thus it seems reasonable to assume that Sparta deployed a full force at Mantinea. Working on Thucydides's figures, the maximum force that can be assumed is 3,600 hoplites but probably less as the phalanx might not have been uniformly eight men deep. Thucydides also mentions 600 Sciritae, who were probably a regiment of Perioeci in addition to the Spartan force.

The allies certainly missed a chance to deliver a fatal blow to Sparta's control of the Peloponnese. After the battle 3,000 soldiers from Elis arrived, and another 1,000 from Athens. This was the only contribution that Athens made to the battle. If Athens (and Elis) had sent a reasonable force then the result of the battle might have been different. One might compare the 5,000 hoplites Athens sent in each expedition to Sicily in 415 and 413. The reason for Athens's poor contribution to the campaign of 418 was of course party politics at Athens between Alcibiades and Nicias. Thucydides declared of Sparta in 411 that the Spartans proved to be remarkably helpful allies: he could well have said this of Athens in 418. That Sparta eventually won the Peloponnesian War is no testament to her strength. Athens partially destroyed herself at Syracuse. Sparta contributed no Spartan citizen hoplites to Syracuse's struggle. Her one main contribution was to send the general Gylippus. Moreover it was the final defeat of her navy that finished Athens, and this was due to Persian money, although it required the able individual Lysander to make the best use of it. Plutarch in his *Life of Lysander*, chapter 4, says that by increasing the sailors' pay from three to four obols a day he all but emptied the Athenian ships of crew. By capturing Decelea, Agis was able to increase further the pressure on Athens, but it was not decisive.

In short, the Peloponnesian War confirms Sparta's weakness in all but her prowess in a set piece hoplite engagement such as Mantinea. Even here the reduction in her citizen numbers made even this problematic, and at Mantinea as elsewhere she depended on her allies.

John Arnold is Head of Classics at Colfe's School, London

The Burden of the Past in Homer and Virgil

R.B. Rutherford

In this paper I discuss the way in which past events and experiences are handled in the Homeric epics and the *Aeneid*. I argue that this comparison of Homer and Virgil illuminates some key differences between the poets.

All the major epics are set in the past, often hundreds of years before the poet's own time. There is a sense of a long perspective. It is true that Ovid's *Metamorphoses* brings his narrative down from the origins of the world to his own time, and that Ennius' lost *Annales* moved from the foundation-myths down to Rome in his own day. Historical epic may need to be treated separately from mythical. But even within the mythical frame, the *Aeneid* shows us how the past can be powerfully brought into relation with the present.

How far is this true also for the characters within the poems? Recollections of or inherited problems from the past do not play a very significant part in the *Iliad*. Of course there are references to earlier events in the previous nine years of war: Achilles refers to his earlier campaigning successes; Andromache dwells pathetically on how her father and brothers were killed in one such raid. The origins of the war are occasionally recalled, especially by Helen. But there is not much sense of a long history to the heroic age, except in the speeches of Nestor, who harks back to his younger days and declares that in his day he fought with better men than nowadays. Similarly Phoenix reminds Achilles of the tale of Meleager and tries to persuade him to take warning from it. But there is little to suggest that the Greeks and Trojans of the *Iliad* think much about the past or are oppressed by it. Genealogies are invoked as a source of pride; in some passages past glory and prosperity are used to contrast with present downfall or despair: a moving example of this comes in book 24, when Achilles speaks compassionately to Priam: 'You too, old man, as we hear, were fortunate in time gone by... in all these lands they say you were supreme in wealth and in your sons.' But it is generally true that the *Iliad* is tightly focused temporally as it is geographically. Just as the action seldom moves from the Trojan plain, so the time-scheme does not involve elaborate retrospectives or large-scale narratives of past events.

In the *Odyssey* things are different. The Trojan War itself has become an important part of the past, and the characters are conscious of this. The poets within the poem look back to it: Phemius in book 1 is singing the story of the 'baleful homecoming' that Athena wrought for the Greeks, a song that gives pain to Penelope because her husband has never come home. Among the Phaeacians, Demodocus strikes up the song 'whose glory then was reaching broad heaven', an episode from the earliest years of the war. When Telemachus visits his father's former comrades, they dwell not only on the glorious achievements of the war, but on all those who died there: the memory of the war swiftly brings tears to the aged Nestor, who remembers the son who died in order to save his father's life. This dual attitude to the victory at Troy may partly spring from the poet's own attitude to the *Iliad*, if as I believe the *Odyssey* is the later work and composed by a different poet. The poet is conscious of the *Iliad* as an awesome model, which he needs to come to terms with, recalling and challenging without attempting to reproduce its qualities. However that may be, the hero of the poem also feels the burden of these memories. In book 8, Odysseus, still disguised, asks Demodocus to sing of the sack of Troy. He presumably anticipates a pleasurable experience, listening to the tale of his own great exploits. But the bard's song instead fills him with uncontrollable grief, and he finds himself weeping. A simile follows: Odysseus is compared with the wife of a warrior, who is dragged from her husband's corpse and forced away into slavery – a wife, indeed, very like Andromache and the other victims of the Greek victory. It is exceptional for a Homeric hero to be compared with a woman. This is

one way in which the poet enables us to see that Odysseus has changed in the ten years since the sack: because of all he has gone through since, he can look back on what he has done with pity and empathy, not triumphalist satisfaction.

But the part of the poem, which most clearly recalls the *Iliad* and confronts Odysseus with the past, is of course the underworld episode, book 11. This is the prime source for *Aeneid* 6, and we can see a number of ways in which Virgil draws out and develops points, which are merely hinted at or implied in Homer. Homer seems not to make quite as much of the book as we might expect: the journey to the land of the dead is a formidable task, but it is not the climax of Odysseus' wanderings: it comes in book 11, not in book 12, so we still have Scylla, Sirens and Cattle of the Sun in store. Virgil saw that this episode should become the ultimate test, forming the last phase of Aeneas's journeying. Notoriously, it is not altogether clear that Odysseus does go into the underworld: at first he seems to be positioned at an access point, summoning the ghosts forth and letting them drink the blood of his sacrifices, which enables them to speak: but later he tells how he saw figures who seem to be static in the land of the dead itself. Homer seems to have combined two conceptions. By contrast Virgil leaves us in no doubt that Aeneas does descend, amid elaborate detail of preparation and procedure, and all the details of mythic Hades-geography are included. We should also ask why each hero goes to the underworld: what motivates the episode? Such a journey is a traditional heroic exploit, and need not be motivated by the same objective in each case. In the far more ancient Epic of Gilgamesh, the hero goes to the land of the dead in the hope of learning the secret of immortality, but fails. In other Greek myths, Heracles descended to seize Cerberus, a trial of strength; Orpheus to recover his beloved wife. In the *Odyssey*, our hero seeks guidance on his route back home, which he receives from the prophet Tiresias: the meetings with the ghosts of his mother and of three of his comrades-in-arms are incidental, however emotionally effective. As a result his experiences in this book seem rather episodic: once he has seen Tiresias, the main purpose is fulfilled, and there is in a sense no reason for him to stick around, though his intense curiosity and keenness to see more serve as adequate motivation. Virgil saw that the power of the episode could be intensified if the main objective came at the end of the book, and if the source of guidance as to the future was no mere prophet but the hero's own father. The advice Aeneas receives in that scene concerns not only his own route or destination, but the future of his race and the destiny of the city he will found. Hence the restructuring, which makes *Aeneid* 6 not only the climax of the first half but a doorway between past and future.

How does this relate to my more specific theme of the *burden* of the past? As regards the *Odyssey*, I have already mentioned how some of the living characters tend to dwell on the experiences and the suffering of the Trojan War: it is prominent in the speeches of Nestor, Menelaus and Helen. In book 8 we saw Odysseus overcome by painful memories. In book 11 he encounters the ghosts of Agamemnon, Achilles and Ajax. Each of them is wrapped up in thoughts and regrets for the past. Agamemnon laments his disastrous homecoming and denounces the treachery of his wife. Achilles ponders his unhappy lot and regrets the life he has lost: he would rather be a menial serf subjected to a poor man without property, than king among all the dead. Ajax is still bitter and resentful at the way in which he was deprived of the armour of Achilles after the latter's death: the armour was allocated to Odysseus instead. Alluding to these events, Odysseus expresses regret: 'If only I had never won that prize! Because of it, the earth closed over heroic Ajax'. Odysseus tries to persuade Ajax to break silence and speak with him, but Ajax will not yield. We see here

a contrast between ways of dealing with the past. Odysseus, who still lives, is able to change and move on; the dead men continue in an unchanging state, forever dwelling on the past, unable to alter the present. Homer uses this opposition to bring out the very different destiny of Odysseus. Achilles, as in the *Iliad*, worries about his father and longs to be with him, to protect him against those who may be dishonouring him or driving him from his kingdom: 'if only I might return to help him, return to the sunlight as once I was when in the wide land of Troy I championed the Argives and slew the bravest of the foe!' What Achilles wishes he could do is close to what Odysseus in fact will do in the climax of the epic. Similarly in contrast with Agamemnon, Odysseus will be reunited with his own son. The encounter with the figures of his past points the way forward to a more joyful and triumphant future.

The *Aeneid* is a poem with a far larger historical perspective than either of the Homeric poems; the voyage of Aeneas is no ordinary heroic episode but stands at a turning-point in world history. Virgil is constantly making the reader aware that a vast time-span is involved. Troy itself is an ancient city; so will Carthage become one. Jupiter predicts a span of 333 years before the eventual foundation of Rome. In the mythic background, the roots of Juno's hatred go back earlier than the judgement of Paris, and also arise from future enmities and fears regarding the fate of her beloved Carthage. In book 8, when Evander gives Aeneas a tour of the primitive site of Rome, there are references to ruins of an even older city, relics of a still more ancient civilisation. Or again, when Charon challenges Aeneas at the River Styx, the Sibyl answers the challenge and produces the golden bough, the mysterious talisman, which allows Aeneas admission. Charon gazes at it in wonder, but it is not new to him: 'he marvelled at the revered offering, seen again after a long interval'—someone has plucked it before and come in this way, using the bough in time long past. This is Virgil's constant practice: *antiquus* is a favourite word in the poem.

The *Aeneid*, then, has a historical dimension: we look backward to ruined Troy and forward to the future growth of Rome. Aeneas himself is an emblem of this progress from past to future. Not only does he move geographically from the old world to the new, he undergoes a development of outlook. In the first half of the poem we constantly see him harking back to Troy, faltering on his path, wishing he had died there, trying to found miniature imitation Troys which are doomed to fail. He does not welcome his divinely-imposed destiny; for quite a while, indeed, he seems hardly to acknowledge or accept it. Much more than Odysseus, he must first bear, then shed, the burden of the past. He has other burdens too: not only the painful memories of the horrors of Greek treachery and slaughter in the sacking of his native city, but the heavy responsibility of a commander who must look after his men and preserve what they have salvaged from sack and storms.

Two moments in the poem symbolically capture the movement of Aeneas from past to future, from looking backward to accepting his destiny. At the end of book 2, he finally concedes that there is no more hope of saving Troy. He proceeds on his way, 'hoisting my father on my shoulders'—the action that for centuries epitomised his *pietas*—Compare and contrast the later scene at the equivalent point in the second half of the poem, the end of book 8. It is no coincidence that Aeneas there too hoists a burden, the mighty shield forged by Vulcan, on which the scenes of Roman successes down to Augustus at Actium are represented, as described in the long passage toward the end of the book. Aeneas does not grasp the full meaning of the scenes, but 'though ignorant, he rejoices in the image, hoisting on his shoulder the renown and the destiny of his grandchildren.' The contrast is obvious: in book 2 he took responsibility for his father, in book 8 for his descendants.

It is clear that book 6 plays an important part in the Pilgrim's Progress of Aeneas, whether or not we see this in terms of character development. As I already hinted, Virgil has taken an episode which in Homer was dramatic and moving but which perhaps played less central a part in the *Odyssey* than we might have expected, and he has made it integral to the poem. Most obviously, the encounters with Aeneas's past, represented by

Palinurus, Dido and Deiphobus, each involve acceptance on Aeneas's part that however painful the loss, there is nothing more he can do for them (or they for him). Deiphobus at their parting even goes so far as to urge him on to his better future. Again, when Aeneas prays to Apollo at the start of the book, he asks that their arrival in Italy may mark the end of the jinx-like 'Trojan fortune', which has pursued them throughout their wanderings. As in earlier books, there is the sense that they must turn their backs on Troy. In the last stages of the book, although he meets his father, another important figure from his past, it is a father renewed and prophetic, who shows him his descendants and teaches him about his own future. Crucial is the famous speech of Anchises about the mission of Rome, in which he uses the vocative 'Roman' ('You, Roman, remember to govern the nations with authority'). Of course this is partly generalised, addressing the archetypal Roman yet unborn; but we cannot altogether exclude Aeneas himself as addressee. At this moment he is at least for the time being, a representative of the future Rome. In such a confrontation with death becomes the means not just of revisiting the past (as in the *Odyssey*), but of transcending it. This is not the whole picture, of course: a fuller treatment would have to deal with the last part of the poem, where Aeneas is sometimes still described as 'Trojan Aeneas' or equivalent; moreover, in the second half the conflict in Italy is modelled on that of the *Iliad*, and the Trojan War is in a sense being fought. Not until book 12 will the ghost of Troy finally be buried, under Juno's urgent insistence. But book 6 does mark a key stage in this process.

We naturally ask why the interplay between past, present and future is so important in the *Aeneid* when it was not, it seems, so central in Homer. Part of the answer is the Augustan aspect of the poem. As the early commentator Servius already saw, Virgil has a dual purpose in writing the poem: to imitate Homer and to praise Augustus through his ancestors. Many have supposed that he originally contemplated writing an *Augusteid*, with occasional retrospectives to the great man's mythic ancestors; but the poem, which eventually emerged, was a far more original conception.

Obviously this panegyric aspect is an important motive, but we should not let ourselves be too obsessed with Augustus to the exclusion of the wider picture. All Romans were interested in the history of the city, and there is quite a lot of evidence that the first century BC, even before Augustus, was a period of intense activity by historians and antiquarians concerned with the origins of Roman society and its rituals, its customs, its buildings. Cicero's friend Atticus compiled a chronology of Roman history. The scholar Varro, another contemporary of Cicero, composed works on the prehistory and early chronology of Rome, and worked on the history of religion. His premises that an ancient city should adhere to its traditional religion, and that the greatness of Rome rested in part on its religious observances, are also fundamental assumptions of the *Aeneid*. The frequent references in the *Aeneid* to Roman families being descended from Trojans seem quaint to us, but this too was taken seriously in Roman scholarship: it formed the subject of another of Varro's works, *de familiis Troianis*. The interest of the *Aeneid* in aetiology, the telling of stories to explain the origins of rituals or Roman institutions, did not spring from thin air. Augustus and Virgil were both responding to the historical awareness of the previous generation: Virgil embarked on the *Aeneid* while Varro was still alive. The early parts of Livy, the fourth book of Propertius, and Ovid's *Fasti*, reflect many of the same preoccupations.

Metatextually, the poets themselves are conscious of their poetic predecessors, and in that sense they too labour under a burden, the need to rival or even surpass those whom they emulate. It would be possible to extend this enquiry still further, and examine the plight of the modern commentator (or reader!) faced with the ever-increasing mountain of scholarly discussion of these epics. But that would call for another paper.

Dr Richard Rutherford teaches Greek and Latin literature at Christ Church, Oxford (A longer version of this paper was delivered at the ARLT Summer School in July 2002.)

Further reading: Line-references to the texts of Homer and Virgil have been omitted, but the relevant passages should be easy to find. On Romans tracing their ancestry to Trojan heroes, see T.P. Wiseman, *G&R* 21 (1974)

158ff = *Roman Studies* (1987) 207ff. On interest in history and aetiology in the late Republic, see E. Rawson, *Intellectual life in the late Roman Republic* (1985) chh. 15-16 and *Roman Culture and Society* (1991) 58ff.

More on The Symmetrical Four-Word Hexameter

Herbert H. Huxley

Praecipua probitate citabimus excellentes

In the last number it was not explained precisely why this verse is symmetrical, though doubtless many readers spotted it. For those who did not, the reason is that each word has four syllables.

Four-word lines occur in most Latin poets, but are far from common. Here is one from Catullus (LXIV,15), ending like mine with a double spondee.

Aequoreae monstrum Nereides admirantes.

'The sea-dwelling Nereids marvelling at the strange thing.'

Three-word lines like the following from Horace (Sat.II.i.1) are extremely rare.

Ambubaiarum collegia pharmacopolae

'Groups of Syrian girls, vendors of quack medicines.'

Fraenkel wisely observes that this extraordinary verse (the three words making it up are Syrian, Latin and Greek!) is deliberately pompous.

Let us turn finally to one of the 'noble five-word lines' so typical of Virgil at his best; it begins the fourth or so-called 'Messianic' eclogue.

Sicelides Musae, paulo maiora canamus!

'Muses of Sicily, let us sing somewhat sublimer strains.'

ROLL UP ROLL UP ROLL UP ROLL UP ROLL UP ROLL UP ROLL UP ROLL ...

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