

# Editorial

## Alan Beale

In *Omnibus 5*, our (alas, retired) satirical friend Thersites was giving us his thoughts on Great Commentaries: vehicles for advertising one's cleverness, repositories of useless information, opportunities for prolixity and obscurity. And when the going gets really tough: no comment. This was not an attack on scholarship per se, but the satirist identified an underlying, even if distorted, truth – that editions used in schools often contained irrelevant and unhelpful comment and did not address the problems of the learner. 'What sort of editions do we need in schools?' was surely his subtext, and this is a question worth revisiting on a regular basis.

There will be different answers: some, for example, will find the old MacMillan Modern School Classics series their ideal. Elucidation of the harder syntax, translation of the harder idioms, explanation of background, vocabulary alphabetically arranged at the back, what more could a pupil desire? Improved page-turning skills may be the flippant answer, but there is a virtue in facing a text unaided in the first instance and only seeking help in extremis. One might even advocate plain texts in order to teach independent research and patience with a dictionary, a virtue worth acquiring, especially for any attendant discovery of etymology, usage and semantic range. We can all agree that the task of problem-solving assists learning, but there is a danger that if we make the problems too hard, learning will not even begin.

A more recent format has been provided by the *Cambridge Latin Course*, the *JACT Reading Greek* series and others: here all the information is provided in the form of a vocabulary (running or alphabetical) on the same or facing page. (See Terry Bird's article on the use of running vocabularies, *JACT Review*, Autumn 2001.) Initially the *CLC* texts were designed for O Level and GCSE, now the *Reading Greek* series is being set for AS. AQA have published an edition of *Lysias On the Murder of Eratosthenes* by Nick Munday in this format, but with comment and questions in addition to vocabulary. Is this the model at which teachers and publishers should be looking? If so, just what degree of comment do such editions require? Help with proper nouns? Vocabulary which offers basic as well as special meanings? Pointers to idiomatic and grammatical peculiarities? Attention to literary features? Metre? Social and historical

background? If the list gets any longer, we will have a commentary where, in Thersites' words, 'the actual text heaves thinly up and down on top of a gigantic groundswell of comment below.' For GCSE work the *Cambridge Latin Course* puts much of what might have appeared in a commentary into a Teachers' Handbook. For AS and A Level, how much of that do we need in the pupils' texts?

Should we be thinking of tying editions of texts to syllabuses? One obvious advantage is that prescribed vocabulary can be starred for learning (a pattern familiar from *Reading Greek*). Syntactical features could easily be treated in the same way. But in the current climate of 'initiativitis', it may not be an attractive option for a publisher to commit themselves to books with relevance only to specific syllabuses. In an ideal world publisher, writer, teacher and examiner might plan publications together to ensure editions of the right sort are available. But consensus among teachers will be hard to create and competition must rule in the market place. Short-run publishing is now affordable and may be the way to satisfy every demand. If that means we all get the editions we want, we'll be lucky.

Someone recently asked me whether *JACT Review* is successfully doing its job. What, in fact, is its job? The purpose of the book reviews may be obvious, but to define the purpose of the features pages is rather more challenging. Variety (of subject matter, perspective, approach) is a desideratum in a field as large and fertile as ours. One 'feature' conspicuously absent, however, has been classroom technique, and this was my questioner's point. What ought to be one of our primary concerns, seems to suffering from some neglect. Panos Seranis' article in this volume is therefore particularly welcome. Might we look forward to reports from teachers about the use of online Latin, the fourth edition of *CLC*, teaching towards any of the new syllabuses, indeed anything that might happen in a classroom? I hope so.

*JACT* would welcome opinions and ideas about the issue of texts raised in this editorial. If anyone would like to contribute, please send your views to Alan Beale at the *JACT* office. Responses by e-mail ([jact@sas.ac.uk](mailto:jact@sas.ac.uk)) will be posted on the Bulletin page of the *JACT* website.

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## Personal Engagement & Active Learning through the Reading of Classical Texts

Panos Seranis

Engagement with literature through student involvement in the reading activity is of key importance in the literature classroom (Lunzer and Gardner, 1979; Hamlin and Jackson, 1984). According to Wehlage *et al.* (1989) engagement 'is always a prerequisite to acquiring knowledge and skills' (p. 177). Research on literature reading has also come to stress more and more the significance of readers' motivation in developing their reading strategies and in reflecting on their own processes (Kolb, 1984; Mitchell, 2002).

This paper focuses on the findings of a study (Seranis, 2000) that investigated the responses of 35 A-Level students from three different schools to the teaching of Homer in translation as part of their A-Level Classical Civilisation course. Among the aims of the study was the development of lesson plans and activities to promote student' active learning and personal engagement with classical texts. Lesson plans and activities using reader response techniques were provided to the teachers and personal reading journals were distributed to all students participating

in the study for them to record and reflect on their personal responses to the passages studied. Students recorded their thoughts after their individual reading, at the end of their group-work and during the class discussions. The six lesson plans were based on an equal number of key passages from the *Odyssey*, as following (*all references are to the Lattimore translation*): a) Odysseus and Calypso, Book 5, ll. 85-191; b) Odysseus and Nausicaa, Book 6, ll. 135-210; c) Demodocus and Odysseus, Book 8, ll. 485-586; d) Penelope and Odysseus, Book 19, ll. 104-212; e) Slaughter in the Great Hall, Book 22, ll. 310-501; f) The Recognition Scene: Penelope and Odysseus, Book 23, ll. 166-239. The lessons had four stages: (a) Establishing personal response; (b) Group work; (c) Class discussion; and (d) Summarising exercise.

*A. Establishing personal response:* Students were given time in the observed lessons to reflect on their own encounters with the text. It seems a paradox that, whilst students are usually told that their written accounts

should undergo careful scrutiny and constant rewriting, a complete reading is approached as something to be acquired on first encounter.

**B. Group work:** The next stage involved discussion within small groups of up to five students. This gave students the chance to interact closely with each other. The activity itself provided a setting where pupils shared ideas, compared and contrasted differences and likenesses. They also learned to defend their views and to modify them in the light of compelling arguments and to be collaborative and motivated, without being antagonistic.

**C. Class discussion:** Class discussion focused on the main issues that had occupied small groups (which were raised either by students or by the teacher). An agreed member of each group (chair) presented the conclusions of their group to the class. This phase was particularly important for teachers too, who needed to be sure that everybody had understood the key issues raised by each group.

**D. A summarising exercise** that recapitulated the main points raised during the discussion was a good way for both students and teachers to make sure that a record was made of all significant issues, which could be used for future reference and revision before the examinations.

**The selected activities:** The lesson plans included exercises involving three variations of predicting. Prediction activities allow for multiple interpretations of the taught text and they can also activate students' previous knowledge and experience of texts and arouse motivation in finding out the likely development or outcome of a story. All six lessons were planned in using a type of the prediction activities, as they are presented below. There were three types of predictions in total, so each was used twice.

**A. Prediction alternatives:** In this activity students were given five alternative outcomes to a scene. In their reading journals, students wrote down individually, in note form, the reasons that led them to opt for their selected outcome and reject the others.

**B. Students' own predictions:** The narrative was divided into short sections and students were asked to speculate on what followed or to fill in the gaps/missing lines between the instalments. This required pupils to use the evidence provided by the text up to this point.

**C. Generic Descriptive Labels:** Students took on the role of the author in continuing the story, using the generic labels adapted from Lunzer and Gardner's (1984) *Learning from the Written Word* :

The generic labels represented different ways in which the story might be developed by the author. The students were also asked to justify their choices and to elaborate upon them: for instance, if they chose *action*, they were expected to say who the main characters would be? Whose *argument* would be advanced and why? On what events would the *description* focus and who was going to be the narrator (the author, one of the main characters, an extra-textual narrator)?

**Student responses:** Students were interviewed before, during and after the reading process. Since the data provided a diverse set of themes, subheadings are used below to facilitate discussion of the findings...

*Co-creating the meaning: the reader as writer*

A5: you are almost being like what he would have been . . . reciting it to an audience . . . to remember all that. It then makes you think that is a genuine continuation of the story, because you have to think 'What do I decide is going to happen now?' [ . . . ] so I think it makes you get a fuller appreciation how it would have sounded, how it would have been . . . if you do it in small sections and think for yourself . . .

A4: (it was) almost as if you were constructing it with Homer, so I think I understood the construction better [ . . . ] I think I'd put myself more in his situation rather than the characters' situation...

C19: It makes you think more, I think I got more out of it

C15: the same, because I think it is guiding you towards the answer . . . it gives you a quite good idea of what the answer might be . . . you can add your own and grow an answer . . .

The above comments revealed that the students gave consideration to the construction of the epic. This allowed them to enter into the author's situation and imaginatively co-create the meaning of the text. A5, for instance, seemed to identify with Homer through using the activities. She explicitly put herself into the author's shoes and asked herself the question *What do I decide is going to happen now?* This enabled her to see similarities between the text she had already read and the text she was about to produce through *predicting*.

Both A4 and A5 seemed to reflect on their own reading in the search for meaning, acknowledging that they had 'some responsibility for and power over' (Johnston, 1983) the construction of their own literary experience. A4 went on to argue that she acquired a fuller understanding and appreciation of the process of creating the text and the strategies that the author used in achieving his aesthetic effect.

*The reader in the story: engaging with the characters*

A2: If you read about the characters in detail, then . . . as you go back you see how the characters have changed and developed, so . . .

A1: today it is a totally different lifestyle . . . this is a completely different way of living, dressing, everything [ . . . ] we don't understand why Penelope is upstairs crying and not down . . .

A3: I think you can get comparisons with nowadays and then . . . a lot of people had the same emotions as we do today

C9: . . . maybe the feelings . . . yeah, but the situations . . .

C19: . . . maybe never give up . . . the emotions

A5: I definitely had sympathy for Penelope throughout the epic [ . . . ] Homer helps us definitely to connect with the characters and to have sympathy . . .

A4: You see, you are always taught to try and evaluate these people from such a long time on their own values or what people around them might have thought, so it's not something I automatically do . . . think of myself in that situation . . .

Students were cautious about projecting their own feelings and beliefs onto the characters. They were aware of the differences between the society for whom the text was written and the modern world in which they live. It appears that these differences make them more reluctant to interact with the characters. A4's literary education suggested a remote evaluation of the characters, which tried to reconstruct the responses of the original audience. Nevertheless, what is more significant in the classroom setting is not a recollection of likely interpretations of the intended audience, but a dialogic investigation into how the students perceived the text.

The account of A1, for instance, suggested an alienating atmosphere in the epic that made engagement more difficult for her. The Homeric world did not resemble her immediate world of experiences and acquired cognitive schemata. Moreover, it appears that her understanding of the text was partial and incomplete with arguments that remained at a superficial level.

A5 claimed that adopting the authorial point of view increased her sense of her engagement with the characters, whilst A2 appeared to develop responsiveness to the characters of the text, in that she was able to identify different stages in the plot where the characters were progressing. In other words, her partial picture of them became more complete during the process of reading when new themes were added and characters were better understood.

It was observed that situations in the text reminding students of lived experiences enhanced engagement. The question that arises, then, is what is the impact of a negative experience on readers. A12, for instance, was able to narrate a painful experience she had and she came to recall it through her reading of *Medea*:

Every now and then you find things that remind you of yourself, I think it was in *Medea* recently, I think it was Medea who said how, if you are intelligent, people despise you and I had a lot of that in the secondary school, I suffered a lot for being smart, even if I am not that smart . . .

Her thinking was reflective in that she related her own personal experiences to the behaviour of Medea in an effort to understand the character better, but she also linked her own experience to the experiences of the fictional characters in order to gain a better understanding of her own character. Relating Medea to her own situation, A12 seemed to acknowledge the opportunity 'to develop the ability to *think rationally within an emotionally colored context*' (Rosenblatt, 1970: p. 228, her emphasis).

Summarising, it appears that to engage with the text means to get involved in a dynamic process of interpretation rather than a passive assimilation of meaning that can be found entirely in the text. Engagement presupposes a negotiation between past reading experiences and the new themes found in the text.

**Teacher responses:** Teachers were asked to identify any stages in the teaching-learning process, where students were more actively involved than others. In their own words:

A1: [. . .] I think they got lot out of discussing in their small groups [. . .] I think we would have got a lot from bringing together the ideas of different groups together as a group but I did not do it very well, because of time

A2: When they are actually focusing on the particular question and think something was right, yes . . . but again I think it's more the dynamics of the particular class really . . .

C: I think different groups took different amounts of value out of it . . . I think perhaps in some ways it was best when people disagreed . . . there was a bit of a fight. I think that was really useful . . . I enjoy getting the responses of the class after they have done their individual work, their group discussion and then their feeding back

What emerges from the above comments is that each class with its distinctive group dynamics appreciated different stages of the process. Individual thinking, for instance, worked very well with students who preferred working on their own. This challenged them to write down their own ideas and reflect on them. Group work, on the other hand, was an opportunity for students to exchange views and ideas with their peers and modify their responses if needed. Reporting back to the class was particularly useful, according to the teachers, since all students enriched their repertoire of ideas not only from within their groups, but also across a wider spectrum, from the whole class.

In addition, teachers also associated personal involvement with greater understanding of the characters and argued that the activities helped students focus more easily on the selected passages and develop their sense of literary appreciation. The latter is particularly useful, especially in the case of classical literature, which is too often approached as a hallowed piece of literature:

Teacher C: The trouble with classicists, I think, is that they tend to regard the classical authors as being Gods, and therefore whatever Homer does is the right thing to do. In fact, another exercise might try to say this 'Well, if Homer had not done that, what else might he have done? or 'Could you construct an epic taking a different part of the Trojan cycle?' . . . and this would have been more satisfactory, so they could look at the process of composition for themselves

Teacher A1: You are thinking of how the story works, of all kinds of angles in the story . . . on the literature, which you only think of if you start thinking 'How could it go? How it could be different?' [. . .] You can ask what would have happened if the poet had done it differently and that's very important . . .

Development of personal responses was, however, evident during the reading process; students were able to articulate their views and defend their choice, using arguments that related to the text or to points in the selected passages that were more striking to certain individuals than others. The fact that different voices were raised in the class challenged class discussions further and provided teachers with the opportunity to co-ordinate the class discussion more effectively. As teacher A2 pointed out: They are developing different responses. It is obvious that A1 sees Odysseus as homesick, as a lonely character who has all those sufferings, whereas A2 is definitely not like that. She thinks of him as a proud character, proud of what he had done and all of that is nice, because they are both getting into it and seeing it from their own way and take something out and then reinterpret it through their own eyes, which is good, they are developing their own ideas . . .

Practitioners were conscious that any justification of classical literature should derive from students themselves rather than from 'informed' interpretations coming from the teacher. This is exemplified in the following comment:

Unless young people engage and become involved in what they are doing, they won't benefit, won't learn, won't succeed: and why should they, if they don't see the point? Educators have to make them see the point-which we can only do if we see it (feel it in our bones) first . . .

The above quotations highlight the importance of active learning on students' part and teachers' task to facilitate and encourage personal engagement. This leads to the justification of literature as a way for developing students' literary appreciation. More importantly, it also helps students take control over the way they read and participate as active, critical readers in the reading process.

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# Tacitus versus Oratory

## Hilary Walters

Tacitus' style is often described as a reaction to the rhetorical style of earlier writers. In this article I shall try to explain and illustrate what he is reacting to and why. The greatest influence on Latin prose style in the centuries before Tacitus was Cicero; Tacitus often seems to be reacting very strongly to the characteristics of Ciceronian oratory, even though this was forensic or political speech writing, not historiography.

### Cicero

Cicero's speeches were written with delivery to an audience in mind. The sorts of stylistic effects that he uses are not subtle or obscure: the law courts where Cicero would have made his speeches were not places for the faint-hearted. Lily Ross Taylor gives a lively description of the scene (p98ff): eight open-air stages in the Roman forum, where the presiding judge and jury (as many as 70 people) sat, benches below for the defendants and witnesses, high-ranking politicians involved in many capacities, and a crowd of on-lookers milling around, seeking out the largest 'corona' ('circle', group of spectators), as this suggested that the best orator was speaking. An orator's task was to 'prove, please and sway' the jury: 'probare necessitatis est, delectare suavitatis, flectere victoriae' (to prove is a matter of necessity, to please is delightful, to sway means victory) (Cicero, *Orator* 69).

Cicero's speeches were structured according to well-established principles. The anonymous *Ad Herennium* (Book IV) gives an exhaustive list. Many of these require the balancing or paralleling of clauses, for example:

- Repetitio (epanaphora): the same word starts each phrase
- Conversio (antistrophe): the same word ends each phrase
- Complexio (interlacement): repetitio and conversio combined
- Contrarium (reasoning by contraries): two opposing statements, using one to prove the other, i.e. antithesis
- Dissolutum (asyndeton): omitting conjunctions

Of these figures of speech the author says that they have 'cum multum venustatis tum gravitatis et acrimoniae plurimum' (both much charm and weightiness, and very much force); of antithesis that it is 'commodum auditu' (pleasant to hear) and neatly proves the point in question 'ut dilui non possit aut multo difficillime possit' (so that it cannot be disproved, or only with great difficulty). Of asyndeton that it is 'vehementissimum et ad brevitatem adcommodatum' (very forceful and suited to conciseness) (*Ad Herennium* IV 19-20, 25-26, 41).

Another section deals with phrases, clauses and the periodic sentence. Phrases (which may just be single words) and clauses are best in threes (the familiar tricolon). The author describes how single words 'intervallus distinguuntur caesa oratione' (are set apart by pauses in staccato speech). The comparative effects of a tricolon of phrases and clauses are neatly described: 'in hoc genere ex remotione brachii et contortione dexteræ gladius ad corpus adferri, in hoc autem crebro et celeri corpus vulnere consauciari videtur' (in the latter, a sword seems to be swung back by the arm, whirled round and brought to the body; in the former the body seems to be struck by frequent, quick wounds). Cicero uses similar language, when analysing a sentence (*Orator* 222-226); phrases ('incisa') or clauses ('membra') are like 'pugiunculi' ('little daggers'). He concludes: 'nec ullum genus est dicendi aut melius aut fortius quam binis aut ternis ferire verbis, nonnumquam singulis, paulo alias pluribus, inter quae variis clausulis interponit se raro numerosa comprehensio' (no style of speaking is better or more forceful than to strike with phrases of two or three words, sometimes with single words, at other times with several, in between which comes sparingly the rhythmical period with varying cadences).

Cicero had an extremely acute ear, and was very sensitive to the rhythm of prose. A long section in *Orator* discusses prose rhythm, tracing its history and use. Greek orators, Isocrates or, even earlier, Thrasymachus and Gorgias, introduced it; Roman orators adopted it to varying degrees, some finding it unattractive, or even denying its existence. Cicero dismisses the latter with contempt: 'quod qui non sentiunt, quas auris habeant aut quid in his hominis simile sit nescio' (as regards those who do not perceive this, what kind of ears they have, or what human characteristics they have, I do not know). He records a speech where the rhythmical end of a sentence was particularly spectacular: 'hoc dichoreo tantus clamor contionis excitatus est, ut admirabile esset' ('with this ditrochee ('temeritas fili comprobavit'; 'the son's rashness demonstrated') it was amazing what a shout arose from the audience'). The Loeb edition suggests that the subject matter rather than the rhythm may have caused this effect, but Cicero feels that 'comprobavit fili temeritas' would have fallen flat (even though it gives a prominent position to the important word 'temeritas'). Cicero's analysis of prose rhythm in general is confusing, particularly when he tries to go into great detail; however he often repeats the point that rhythm can be created simply by the kind of balanced or antithetical sentences mentioned above, and reading these aloud can recreate the effect that he was responding to. On the other hand, he also acknowledges that too much prose rhythm was counter-productive in lawcourt speeches: its unnatural quality 'tollit funditus veritatem et fidem' (completely removes the impression of sincerity).

Choice of words was also considered very important. In the century before Cicero, there had been a purge of non-standard words from literary Latin, probably in the interests of clarity and effective communication. Julius Caesar wrote a book called 'De analogia' (About the choice of words) in which he said that an orator should avoid an unusual word 'tamquam scopulum' ('like a reef') (Aul Gellius 1.10.4). Quintilian (1.6.42) suggests words that should be avoided: 'turchinabundus, lurchinabundus' ('gobbling', 'guzzling'), as well as the delightful 'topper' ('quickly'). Cicero acknowledges the effectiveness of archaic, coined or metaphorical words, but advises judicious use. Archaic words are better in poetry (although they can lend dignity (*de Oratore* 153); coined words ('versutiloquas malitias' 'twisty-speaking wickedness') are merely mentioned, without discussion – presumably they are also felt to be very poetic. Metaphor is recommended most enthusiastically: no mode of speech is 'floreantior' ('more effective'); use of metaphor 'maxime tamquam stellis notat et illuminat orationem' ('greatly distinguishes and brightens a speech like stars') (*de Oratore* 166; 170). However, in most cases an orator should be 'verecundus' ('restrained') in using metaphor; full-scale use belongs to the grand style of writing appropriate to the particularly emotional sections of a speech.

A balanced and rhythmical approach to writing pervades Cicero's works.

For example, from the end of the 1st Catiline (Ch 32) (arranged to show the parallel phrases in asyndeton, and with two rising tetracola, to trump the normal tricolon):

Quare

(a) secedant improbi,

secernant se a bonis,

unum in locum congregantur,

muro denique, id quod saepe iam dixi, secernantur a nobis,

(Therefore these villains must withdraw, separate themselves from the good citizens, gather in one place, at last, as I have often said, separate themselves from us by the city wall)

desinant

(b) insidiari domi suae consuli,  
circumstare tribunal praetoris urbani,  
obsidere cum gladiis curiam,  
malleolos et faces ad inflammandam urbem comparare.  
(they must stop lying in wait for the consul in his own house,  
surrounding the tribunal of the urban praetor, besieging the senate  
house with swords, collecting firebrands and torches to set fire to  
the city)

four clauses based on repeated iussive subjunctives, with variety of position; 'rising' because the clauses get longer.

The contrast of 'boni' and 'improbi' shows Cicero's views: a man who is 'improbus' is in some way sub-standard (morally or politically), who insolently demands more than his fair share; the 'boni', like Cicero, support the status quo.

four clauses based on infinitives, again with variety of position (and to avoid the hexameter rhythm of 'insidiari' at the end of a clause); 'rising' because of the increasing seriousness – Cicero modestly puts himself, the consul, in the least important position.

The extended image of warfare, clearly civil war, expresses the wickedness of the Catilinarians.

This is highly oratorical writing, which cries out to be read aloud and delivered with the flourish of a professional speaker. But the spectre of redundancy which niggled Cicero can be discerned; there is a temptation to create unnecessary parallel clauses, for the sake of the effect rather than the actual subject matter. Tacitus will not give way to such a thing.

#### Reactions to Cicero

How does history link with oratory?

Why should the effects aimed for in a speech in the Senate or law courts have any bearing on the style adopted by a writer of history? This seems puzzling to us, but in fact Roman writers seem to think that history writing was a branch of oratory, although having links to poetry and with a less serious purpose, to entertain an audience rather than win a serious debate. Sallust reacts to the prevailing rhetorical style with violent opposition; Livy prefers a Ciceronian approach, although Quintilian (10.1.32) finds a similar 'ubertas' (richness) in both, but in Livy a lack of clarity ('neque satis docebit eum qui non speciem expositionis sed fidem quaerit' 'he does not explain clearly enough for a reader who seeks not elegance of exposition but credibility').

Oratory, too, moves on. Cicero rather smugly apologises for eclipsing earlier speakers, (Brutus 123: 'nocuimus fortasse quod veteres orationes post nostras . . . a plerisque legi sunt desitae': 'perhaps I have done some harm because since my speeches, the older speeches have stopped being read by most people') but the heights he reached meant that followers too had to find another way. The changing political situation reduced the powers of senators. The Republic was no longer, the Senate no longer ruled the Rome and its empire, aristocrats no longer vied for supreme power and influence. Augustus, the first emperor, consolidated his hold on power and the senate bowed to his wishes. Oratory, although still offering advancement and enrichment, no longer offered the key to real power. Nevertheless, rhetoric continued to be the centre of Roman education, but it had somehow lost its heart.

The two Senecas exemplify the changes in rhetoric in the 1st century AD. In terms of style, a development from Cicero can be observed; in terms of content, things have changed. The *Controversiae* of the Elder Seneca make jaw-dropping reading. In these Seneca recalls demonstration debates held between famous orators. The format requires a point of law, and a fictitious case which will test that point of law. Pride evidently

seems to have been taken in inventing the most outrageous and extraordinary cases, for example:

(Seneca *Controversiae* 1.2.) Law: a priestess must be chaste and of chaste parents, pure and of pure parents. Situation: a virgin is captured by pirates and sold; she was bought by a pimp and made a prostitute. When men came to her, she begged them for a gift of money (i.e. without her providing the expected 'services'). She could not get money from a soldier who had come to her; when he struggled with her and tried to use force, she killed him. She was tried, acquitted and sent back to her family. She asks for a priesthood.

The style developed during this period clearly derives from the balanced, parallel clauses so beloved of Cicero, but taken to greater extremes. Long, complex periods fall out of use, and balanced or antithetical clauses become more pointed in the search for a clever, witty effect. Possible approaches to the non-prostitute priestess scenario include the ominous:

'Inter barbaros quid passa sit nescio:  
quid pati potuerit scio.'

(Among barbarians (i.e. the pirates) what she suffered, I don't know: what she could have suffered, I do know.)

Or, in reply to her claiming 'nemo mihi virginitatem eripuit' (No-one took away my virginity), the speaker replies:

'Sed omnes quasi erepturi venerunt,  
sed omnes quasi eripuissent recesserunt.  
(But everyone came to the brothel as though to take it away, and left as though they had taken it away.)

Once again, as orators seek for pointed contrast, redundancy looms.

#### Tacitus

Tacitus had an illustrious political career and was an orator of note, although he published none of his speeches. Pliny (2.11.17) describes him speaking 'eloquentissime et quod eximium orationi eius inest, semnwi' ('very eloquently, and solemnly – the distinctive quality of his oratory'). His early work, the *Dialogus* (AD 101/2), hints at why he rejected the style of oratory which he had inherited. Messalla (12.2) refers to oratory as 'lucrosa' and 'sanguinans' 'in locum teli reperta' (greedy and blood-stained, invented as a weapon); one thinks of the many rigged trials mentioned in the *Annals*, for example Torquatus Silanus in XV.35 whose sentence is passed after false accusations and, presumably, a defence so cursory that it does not even warrant a mention. Maternus, however, takes this further. Oratory is indeed a weapon, but one no longer necessary in the 'composita et quieta et beata re publica' (settled, calm and happy state) of Vespasian's rule (36.4). The subject matter of lawsuits is more humdrum: (37.4) 'de furto aut formula aut interdico' not 'de ambitu comitorum, de expilatis sociis et civibus trucidatis' (about a theft or agreed summary or an injunction' not 'about bribery in elections, allies fleeced or citizens butchered'). Courts themselves are not the great public arenas where Cicero performed, but could even be hearings before individual magistrates in 'auditoria aut tabularia' (39.1) (audience rooms or offices). Hence orators are not inspired to rise to great heights; but in any case, oratory is not 'magna et notabilis' ('great and noteworthy'), it is 'alumna licentiae, quam stulti libertatem vocant, comes seditionum, effrenati populi incitamentum, sine obsequio, sine severitate, contumax, temeraria, arrogans' ('the offspring of licence, which stupid people call liberty, the comrade of treason, something which incites an uncontrolled mob, without discipline or seriousness, defiant, thoughtless, arrogant') (40.2).

His mature style can be seen as a rejection of this sort of oratory. Redundancy is avoided at all costs. Where we expect parallel clauses,

Tacitus goes to great lengths to avoid rigid paralleling of words and expressions. His writing does not flow rhythmically but constantly pulls us up short. Wilkinson (p162) sees no real discernable rhythmical pattern in his historical works, neither wholly normal, nor consciously rhythmical. Everything depends on choice of words: every word is heavy with meaning or meanings; conciseness is sought by stripping away all unnecessary words.

So when we read Tacitus, we need to approach him with the content and purpose of his writing always in view (Miller Tacitus XV p. xvii Tacitus' style 'should not be studied in isolation from the content of his narrative'). We should not expect the crafted style of the orator, but should focus attention on the words he uses.

In *Annals* XV. 34 Tacitus is examining the character of Nero and his effect on Roman society as exemplified by the character of Vatinius.

[34] Illic,

(a) plerique ut arbitrabantur, triste,  
ut ipse, providum potius et secundis numinibus  
evenit:

(There, something happened which seemed to most people a bad omen, but to Nero himself, a sign and by divine providence)

nam egresso qui adfuerat populo

(b) vacuum et  
sine ullius noxa  
theatrum collapsum est.

(For, when the people who had been present had left, the theatre collapsed, empty and without hurting anyone.)

ergo per compositos cantus

(c) grates dis atque ipsam recentis casus fortunam celebrans  
petiturusque maris Hadriae traiectus  
apud Beneventum interim consedit, ubi gladiatorium munus a  
Vatinio celebre edebatur.

(Therefore Nero composed songs and celebrated thanks to the gods and the good luck of the recent event, and about to make the crossing of the Adriatic swell, he stopped meanwhile at Beneventum, where a gladiatorial show was being put on by Vatinius.)

(d) Vatinius inter foedissima eius aulae ostenta fuit, sutrinae  
tabernae alumnus,

corpore detorto, facetiis scurrilibus;  
(Vatinius was among the foulest portents of his court, the nursling of a cobbler's shop, with a twisted body and rude jokes;)

(e) primo in contumelias adsumptus,  
dehinc optimi cuiusque criminatione eo usque valuit,  
ut gratia pecunia vi nocendi etiam malos praemineret.  
(first taken on as a laughing-stock, he then became so powerful by accusing good men, that in favour, money, power to do harm he outstripped even the wicked.)

In (a) variety is achieved by reversing 'plerique ut' and 'ut ipse'; also by the single word 'triste' paralleled to 5 words (providum potius et secundis numinibus), an adjective and an ablative phrase.

In (b) a similar, unbalanced parallel of 'vacuum', one word, an adjective and 'sine ullius noxa' three words, a prepositional phrase. So far, the effect of the search for variety has been just to keep the reader engaged, unable to relax into the feeling of an expectation fulfilled.

In (c) the use of 'celebrans' with 'grates dis' is very strained (a zeugma); 'celebrans' is paralleled to 'petiturus' – two participles, but a present and a future, and in different positions in their clauses. 'Maris Hadriae' is poetic; the normal phrase would be 'maris Adriatici'. Nero's grand, pompous expressions of thanks, combined with the poetic 'maris

Hadriae', are followed by the bathos of a gladiatorial show and Vatinius, introducing the theme of paradox and incongruity which concludes this chapter.

In (d), the search for variety continues, but our attention turns to Tacitus' 'hard-working' words. Vatinius is out of place: he is 'foedissima' but belongs to the 'aulae', yet he comes from a 'sutrinae tabernae' of which he is an 'alumnus' (an archaic and poetical word, giving an elevated tone). The detail of a cobbler's shop may well be the simple truth, but leather-working had long been a despised trade (presumably due to the use of urine to tan the leather). 'Ostenta' is a particularly weighty word, which Tacitus expects us to ponder on; Vatinius is a 'portent' because he is a sign of things to come under such a system of government; portents are often given by freaks of nature (e.g. *Annals* XV 47, where the Pisonian conspiracy is foretold by 'bicipites hominum aliorumve animalium partus' 'two-headed offspring of humans and other animals'), and Vatinius is physically one such.

In (e) his extraordinary career is outlined. What could be more degrading than to be a court jester, to be laughed at because of one's deformity? Yet from this humblest of beginnings, Vatinius gains enormous power (eo usque valuit . . .). In a normal world, the wicked are taken to court, but in Nero's perverted world Vatinius accuses 'optimus quisque' (all excellent people). He gains supremacy, but he does not surpass good people; this is a society where to get on, you have to be bad – and Vatinius surpasses 'etiam malos'. The tricolon of 'incisa', like 'little daggers', makes the reader reflect on what constitutes power: gratia, pecunia, vi nocendi' (the favour (of Nero), money, power to do harm).

Tacitus thus rejects rhetoric and relies on the power of words and ideas. By juxtaposing incongruous words, he impresses on his readers the uncertainty of a dangerous society that he himself has experienced, where basic values are perverted and the best people are the most vulnerable. Such a serious purpose has no room for the tricks of oratory. History and oratory have changed places. Oratory is now simply for entertainment; history is serious.

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