

VARIA DIDACTICA

LATIN SELF-STUDY AND TEACHING TEXTS FOR HIGH SCHOOLS¹

With the present state of flux in education, Latin teaching has been placed under greater pressures than ever before. Yet almost in every centre, even in areas where Latin has been phased out because of "rationalisation", pupils and their parents approach the universities for advice on private tutoring in Latin. At the same time there is a market that was consistently neglected in the South African school system. There has to date been a National Examination, which fell under the former Department of Education and Training of the House of Assembly, which was annually taken by private candidates, some candidates from a few "Black" schools which offer Latin, and some from independent or correspondence colleges. Most, but not all, were students from traditionally "Black" areas, where Latin is not generally taught.

In theory private candidates could enrol for any one of seven Latin Matriculation examinations, each adapted from a common South African "Core Syllabus" to the purposes of individual examining bodies.² These students were generally left to flounder on their own, and their matriculation results have to date been predictably poor. The only extant South African correspondence course for Latin is not suitable for such students, and is at present under review, under the guidance of Dr. D. Coetzee of UOFS (see below).

Admittedly the status of examinations in South Africa will be severely affected by the present political and educational restructuring, and the whole battery of examinations at present offered by a phalanx of examining bodies will presumably soon be rationalized, particularly in a small subject such as Latin. Yet until such time as such restructuring is made known, we need to work within the confines of the present system. In the new dispensation we can assume that some similar examination will be continued. This paper sets out to review material at present available in South Africa for "distance education" in Latin.

Self-study aid with the Cambridge Latin Course

The pioneering approach of the first series of the Cambridge Latin Course, which appeared more than twenty years ago, has been largely accepted as a sensible way to start teaching Latin to junior high school pupils. The approach at first entailed offering pupils interesting

¹ A first draft of this review article was discussed at the *Vakindaba vir Latyn*, RAU Island, September 1993.

² These were the former "Joint Matriculation Board", now the Independent Certification Board; the Education Departments of the Cape Province, OFS, Transvaal and Natal, the Departments of Education and Culture of the House of Representatives and the House of Assembly (the so-called National Senior Certificate, which is the examination most often taken by private candidates). At the time of going to press the new educational dispensation had not yet been finalised, but it is to be assumed that some sort of regional distribution of examining bodies will still obtain.

reading matter, with very little basic grammatical elucidation, and a great deal of Roman cultural background. It was hoped that pupils would form their own instinctive grammatical insights. The series has undergone one major and at least one minor revision. The authors of the series have through the years adapted it, in some ways returning to traditional concepts (e.g. in reintroducing traditional grammatical terminology). Even the format was changed. From a series of four sets of loose pamphlets held together in differently coloured boxes, each box representing a "Unit" (1971-1973), they progressed to four two-volume "Units" (1982-1983), still using the same colours, plus, with each "Unit" a slim volume of "Language information", and a "Teacher's Handbook".

While the Course is almost universally acknowledged as excellent, the proliferation of separate volumes made it a very expensive Latin handbook to use in the South African classroom. The new "Integrated Edition, with Language Information" comprises a single volume for each "Unit". Unit I, recently purchased by me in England, came to £7 sterling, which at the present rate of exchange would mean about R35 to R40 per volume, and pupils need use only the first three.³ By the end of Unit III all the language work prescribed in the Core Syllabus for Latin of the various South African Latin examining bodies has been covered, and pupils have, in addition, absorbed a vast body of information about the Roman world.

Now, as concomitant to "Unit I Integrated Edition", Cambridge's authors, Jean Hubbard and Pat Story, have produced an "Independent Learning Manual" with an "Answer Book" (1992), which consists of photocopiable masters on which the normal copyright provisions have been waived, with the proviso that photocopying is done for educational or personal use within the institution which purchases the book. The authors explain (Preface p.iii) that the *Manual* is intended for use by a variety of readers: "students learning Latin on their own, students on short courses where independent study is the norm, privately tutored pupils requiring additional material, those catching up after illness or transfer, or bright students working ahead of the class, for use if the teacher is ill, for group classes with pupils at different levels, and in any other 'self-study' environment". To this one may add the South African concept, already in place, of "distance education", which, in Latin context, has so far been the step-child of an apparently uncaring mother.

The *Independent Learning Manual* has a long introduction, outlining study methods in simple language, suitable for a high-school beginner. It advises use of the CLC Audio Cassette, filmstrips, and computer programs, but, even without these, it makes the material in Unit I manageable for pupils who do not have a trained classicist at their beck and call.⁴ The "study-guide" largely comprises self-discovery exercises and the kind of leading questions good teachers use in the classroom as their main teaching tools. The instructions that accompany the first few phases of Unit I are not more complicated than, e.g. (p.2) "Read carefully. Note the kind of sentence where the order of words is different from English". As the Latin in Unit I becomes progressively more difficult, the instructions are fuller, but the principle of "self-discovery" is still maintained. The answer book covers most answers, and indicates where variants would be applicable.

The pupil is working with three books together at any one time, the *Manual*, the original *Integrated Text*, and the answer book. Numbering and cross-referencing is fairly clear, and pupils should not trouble finding their way around. At each stage there are "Checking"

³ Usually the fourth unit is not used in SA, as setwork for the Stds. Nine and Ten syllabi is usually prescribed from other sources, notably the South African *Tria Saecula* (University of Stellenbosch) series.

⁴ It must be stressed that pupils do need to purchase the basic books of the CLC as well as this *Manual*.

reminders. "Progress records" are provided, with blanks for pupils to record achievement, with clear page references both to the *Manual* and the text book, so that pupils can at all times be clear on what they have covered. A supervising teacher, even if she or he is unfamiliar with Latin, can at least check whether prescriptions have been carried out.

The didactic principles of self-discovery, a minimum of technical explanation, and the emphasis on genuine Latinity and Roman culture underlying the CLC approach have been well-documented in the past, and need not be repeated here. Suffice it to say that the system offers Junior High School pupils an exciting introduction to the Roman world, and provides them from the beginning with interesting material (based on the archaeology of Pompeii), while at the same time catering for the few who will continue with serious Classical studies. *Unit I* of the CLC covers about as much as Standard Six pupils can cover comfortably in one year, and brings them to full familiarity with the six tenses of the indicative, and with the functions of all six tenses, but without a great deal of stress on all possible forms. It is to be hoped that the authors will in time produce the equivalents of the *Manual* and *Answer Book* for *Units II* and *III*. Even if these are not immediately forthcoming, a clever pupil, once he or she has been trained by the *Manual*, should be able to cope individually with the next *Units*, even with very little supervision. The system is highly recommended for any situation where normal classroom teaching cannot take place, as outlined above.

The Oxford Latin Course

This text book first appeared in 1987, but has not received extensive publicity in the SA educational world. Its production has clearly benefitted from the pioneering work of its Cambridge rivals, but its authors, Maurice Balme and James Morwood, claim to have incorporated the best features of both modern and traditional methods of Latin teaching. Even a cursory reading will validate their claim.

The Oxford Course comprises three "*Parts*" and a single "*Teacher's Book*". At about £8.50 per "*Part*", the series is not much less expensive than the CLC. For the SA situation *Parts II* and *III* together would apparently bring pupils up to the end of Standard Eight. Part I, which I have to hand, covers all tenses of the indicative, and also gives a fairly complete view of the declension of nouns. Its contents offer material suitable to the South African core Syllabus requirements up to about the middle of Standard Seven. The story of a boy called "Quintus" is featured, but not just any Quintus, it is Quintus Horatius Flaccus, the poet, as a boy, with his family, which includes an imaginary sister Horatia. Quintus, predictably, goes to school and there studies, *inter alia*, some Greek myths. As the chapters featuring these myths occur early in the book (Ch. VII-X), they will most certainly form part of the present Standard Six syllabus. This agrees very well with the requirements of the present and possible future SA Core Syllabi.

Each chapter starts with a picture, a sort of comic-book feature with cartoon characters, (a stylization or sophistication which is a far cry from the CLC's more realistic sketches).⁵ Each picture has a short caption embodying the structure to be studied in that chapter. Then follows a longer and sometimes quite dense passage of Latin ("made-up", as with the CLC). Vocabulary is offered in a shaded block, grammatical explanations are short and to the point, and offered in a "chatty" direct discourse with the reader as notional pupil. This seems to indicate that the book could work as a self-study manual, but as some

5 The illustrator is a Cathy Balme, apparently either the wife or daughter of one of the authors. "Background" or "Classical Culture" sections are illustrated with photographs of sculpture, vases and mosaics, in the traditional "modern" manner.

explanations are so concise as to be virtually elliptic, they would probably need a teacher for proper elucidation. The book is not really meant for independent study. Copious exercises of a largely traditional sort follow, and include translating into Latin, a practice wholly discarded by the CLC.

As with the CLC, pupils are trained to approach passages of continuous prose without the sort of fear experienced by pupils being taught in the "traditional" manner, whose first confrontation with continuous prose begins when Caesar is thrust at them in Standard Nine. The OLC often combines exercises in prose translation with "comprehension questioning", as an inducement to rapid reading of continuous prose.

"Cultural background" is based partly on the known facts of Horace's life, and partly on the sort of broad information generally offered in traditional courses: nothing is quite as exciting as the CLC's Pompeian boy's adventures. It does, however, offer a slightly broader background, and the historical and cultural information it contains is thorough enough to comply with the requirements of the SA Core Syllabus for the junior standards.

A "summary of grammar" fulfils the same function as the CLC's "Language Information". The OLC's vocabulary list gives complete dictionary details in the traditional manner, useful for pupils intending to progress through Matriculation Latin, and these words, although the list is shorter, correlate very well with the longer list in *Lexis Latina*, the word list prescribed for use in SA schools. A short English-Latin vocabulary will cater for those teachers who enjoy setting translation into Latin as a learning tool. Another plus-factor is the useful index of grammatical usages at the end of each volume.

In all, this course is also admirably suited for use in South African schools. If its authors could be induced to write an independent learning manual, it would do very well for "distance education", as outlined above.

Reading Classical Latin, a Reasonable Approach

By way of contrast with the above books, this "reader" is less suitable for school use, but perhaps not without merit for the universities. Its author, Robert Ball, who is from the University of Hawaii, explains that many university courses are unrealistic in their demands for the attention of their students, assume too much grammatical sophistication in the students, and do not differentiate between essentials and non-essentials, including the "wasteful drudgery" of translating English sentences into Latin, particularly with insufficient context.

The most positive feature of the book is that it incorporates "real" Latin from the beginning, longer passages from the *Fabulae* of Hyginus, and short "epigraphs" at the head of each chapter, taken from other authors. Interlinear translations in Italics gloss words in the Latin order, as they stand. Grammar is presented with a view to fostering reading ability, not reproduction. Yet, if the "Table of Contents" is consulted, the course appears highly traditional, with each declension of nouns and each conjugation of verbs offered in a separate chapter (although the readings in any one chapter will incorporate words from other categories as well).

It is a pity that such an admirably intended and prepared work should fall down because of the vagaries of its production. It is typewritten, reproduced in A4 size, poorly duplicated, and each page appears crowded and "busy". Its 72 "lessons" are intended for completion in one academic year, and none is overlong, yet the whole impresses unfavorably, and appears calculated to put off all but the most dedicated students.

A long series of appendices (pp.373-547) epitomizes and compiles language information for easy reference, but in the end the student is still left with an impression of a vast, diffuse wood, with many and disparate individual trees: short-cuts, such as a handy six-tense block for organisation of the indicative, or an "horizontal" overview of declensions, is wholly missing. A random example from the epitome, pp.396-397, offers on the LH the declensions of the Greek names Midas, Niobe and Anchises, followed by second declension m and f nouns, and on the RH, the Greek names Delos and Panthus, with below them, second declension neuter, *donum* and *aevum* (-om, with a footnote to explain the -o-). A "*Cumulative vocabulary*" (pp.483-539) indicates the pages on which words first appear in chapter word lists. It is obviously useful for reading Hyginus, to have all the characters' names listed, but the vocabulary seems unwieldy with its overweight of Greek mythological names, that could better have appeared in a separate little "Who's who". The author's overview of syntax (pp.469-479) appears more successful, as it is clear, short and concise, and groups together what logically goes together, such as "*Dependent uses of the subjunctive*", or "*Temporal clauses with both indicative and subjunctive*".

In all, one could wish that the author's good intentions had been more happily realised by the final product.

Success Correspondence College: Latin Courses for Juniors And Seniors

This course comprises at present separate volumes for Junior and Senior work, and some guidance on setwork. The new head of Success College kindly put these to the disposal of the present author for review, but it was subsequently agreed that, as the course is due for a major overhaul, the review would be used internally as a guideline for updating of the course. At the *Vakindaba vir Latyn*, held on the RAU Island on the Vaal Dam in September, the matter was discussed, and Dr. Dirk Coetzee undertook to liaise with the College about the matter. It will hopefully be fully reviewed in a future edition of *Akroterion*.

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