

## On Coming After

*Inaugural lecture delivered in Cambridge on October 17, 2001*

Vice-Chancellor, ladies and gentlemen:

There was a time, so it is said, when Inaugural lectures were necessary so that people could see what the new man – for they were always men – looked like; most present would never get another chance, certainly not a second lecture. As with many such stories, facts ought not get in the way: in the first years of the Chair which I now occupy, the holder was in fact expected to lecture for a full hour five, subsequently reduced to four, times a week during terms and, except in times of plague, the Long Vacation – no regulations are laid down for the audience. If that were not enough, the first holder of this Chair under the new dispensation of 1546, Nicholas Carr, first of Pembroke and then of Trinity, was, so his biographer tells us, ‘obliged to resort to the practice of medicine in order to maintain his wife and family, the stipend of the Greek professor being insufficient for that purpose’. Well, the infirm of Cambridge need not worry just yet – the shortage of doctors in the NHS is acute, but not perhaps *that* acute ... If Carr’s sad financial plight speaks to us of continuity between past and present, the myth about Inaugural Lectures shows us how times have changed, perhaps for the better; academic life is now such that it might be thought (though I would disagree) that we all see far too much of each other, in Tripos reform committees, Faculty Boards and the other meta-discursive situations of this life. Be that as it may, the bright optimism of the term ‘Inaugural’ conceals the painful truth that such occasions, for both lecturer and audience, are really about dealing with the weight of a hallowed past and hoping that the present is not as grim as it might appear; there is an almost inevitable element of navel-gazing to such gatherings – how on earth did we reach *this* situation? Most Inaugurals, alas, also imply a previous retirement and thus carry a sense of closure, bringing with it the fear (or is it hope?) of radical change, and a temptation, which in the past has not always been unjustified, to see the whole fortune of a subject as embodied in the holder of the relevant Chair. Even if I did believe in such a discontinuous model, it is far too early (and would be absurdly presumptuous) to attempt a summary of what geologists will come to call the ‘Easterling era’, but the earth can move in more than one way, and my concern today will be with the *variety* of ancient, specifically Hellenistic and specifically literary, constructions of and ways of dealing with, talking about, and characterising the past, all of which are in fact the taking of positions about the present. If my selection of texts must inevitably be minute, it is, nevertheless, *not* presumptuous (I hope) to hope that such a concern can help us to understand what we do now, and why we do it.

If we do prefer a more developmental view of recent history, then it is of course Aristotle who shows us the way. In the *Poetics* Aristotle briefly traces the dramatic genres from their alleged origins in popular performances to the *telos* ‘the end’ of their proper nature, their *phusis*, most fully exemplified, as far as tragedy is concerned, by Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus*. From Homer, *qua* poet, descended both tragedy and comedy. Aristotle bequeathed to the western tradition a teleological and narrative form of literary history from which escape has proved remarkably difficult, partly of course because there is something deeply satisfying about closed narratives. It is temptingly easy to construct a similar narrative of the recent history of the Regius Chair of Greek. In the beginning was Denys Page who knew everything and from whom all forms of life descend, then Geoffrey Kirk who opened the world of

Homer and epic to generations of students, then Eric Handley who restored Menander and New Comedy to us, and then my predecessor, Pat Easterling, whose name is almost synonymous with the study of tragedy, particularly Sophocles; in the Aristotelian model, it may be said, with Pat the Regius Chair reached its *phusis* and then 'stopped' (ἐπαύσατο). What follows in most ancient narratives is, as is well known, terminal decline or, at best, stagnation. If it might be thought that I have reason to view such narratives with suspicion, let me say that the briefest consideration of Pat's monumental services to the study of Greek both within and without Cambridge will suggest that, as happens too often for comfort, there might just be something in Aristotle's rather peculiar views. On a personal level, from my very first days in Cambridge Pat has been more than generous with her time, her advice and her wisdom, and I here record my heartfelt thanks to her; Sophocles famously gave hospitality to a divine snake, divine certainly, but a snake none the less – I hope that the parallelism is not exact.

There are of course other narratives, both *post* and, in some cases, *propter* Aristotle, which one could tell. The poetry of the third century BC is full of representations of the relation between past and present, and this can be no accident of survival. In the fourth book of Apollonius' *Argonautica*, the Argonauts, who carry all hopes and fears for the survival of Greek culture with them, are plunged into an impenetrable primeval darkness and lose their way, drifting in aimlessness and ignorance, not a 5 star in sight, not knowing how to rescue their civilising mission, until they are saved by the epiphany of a young (well, youngish) blonde god from the south east who brings enlightenment and restores a sense of direction and purpose. Fortunately, the ancients recognised that such epic narratives were a special form of fiction ...

The majority of my scholarly life has been devoted to literature which is conventionally categorised as 'post-classical', and if I begin with this stress upon my own sense of epigonal status, I hope I will be forgiven. I used to joke in lectures that the period after the death of Alexander the Great is usually called 'the Wars of the Successors' because no one knows or cares about their names; I don't think I will be making *that* joke again. It is, however, with representations of succession that I am partly concerned in this lecture. We will, however, for once let Droysen rest in peace, and I will not trace again the origins of the idea of 'the Hellenistic' in modern scholarship. As far as modern literary history is concerned, the idea is of course more time-honoured than the name. Without going back to the laments of Schlegel and others about the decadence of Alexandrian literature, we find that in his *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur* of 1831 Friedrich August Wolf, the founder of modern Homeric studies, divided Greek literature from the beginnings to the end of Byzantium into 6 periods, of which the fourth indeed stretched from the death of Alexander until the battle of Actium, i.e. exactly the extent of what is now conventionally thought of as 'the Hellenistic period'. Twenty years later Karl Otfried Müller simplified things by dividing all of Greek literature down to the high Empire into 3 periods which he labelled, the First, the Second, and the Third (this last indeed beginning with Alexandria). Müller did not – if you will allow me a self-indulgent footnote - live to write about his third period, but his *History* was elegantly completed by his translator, John Donaldson (not *the* John Donaldson, I hasten to add). Donaldson was an Australian classicist (his brother made a fortune in sperm oil), a Fellow of Trinity, and his appointment to a headship in Bury St Edmunds is described by the *National Dictionary of Biography* as 'unfortunate for the institution and for himself' (*absit omen*), though it speaks approvingly of 'the wholesome intellectual

influence he exerted on the town, where he greatly improved the Athenaeum and raised the level of intellectual culture in general' as Australians customarily do – I added that last bit. Donaldson died, incidentally, of overwork.

Periodisation and the stereotypes which accompany it are, of course, always with us, even when relatively brief flourishings are under examination. In his marvellous Inaugural Lecture of fifty years ago Denys Page said of a now famous papyrus fragment of drama on the subject of Gyges and the wife of Candaules: 'look again at the language and style ... we shall find the dignity, simplicity and reserve of the early [i.e. late archaic-early classical] period; where in it shall we find any of those features which we associate with Alexandrian literature of any type' (or of those who study it, you may be tempted to add). Such a way of arguing finds countless parallels in the rhetorical and art criticism of antiquity. Dio Chrysostom's laudatory account of the *Philoctetes* plays of the three 'classical' tragedians is a familiar example: Aeschylus is characterised by the 'archaic spirit of great-mindedness' (μεγαλοφροσύνη καὶ τὸ ἀρχαῖον) which is well suited to tragedy and the old-style characters (παλαιὰ ἦθη) of the heroes' (chap. 4) - even the craftiness of his Odysseus is an archaic form of guile, unlike modern pseudo-straightforwardness, with which, I dare say, many of us are very familiar (chap.5). Euripides, on the other hand, is the complete opposite (ἀντίστροφος) of Aeschylus (11), whereas Sophocles, 'seems to come in the middle ...' (chap. 15), rather as Hellenistic rhetorical theory devised three kinds of prose style, the high, the plain, and one in the middle which draws from both the other two; three was ever a magic number. Book 10 of Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* is of course another fertile source for such critical attitudes.

A recent attempt to come to terms with Latin literary history reminds us that 'a critique of periodization must begin by historicizing the notion of periodization itself'.<sup>1</sup> Easier said than done, one might retort. Much of our evidence for ancient discussion of cultural periods comes in fact from the writers of Roman classicism, from the Atticists of the Augustan age through to Quintilian, together with those who parody them, such as Petronius. Here, for example, is the famous opening of Dionysius of Halicarnassus' essay *On the ancient orators*: 'In the epoch preceding our own, the old philosophic Rhetoric was so grossly abused and maltreated that it fell into a decline. From the death of Alexander of Macedon it began to lose its spirit and gradually wither away, and in our generation had reached a state of almost total extinction. Another Rhetoric stole in, intolerably shameless and histrionic, ill-bred and without a vestige either of philosophy or of any other aspect of liberal education. Deceiving the mob and exploiting its ignorance, it not only came to enjoy greater wealth, luxury and splendour than the other, but actually made itself the key to civic honours and high office, a power which ought to have been reserved for the philosophic art. It was altogether vulgar and disgusting, and finally made the Greek world resemble the houses of the profligate and the abandoned: just as in such households there sits the lawful wife, freeborn and chaste, but with no authority over her domain, while a reckless harlot, bent on destroying her livelihood, claims control of the whole estate, treating the other like dirt and keeping her in a state of terror; so in every city, and in the highly civilised ones as much as any (which was the final indignity), the ancient and indigenous Attic Muse, deprived of her possessions, had lost her civic rank, while her antagonist, an upstart that had arrived only yesterday or the day before from some Asiatic sewer, a Mysian or Phrygian or Carian creature,

<sup>1</sup> J. Farrell, *Latin Language and Latin culture* (Cambridge 2001) 85.

claimed the right to rule over Greek cities, expelling her rival from public life. Thus was wisdom driven out by ignorance, and sanity by madness.' (trans. S. Usher, adapted) I will not be concerned in this lecture with the substance and course of the debate between 'Atticism' and 'Asianism', though it is worth bearing in mind that just as in antiquity 'Asianism' seems always to have been a purely negative construct, created the better to parade the virtues of its 'opposite', so 'Hellenistic' has in the more recent past been another such negative construct (and it is of course no accident that the ancient period of 'Asianism' roughly overlaps with the modern construct of 'the Hellenistic'; as Dionysius' essay makes clear, both categories have politics at their heart). What we should, on the other hand, notice for the moment is the very continuity of critical language. What Dionysius has to say about 'Asiatic rhetoric' mirrors almost exactly the treatment by Attic Comedy of 'the new music' of Timotheus and Philoxenus nearly four centuries before. What came before was solid and genuine, 'men' were really 'men' then, but the new, I am almost tempted to say 'the inaugural', is characterised by the empty fashionableness of the performance, which is made possible by the ignorance of the audience; 'playing to the crowd' (or the lecture questionnaire score) is now the name of the game (cf. Quintilian 10.1.43).

For the writers and scholars of the Augustan age οἱ ἀρχαῖοι - and their virtues - were what we would classify as 'the ancients' down to (roughly) the end of the fourth century BC, though of course divisions could be made within such a long period, and the critical language of periodisation was never meant to map smoothly on to a chronological table, in part because (of course) much more than mere chronology is at stake. It is less easy to establish where the poets and scholars of the third century themselves drew boundary lines, or rather what any such boundaries might have meant for them, in the way that we can see that ἀρχαῖον and παλαιόν are already highly charged words for Thucydides and for certain self-consciously fashionable characters in Aristophanes. It will mean something that Eratosthenes did not carry his chronographical work on the Olympian victors beyond the death of Alexander, though we should be wary of leaping to the most obvious conclusions that one might draw from this apparent watershed. So too, Quintilian's famous report that, in the late third and second century BC, Aristarchus and Aristophanes (of Byzantium) did not receive anyone 'of their own time' (*suum tempus*) into the lists of approved authors (10.1.54) begs as many questions as it answers; these were, you will recall, the same people who, rather like the Quality Assurance Agency, thought that Homer deserved only 23 of the 24 available books of the *Odyssey*. The practice of the grammarians perhaps tells us more about the history of generic classification as a scholarly activity than it does about any sense of what divides the present from the past. Moreover, there is evidence on the other side. There is, for example, no sign that the several quotations of Callimachus and the at least one each of Euphorion and Simias of Rhodes in the great first-century catalogue of dreadful things said by poets in Philodemus' treatise *On Piety* were 'ghettoised' off from the quotations of archaic and classical poetry, and some at least of these quotations of what we call Hellenistic poetry presumably go back as far as Apollodorus in the mid-second century.

Be that as it may, periodisation and the rise of scholarship can indeed hardly be separated, but where is that rise to be located? This too may, of course, be one more charge to be laid at the door of the sophists of the late fifth century, and it is at least worthy of note that it is again in the *Frogs* (which has so often been thought by moderns to mark some kind of watershed) that we find perhaps the first dramatisation of the kind of literary scholarship which we so closely associate with the Hellenistic period. Here Euripides accuses Aeschylus of using 'sheer massive mountains of

words that it was very hard to work out the meaning of' (929-30, trans. Sommerstein) and Dionysus, that avid reader of books, breaks in: 'Yes, by the gods; I for one have certainly before now lain awake through the long watches of the night trying to fathom what sort of bird a tawny horsecock was' – this was in fact an emblem painted on a warship. Dionysus' language of sleepless searching – the pursuit in fact of what would come to be known as a *zetema* – strikingly foreshadows that of later scholarship. Moreover, if it is true that his words pick up those of Phaedra in Euripides' *Hippolytus*, 'before now, during the long watches of the night, I have pondered the ways in which human lives are destroyed', then the comic move from a great moral problem to the meaning of a rather silly gloss might be thought precisely to skewer what is wrong with 'scholarship' as narrowly conceived and practised. Be that as it may, it is texts of the third century which are replete with allusions to and anecdotes about 'scholarship', with – if you like – second-order reflection which knowingly reifies the activity into a discrete form of life and at the same time monumentalises the past. I offer just one famous example. One of Callimachus' epigrams deals explicitly with the folly of the élitist self-delusion of the scholar who knows the technical names for things:

I hate recycled poetry (*poiema kuklikon*), and get no pleasure  
 From a road crowded with travellers this way and that.  
 I can't stand a boy who sleeps around, don't drink  
 at public fountains, and loathe everything vulgar (*demosion*).  
 Now you, Lysanies, sure are handsome ... But before I've repeated  
 'handsome', 'and some ... one else's' cuts me off.

Epigram 28 Pf., trans. Nisetich

The poet proclaims his disdain for all things common or banal which must be widely shared: 'cyclic' poetry, the broad highway, a promiscuous lover, a fountain available to all. The variety of the verbs in the first four verses marks the poet's fastidiousness and care, whereas the very prosaic expression for the things which are rejected enacts at the verbal level the banality which is being imputed to them. What is rejected also involves or implies movement: the poem 'which circles around', the path with its bustling crowd, the boy who roams from one admirer to the next, the fountain to which one must travel; against this chaos is set the stillness of the scholar-poet, fixed in his opinions, and the privacy of his superiority. The final couplet modifies this picture. The play with echo suggests the emergence of a truth which previously was (consciously or unconsciously) suppressed (Walsh 1990: 11-12); the poet's brave words turn out to be a protective barrier which conceal as much as they reveal, and only the operation of echo, which is beyond human control, can unmask the truth. The 'vulgar', embodied in a popular, 'non-élitist' pronunciation which makes the echo possible, triumphs. The poem thus explores the fissure inherent in the whole business of seeking to write 'élitist' epigrams about desire, an emotion to which we are all vulnerable (it is always *demosion*) and one which is no respecter of aesthetic principles; it is not merely that the store of epigrammatic literary *topoi* is finite, but so is that of experience - hierarchies of literature are, in the end, as vain as hierarchies of kinds of lover.

The word ἀρχαῖος 'ancient' does not appear in Homer, though παλαιός 'of old' does, and in contexts which suggest that this notion of 'oldness' was already in early epic associated with the idea of song: men and women who were 'old' were the

subject of epic song.<sup>2</sup> The vocabulary of periodisation turns out (unsurprisingly) to have as much to do with description as with chronology. And so it has remained. In one of the most suggestive modern discussions of 'the Hellenistic', almost now a 'classic' text, Sir Kenneth Dover addressed the question of naivety or pseudo-naivety as a poetic mode, and observed that one of the problems (for him) with Hellenistic poetry was that the poets 'treated poetry as if its province had been defined at some date in the past and it had been forbidden to advance in certain directions or to penetrate below a certain phenomenological level ... convention into historiography' (*Theocritus* p.lxix). These are serious charges, not really mitigated in the one case (*Theocritus* 7) by the presumably deliberate ignoring of context, speaker identity etc (to which I will return) and, in the other, by the wholesale swallowing (in which Dover is not alone) of Thucydides' own (very idiosyncratic) claims for what constitutes historiography. What can these two cases in fact tell us about the Hellenistic literary response to coming after?

Timaios of Sicilian Tauromenion, whose long life extended from the middle of the fourth to the middle of the third century BC, was the great historian of the Greek west – and the first Greek writer to concern himself seriously with the history of Rome; his history of Sicily and the west in 38 books was probably written during half a century of political exile in Athens, and may be seen, from one point of view, within the context of a remarkable flourishing of western Doric cultural and intellectual life in this period. As for the history itself, in the words of *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 'Timaios took an extremely broad view of history, including myth, geography, ethnography, political and military events, culture, religion, marvels, and paradoxa'; in many ways, then, not just 'extremely broad', but also a very traditional kind of history. Whether or not it is right, with Frank Walbank, to label this 'a more frivolous attitude to the past' (*Polybius* p.1) than Thucydides' paraded sobriety may, however, be debated. Thucydides has, it must be admitted, nothing to rival Timaios' discussion of the hedonistic life of the Sybarites (fr. 50), which reveals to us (inter alia) that they were the 'first inventors' of the practice whereby, for ease of relief, each man brought his own chamber-pot to a drinking-party; remarkably enough (perhaps) word-searches with the latest electronic tools reveal that the word for a chamber-pot appears nowhere in Thucydides, and his only mention of Sybaris is a programmatically incidental reference to the river of this name during a military narrative (7.35). Fortunately for all of us, however, it falls to others in this room to establish the parameters of *historical* enquiry.

Labels stick, and in both antiquity and modern times, the label which has been stuck on Timaios is that of 'pedant', itself a notion hardly conceivable without the same mindset which gave us 'Hellenistic'. Even Momigliano, one of Timaios' more sympathetic modern students, calls him 'a pedant with imagination' (*Terzo contributo* I 48) – almost a *real* scholar, then, almost 'one of us'. Indeed, a climactic section of Felix Jacoby's introductory essay on Timaios is concerned with the – to all of us highly culturally charged and to many of us personally important – question of whether the title 'ein gelehrter' is appropriately bestowed upon Timaios. Part of Jacoby's self-confessedly 'psychological' answer is that Timaios' blindness to his own faults and his constant polemic against, not just other historians, but figures such as Aristotle, his constant nit-picking (if you like), which brought the name 'Epitimaïos' (the 'blamer'), *may* (Jacoby does not commit himself to the analysis) have been the result of a deep consciousness that he himself was nothing more than a dilettante

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Od.* 2.118, *Il.* 9.524ff, *hAp.* 160 etc

without 'wissenschaftliche Ausbildung' who was not really up to the job of serious historiography (*FgrHist* IIIB pp. 537-8). 'Dilettante' is, of course, another wounding word: no graver charge can be brought against any 'scholar', and Timaios was both 'pedant' and 'dilettante'. Polybius famously criticises him for doing all his research in libraries, without any practical experience of military affairs, topography, or the interviewing of witnesses: 'Inquiries from books', sneers Polybius, 'may be made without any danger or hardship, provided only that one take care to have access to a town (*polis*) containing a wealth of written accounts (ὕπομνήματα) or to have a library near at hand' (12.27.4). (How different from the life of scholarship as we know it!) The sub-text seems to be that Athens, the *polis* where Timaios worked, like Alexandria, the site of the ancient world's most famous library, is now merely 'a university', i.e. not part of the real world, a place of theory, not practical knowledge; power, and the writing of that power, has moved elsewhere. Polybius' polemic, with its implicit exaltation of a Thucydidean ideal – Thucydides, after all, was exiled from the very *polis* in which Timaios worked and, at the very least, his account of this exile (5.26.5) implies extensive travel in pursuit of his enquiries, unlike the smug Timaios – is thus an early witness to the periodisation, and the stereotyping which accompanies it, which was to take such hold in critical circles in Rome a century and more later. In the light, incidentally, of modern directions in classical scholarship, we must also ask – if only to put off the answer for another day – what is lost and what is gained in the *modern* flight from the charge of 'pedantry', which – as Homer would say – the gods call 'antiquarianism'. When is the flight from Realien the flight from reality?

Polemic is, of course, always with us, however easy this is to forget amidst the soothingly understated modernism of Little Hall. What remains of Polybius' all-out attack upon Timaios in his twelfth book bears eloquent, and in many ways extraordinary, witness to this. It also reminds us (again) how persistent over time are certain kinds of abuse: thus Dover's accusation of 'drivel' against Timaios echoes Polybios' charge of φλυαρία (12.12b.1), just as many of Polybios' terms of abuse pick up those which Timaios himself had used. Polybius' polemical luxuriance at Timaios' expense is itself, however, a version, in rhetorical terms an αὔξησις or *amplificatio*, of what was for him and his readers a very famous text, the early programmatic chapters of Thucydides' first book. After concluding his sketch of early Greek history (τὰ παλαιά, 1.20.1), Thucydides turns to the uncritical attitude that most men take to traditions about the past; he cites three specific examples: a popular belief about the end of the Athenian tyranny, and two facts about the Spartan constitution. No Hellenistic 'pedantry' here of course ... Errors 2 and 3 we know to have occurred in Herodotus, but Thucydides names no one – the object of the attack is, at least on the surface, οἱ πολλοί. In Polybius some of the language of criticism remains the same, and is to be seen within a standard framework of intertextual allusion, but what is important is that Polybius' polemical, scholarly practice takes as its starting point an authoritative 'classical' text and massively documents the kinds of failing at which Thucydides had merely gestured. Between Thucydides' silent stiletto and Polybius' strident shotgun lies, of course, a whole revolution in the use of books, the nature of education, and the nature of criticism, but here Polybius and the despised Timaios stand clearly on the same side of the divide; both illustrate the new world which we still inhabit.

One of the most persistent and virulent strains in Polybius' attack upon Timaios' history, and particularly the speeches within it, is the charge that it is infected by the frigid practices of the rhetorical schools. The terminology of this critical abuse – 'scholastic', 'sophistic', 'childish' (παιδαριώδης, μειρακιώδης) – passed into the

canon of standard judgements, for we find it (and some of the very same examples used to illustrate it) repeated in Plutarch (*Nicias* 1.1-4) and 'Longinus' (4.1-3). It is 'Longinus' who preserves for us Timaios' observation that Alexander conquered the whole of Asia 'in fewer years than it took Isocrates to write the *Panegyrikos* about war in Asia'; for 'Longinus' such pursuit of novel witticisms (*ἐπιφωνήματα*, *sententiae*) is forced and frigid – it is patently the product of the epideictic declamations of young men practising their own puerile humour upon each other (not unlike the Union Society or the House of Commons on a good day). 'Longinus' also cites the example which so upset Plutarch and Kenneth Dover: Timaios linked the Athenian disaster in his homeland of Sicily, in which the Syracusan leader Hermocrates, son of Hermon, played a central rôle, with the mutilation of the Athenian Herms shortly before the expedition's departure. So too, it was not a good omen that the Athenian general Nicias, whose name means 'victory', had in fact at first declined to take part. We may of course argue about the level of 'drivel' involved here – we live in a world where strange things happen, particularly in times of real or alleged war, and rationalism is at least not obviously triumphant today – and it is, moreover, not entirely certain that these reflections were in the voice of the historian himself rather than one of his characters. Nevertheless, Thucydides had already noted that the Athenians had taken the mutilation to be a bad omen for the expedition (6.27.3), and it is hard to believe that the oracle-mongers and seers, against whom, as Thucydides reports (8.1), the Athenians turned when disaster struck had not already seen what lay in Nicias' name, though apparently they drew a different conclusion from it. Thucydides' Nicias had after all already sensed divine jealousy (*phthonos*) at work in the Athenian disaster (7.77.3), and events had proved that Nicias and those who took the mutilation of the Herms seriously were right all along. In writing from Athens the 'Sicilian version' of Athenian disaster, Timaios takes the Thucydidean account as his starting-point and expands upon it (another 'amplification'), particularly in the gaps which Thucydides' apparently rigidly austere selectivity sought to occlude, but in fact openly advertised. Specifically, we may speculate that Timaios took up and sharpened the tragic shaping of the Syracusan narrative in Thucydides, a shaping much discussed in modern scholarship: the rôle of the faceless divine, the *daimonion*, the ominous significance of names (cf. 'Helen', 'Aias' etc), the fact that Timaios has the Athenian generals commit suicide, rather than (as in Thucydides and others) being put to death, and has their bodies (in time-honoured fashion) exposed to public viewing (*theama*, fr.102) all gesture towards familiar features of Athenian tragedy. This is not a matter of the familiar importance of dramatised pathos in hellenistic historiography, but of a specifically appropriate literary shape to a real 'Athenian tragedy'. The obvious parallel for the 'Sicilian version' of the Athenian catastrophe would be an Athenian version of the Persian catastrophe of the early fifth century, and Timaeus may, as perhaps also Thucydides before him, have specifically had in mind just such a text, the *Persians* of Aeschylus, another dramatisation of a disaster of which the gods had given forewarning (vv. 739-41) and of which the lesson was that no one should 'scorn their present lot and by desiring the property of others waste great prosperity' (vv. 824-6, cf. Thucyd. 6.13.1, 6.24.3). The turning of such a text against the Athenians would have carried a brilliant textual power. It is at least tantalising that a not implausible ancient tradition has it that the *Persians* had in the fifth century been performed in Syracuse at the request of the tyrant Hieron I; was there a Sicilian tradition of this play? Alas, we do not know, just as only more of Timaeus' text than we actually possess would show us whether



Thucydides' rationality, constructed as the easy rationality of hindsight, was also subverted, so that the Athenian historian collapsed along with the power of his city.

Let me now turn to Dover's other exhibit.<sup>3</sup> The meeting and song-exchange of Lycidas, the unmistakable goatherd (or is he?), met by chance (or is it?) on a Coan country road, and Simichidas in Theocritus' Seventh *Idyll*, the *Thalysia*, has a fair claim to be among, not only the most discussed, but also the most powerful and strangely compelling scenes of all Greek poetry; in part its hold over us lies not merely in the familiar attractiveness of the mysterious and riddling, but also in our pervasive sense of witnessing a confrontation across time, a dramatisation of historical development. Whereas Timaios demands that we acknowledge his textual suppletion, his ransacking of the past, the *Thalysia* teasingly veils its secrets in proclaiming only its pristine novelty.

If, like the élitist Pindaric voice, Lycidas speaks 'to those who understand', it would seem that the young Simichidas, the 'professional' poet from the city with a repertoire of songs ready to hand (vv. 92-5), but now faced with his inaugural performance in front of the only audience which matters, is not to be included in this privileged group, for when it is his turn to sing he adopts a fiction of 'poetic inspiration', as though he has not understood what Lycidas has said to him:

τὸν δὲ μέτ' αὐθις

κῆγών τοι' ἐφάμαν· "Λυκίδα φίλε, πολλὰ μὲν ἄλλα  
 Νύμφαι κῆμέ διδάξαν ἀν' ὄρεα βουκολέοντα  
 ἐσθλά, τά που καὶ Ζηνὸς ἐπὶ θρόνον ἄγαγε φάμα·  
 ἀλλὰ τόγ' ἐκ πάντων μέγ' ὑπείροχον, ᾧ τυ γεραίρειν  
 ἀρξεῦμ'· ἀλλ' ὑπάκουσον, ἐπεὶ φίλος ἔπλεο Μοῖσαις.  
 (Id. 7.90-5)

'After him I spoke in my turn as follows: " Lycidas my friend, the Nymphs taught me too many other songs as I tended my herd on the mountain, excellent poems, which public report has perhaps carried even to the throne of Zeus. But this with which I shall do you honour is much the finest of them all: listen then, since you are dear to the Muses.'

Simichidas here sets himself as a latter-day Hesiod, whose poetic 'initiation' by the Muses as he herded his lambs on Mt Helicon is recorded in the opening of the *Theogony*. The very fiction which he employs marks him as a modern poet of a quite different kind from the model which he claims; divine inspiration, whether from the Muses or the more appropriately bucolic nymphs, is now merely a 'technical' gesture, a code shared between a poet and his audience. It is a code which Simichidas, like all modern professionals, can adopt or abandon at will, in accordance with the generic demands of any particular song. When, however, Lycidas offers the first performance of a song which he has 'recently crafted on the mountain', we have at least no *prima facie* reason to disbelieve him.

Here is the opening part of Simichidas' poem in A.S.F. Gow's translation: 'For Simichidas the Loves sneezed, for he, poor soul, loves Myrto as dearly as goats love the spring. But Aratus, dearest friend in all to me, guards deep at heart desire of a boy. Aristis knows, a man of worth, the best of men, whom Phoebus himself would

<sup>3</sup> The following section of the paper will appear, in a revised, expanded and annotated form, in a contribution to a volume of essays, edited by Harvey Yunis and provisionally entitled *Written text and cultural practice in ancient Greece*, to be published by Cambridge University Press.

not grudge to stand and sing, lyre in hand, by his own tripods – knows how to the very marrow Aratus is aflame with love of a boy. Ah, Pan, to whom has fallen the lovely plain of Homole, lay him unsummoned in my friend's dear arms, whether it be the pampered Philinus or another. And if you do this, dear Pan, then never may Arcadian lads flog you with squills about the flanks and shoulders when they find scanty meat. But if you consent otherwise, then may you be bitten and with your nails scratch yourself from top to toe; may you sleep in nettles, and in midwinter find yourself on the mountains of the Edonians, turned towards the river Hebrus, hard by the pole. And in summer may you herd your flock among the furthest Ethiopians beneath the rock of the Blemyes from where the Nile is no more seen. But do you leave the sweet stream of Hyetis and Byblis, and Oecus, that steep seat of golden-haired Dione, you Loves as rosy as apples, and wound for me with your bows the lovely Philinus, would him, for the wretch has no pity on my friend.'

The (to us at least) obscure proper names, the sense that the poem is full of in-jokes, the joking prayer to Pan, and the persistent detached irony are all suggestive again of an entirely modern, iambic mode. The very lowness of such poetry, its claim to a 'popular voice', made it a paradoxically perfect vehicle for the exploitation of the new possibilities of written poetry and new types of audience. Thus, for example, whereas Lycidas speaks in a prophetic, incantatory, semi-mystical manner which hints at a magical control of the world (the halcyons etc.) and recalls the originary link between poet and seer, Simichidas includes the description (which so offended Dover) of a distant, but allegedly contemporary, rustic magical rite, with which he himself has nothing to do and about which he has learned, so we are to understand, from a book.

If the world of Simichidas' in-jokes remains (perhaps deliberately) closed to us, he makes very sure that we understand his geographical and cultic allusions. The cause of the Arcadian rite is explained (108), the location of the (otherwise unknown) 'rock of the Blemyes' specified (114), the relevance of Oikous spelled out (116). Simichidas offers no 'mythic narrative' as such, just a world marked out by cult sites and practices, now fossilised in the grasp of scholarship.

Lycidas' telling - or rather the telling which he puts in Tityrus' mouth - of the stories of Daphnis and Komatas, as he imagines the party he will hold to celebrate the safe arrival in Mytilene of his beloved Ageanax, is very different: 'Close by Tityrus shall sing how once Daphnis the oxherd loved Xenea, and how the hill grieved for him and the oaks which grow upon the river Himeras' banks sang his dirge, when he was wasting like any snow under high Haemus or Athos or Rhodope or remotest Caucasus. And he shall sing how once a wide coffin received the goat alive by the impious presumption of a king; and how the blunt-faced bees came from the meadows to the fragrant chest of cedar and fed him on tender flowers because the Muse had poured sweet nectar on his lips. Ah, blessed Comatas, yours is this sweet lot: you too were closed within the coffin; you too, on honeycomb fed, did endure with labour the springtime of the year. Would that you had been numbered with the living in my day, that I might have herded your fair goats upon the hills and listened to your voice, while you, divine Comatas, did lie and make sweet music under the oaks or pines.' Lycidas, unlike Simichidas, finds personal, exemplary comfort in the bucolic and aipolic heroes of his own world - Daphnis and Komatas - and what is important, as it had traditionally been in the poetic representation of myth, is how their stories, their *πάθη*, act as paradigms for his own experience. Moreover, this highly allusive text seems to assume an audience, whether that be just Lycidas himself or some wider group, to which those stories are known and significant. This allusive narrative mode,

seen most famously in the song of Daphnis in *Idyll* 1, suggests 'tradition', as it also constructs for itself an interpretive community; here, literary allusiveness, intertextuality if you like, and mythic allusiveness function in similar ways. The different gods who question the fast-fading Daphnis in *Idyll* 1 embody different levels of knowledge and curiosity, thus dramatising the text's construction of its audience, but this device also foregrounds that allusiveness which implies familiarity, while conjuring up the generic world of myth and constructing a community to whom that myth is significant, who need constantly to (re-) interpret it.

It would be tempting to set this contrast between Lycidas' high allusiveness and Simichidas' plain specificity within that broad movement which we have come to know, and seek to deconstruct, as the shift from myth to mythology, but let me return first to what Simichidas actually says. The pursuit of novelty leaves, as I noted earlier, a world marked out by (often arcane) cult and ritual names, rather than by narratives of personal or collective significance. Many modern readers of Callimachus' *Hymns* might feel at home within Simichidas' 'written' religious world, in which the scholarly gloss is the standard discursive mode, but this 'precision' of names, which there is no reason not to connect with the prevalence of systematic written history, has a place in the wider evolution of mythic narrative. The modern study of fiction has taught us that detailed names and places are the 'effects of the real' which create the fictional illusion; this is an irony which Thucydides would presumably not have appreciated. Such detail goes hand-in-hand with the telling of stories as coherent, self-contained wholes in which temporal and spatial sequence are of primary importance: we may think of, for example, Simaitha's first-person narration of her affair with Delphis in *Idyll* 2. With hindsight we can see that the vast sea of Greek myth was fertile ground for the development of fictionalising instincts and the instinct for fiction: Walter Burkert once noted<sup>4</sup> that what is distinctive and 'utterly confusing for non-specialists and often for specialists' about Greek myth is its extraordinarily profuse detail of names, genealogies and inter-relationships, with, in other words, (though Burkert certainly did not say this) 'effects of the real' waiting to happen. If we are forced to name a crucial moment in this process, the classicist may think of Aristophanes' Euripides, whose prologising gods told 'the whole story' (*Frogs* 946-7), i.e organised disparate strands (and disparate names) into a coherent, connected narrative.

As for Lycidas' stories of Daphnis and Komatas, it is tempting to suggest that the allusive mode of telling, related forms of which are of course familiar enough from the choral lyric of the archaic and classical periods, is a direct response to developments in 'systematic mythography' and to what I have called the 'fictionalising' impulses which go with that systematisation. In the *Bucolics*, Theocritus thus imaginatively recreates or invents an oral style of 'traditional tale' beyond systematisation (and certainly beyond Simichidas) and only preserved in the folk memories of shepherds and goatherds. No more powerful dramatisation of what 'coming after' actually means survives from the extraordinary intellectual currents of the third century.

There are, of course, periods of Greek teaching as well as of Greek literature. In his Inaugural of only 72 years ago, D.S. Robertson observed, 'The Greek Professor is happily no longer expected to teach students their alphabet or declensions'; try telling that to the Classical Languages Committee. The deep commitment by the

<sup>4</sup> 'Mythisches Denken. Versuch einer Definition an Hand des griechischen Befundes' in H. Poser (ed.), *Philosophie und Mythos* (Berlin 1979) 16-39, p.30.

Faculty of Classics to the teaching of the Greek and Latin languages, and to innovation in that teaching, is in fact a major reason why I am very proud to be associated with this remarkable institution. This is, of course, not the easiest period for Greek and for Classics as a whole, despite the enormous contemporary interest in the ancient world and its imagining in successive ages, which was already justly celebrated by Professor Easterling in her London Inaugural of 1988 and which has just been so vividly demonstrated in the sell-out audiences for Jane Montgomery's challenging production of Sophocles' *Electra*. Adjustment to the times in which we live, to – for example – the disappearance of Greek from mainstream secondary education, has, however, been painful and occasionally divisive, particularly for those at the heart of whose universe stand the classical languages. I hope, however, that grand recipes for the future are not an inevitable part of Inaugurals. An obvious cliché would be to recall Rodney Wainwright, the lecturer from the University of North Queensland in David Lodge's *Small World*, who does not know how to complete the crucial sentence of his lecture (an inaugural performance on the world stage) at a Future of Criticism conference: 'The question is, therefore, how can criticism ...'. He is, as you recall, saved by an outbreak of Legionnaire's disease; well, life is imitating art too often these days to allow such jests. I am, in any case, tempted to say that it is in fact not the future of criticism which concerns me – no doubt I will get plenty of that. One of my predecessors as a University Professor of Greek, to whom I should feel particularly close, Nicholas Ridley (successively student, Fellow, and Master of Pembroke), was burnt at the stake, though not perhaps for a poor seminar performance. More seriously, however, the whole future of 'criticism', of *krisis* 'judgement', about Greek literary culture depends crucially upon the training in the Greek language of future generations of students; the crisis for *krisis* is no longer just a feeble pun (has not been so for many years), and our concern must be, not just the future of so-called technical disciplines such as papyrology and palaeography, which (I think) there is good reason to hope will continue to attract highly talented specialists, but rather for the wide diffusion of an appreciation of the Greek literary heritage, as well as for the progress of higher-level understanding of these difficult and rewarding texts. I hope that it is another cliché to say that the furtherance of knowledge of the Greek language must be the principal, though not the only, duty of the Regius Professor, and I pledge myself to work tirelessly to that end. What makes this position so special, however, is the privilege of working in an institution which thinks not only about *how* we can do this, but also *why* we should wish to; what, to put it another way, 'coming after' really means and what opportunities it provides. If, therefore, I do not plead for moderate, or even radical, change of direction – as, for example, did Ted Kenney and Anthony Snodgrass in their Inaugurals of 1975 and 1977 – it is not just because a glance at those lectures will reveal just how far we have moved in a very short time, and certainly not because very hard thinking and (perhaps radical) change will not be needed, but because the collective will is such that there seems no chance whatsoever of a return to the unexamined life of an earlier age.

As long, then, as the University holds to the educational purposes which it publicly proclaims, unlike the young Heracles, Classics at Cambridge does not face an inaugural choice between virtue and vice, between (in random order) the hard, indeed often physically demanding task of properly learning an inflected language and the pursuit of more easily attained and possibly more short-lived intellectual satisfactions. This is not because we do or should conceal the difficulties and often frustrations involved in learning Greek at what is roughly the same age as Heracles made his choice, but because the dichotomy and the labels attached to it, are utterly

false to the complex and variegated material which forms the substance of our subject and the philosophy which informs the way we teach and study it. There are, in fact, many paths from which someone at Cambridge interested in the ancient world has to choose, and in some Greek plays a more prominent rôle than others; this is not a cause for regret, but rather a symptom of careful attention to the ends which we all have in view. The plural here is strictly necessary, of course. Introducing local primary-school children to Greek once a week in the Museum of Classical Archaeology, as has happened in the Faculty this year, must have a different purpose and criterion of success than teaching first-year undergraduates, but too often in the past we have saddled ourselves with a single – and I use the word advisedly – paradigm of what learning Greek looks and feels like. Post-modern diversity is here to be embraced and encouraged. One thing, however, I hope remains constant and unifying. When I was twelve I was fortunate enough to be offered the chance to learn Greek by a school (very many miles from here) which had not otherwise taught the language for fifty years, but where it still now hangs on (by threads of varying degrees of precariousness). Since then learning, reading, and eventually teaching Greek have been and continue to be for me the sources of what (most of the time) seems like a pleasure far surpassing the simple absence of pain, and this is an end we must not overlook and which we as teachers must do our best to allow others to enjoy. It may be that my colleagues in the Faculty do not think that I was placed among them to pursue pleasure, but let me end by thanking them once again for their support and by saying how much I look forward to the common pursuit in the years ahead.

Richard Hunter