

Texts to the People: Treebanking within the Perseids Platform as a Means to Unify the
Consumption and Production of Scholarship across the Discipline

Since the fall 2011 semester, I have been researching the use of the Perseids treebanking tools in the instruction of Latin and Greek, deploying this instructional and research methodology from the third semester of coursework to graduate student seminars. In previous talks I have discussed the unique synergy created by the linked consumption and production of scholarship that is enabled by the use of the treebanking tools of the Perseids Project within the university-level classroom. I have found that the iterative aspects of the toolset allow students and professional scholars to collaborate in the production of advanced commentaries free of the limitations of the print volume. Because the students are asked to connect each word or phrase to what it modifies and are asked to identify the nature of that modification, each sentence becomes a myriad of opportunities for the students to make fine distinctions in the morphosyntactic construction of the author's language – and a myriad of self-illustrating “teachable moments” within the graphical user interface (GUI) of the treebanking environment. Direct observation of the work of fifty-three students with texts ranging from the *Res Gestae* of Augustus to the *Bellum Iugurthinum* of Sallust and the *Pro Caelio* of Cicero, has shown that students from intermediate to advanced were able to control the complexities of the texts at a level of control often years beyond their nominal experience – after an intensive engagement with the texts using the treebanking tools.

In the Fall 2015 semester, I will continue this collaborative research and teaching with a course having as its objective the complete treebanking of the AP high school curriculum and its publication as an interactive commentary within the Perseids Project. The students that will participate in this work are all aspiring high school teachers enrolled in the Masters in Classics

with Teaching Licensure program at Tufts University. While closely studying texts that will likely be central to the success of their advanced courses in the coming years, these students will produce a critical resource for all teachers and students of the AP curriculum and, even more broadly, all students of these texts worldwide. I will argue that the existence of such a resource will enable the maximally effective expenditure of the limited resources of instructional and preparatory time at the secondary level.

Among the primary challenges for the teaching of Latin and Greek in the high school environment is the time pressures placed on instructors. Multiple courses and indeed the many other requirements of the profession may demand instructional compromises between what is ideal and what is realistic. Similarly, students are subjected to often excessive demands on their time and attention by curricular and extra-curricular activities. These demands restrict the preparation time of both students and teachers to the extent that the granular understanding of the Latin texts is often sacrificed in favor of expedients for passing the AP exams: too frequently memorization of an English translation instead of a close engagement with the Latin texts.

Arguably, the comprehension of the subtle morphosyntactic intricacies of the *Aeneid*, for example, is a crucial prelude to a more complete study of the style and content of the work. The publication of the treebanked commentary for the AP selections from Vergil and Caesar (and the eventual publication of the complete texts) will allow students and teachers to deploy their limited preparation time to maximal effect. They will be enabled to move with deliberate speed toward a deeper engagement with the content of the texts built on a nuanced understanding of the morphosyntactic structure of the language.

What is envisioned is the extension of collaborative textual scholarship into all aspects of Latin and Greek study from early secondary education through the scholarship and teaching of

academic professionals. It is hoped that by using the treebanked commentaries on the AP text selections, high school students will be efficiently and iteratively trained to think in terms of the creation of nuanced meaning through the intersections of morphosyntax with arrangement, form, and word choice. Further, a major objective of this initiative is to enable students at the secondary level to attain the degree of granular linguistic control required to engage with the serious issues embedded in ancient texts; they will accomplish these goals by using and ultimately contributing to the work of students and scholars working at the University level. In this way, the discipline of the Classics as a whole can be allowed to collaborate in the research and study of ancient texts: secondary teachers will be enabled to fully prepare the advanced texts that they teach and students will prepare themselves to effectively continue their studies and contribute to research at the University level.