Thersites

My Great and Good friend Thersites has been insufferable over the past few weeks. The reason is quite simple: he met none other than our Very Wonderful Prime Minister and still glows from the encounter. She, naturally, knew all about Thersites and, seizing him warmly by the throat, lowed over him in her most agonisingly sincere fashion for several interminable minutes. But it was her parting words that so endeared la Grande Moman to him: 'We need more Greek!' This, as you may imagine, rocked Thersites somewhat, and he has spent many long hours wondering what on earth she could have meant.

The answer came to him last night: she had clearly seen the rich economic potential of Greek literature, and the more Thersites thought about it, the more it seemed to him that the Leaderena had, as is her wont, hit the thumb precisely on the nail. It is true that Thersites had never quite believed that Kash and Kulchah were easy bedfellows but he now realised he had been wrong: you could worship God and Maman. Thersites set to work at once, but just to be on the safe side, asked me to submit his little ideas to be critically examined by some neutral, but acute and fair-minded, audience before he passed them on for Higher Consideration. I knew that no other readership in the country could respond with more authority than Omnibus's.

The Cambridge Latin Course (CLC)
(Sponsors: Abbey National, Castlemaine Brewery, Fidelity Unit Trusts, HM Government)

CATULLUS

(1) I hate and love. If you ask me to explain
The contradiction,
I can't, but I can feel it, and the pain
Is crucifixion.
She couldn't give a 4X Castlemaine
For my affliction.

(2) My Lesbia, let us live and love,
And not care tuppence for old men
Who sermonise and disapprove.
Give me a thousand kisses, then –

But wait! Should we invest them so,
All in one tranche? What if the kiss-
Markets collapse? Kisses can go
Up and down: what fun we'd miss

To lose them all at once: what's more,
With interest rates right off the clock,
We'd make a fortune, safe and sure,
In Abbey National Kissing Soc.
Then again, the Government's new
Tax-free PEPS appeal to me.
Let's kiss-invest us with a few
Monthly in Fidelity,

And let them swell from year to year
Till we lose track of our account,
With no tax-man to stir our fear
Of hidden kiss-tax on the amount.

**Pericles and Deanos**

_Sophocles' Philoctetes_

*(Sponsors: Cadbury’s, Scholl, Kellogg, Kirkdale Luxury Upholstery, Odor Eaters, Olympic Holidays, Pastorale stretch-covers, Vitalite, HM Government)*

*Odysseus:* This is the coast of Lemnos, a deserted isle In the midst of the sea, where no man lives or walks. _In fact, it offers much, much more!_ Secluded beaches Fringed by crystal waters, and far-off coves ideal
For that all-over tan: self-catering, too, _if that is_

What you want, but check our villas and apartments first.

An Olympic Holiday is everybody's favourite! _Book now!_

This is the place where, many years ago
I left Philoctetes the Malian, Poeas' son,
Lamed by a festering ulcer in the foot,
At which he moaned and howled incessantly.

We recommended Dr Scholl's Designer Footwear
And ozone-friendly Odor Eaters, but the fool
Rejected all our help. But now we have to find him.

*Neoptolemos:* Odysseus, sir! We haven't far to look!
There is his cave just here, as you said.

*Od.:* Is he asleep inside? Look in and see.

*Neo.:* The place seems empty. Not a man in sight.

*Od.:* Is there any sign of human habitation?

*Neo.:* A pile of leaves pressed down, as if someone
Had slept on it: a few rough wooden cups:

Some tinder-wood. Not much. But with the view, This place has got potential! I’d recommend

Some Kirkdale Luxury Upholstery

(With guarantee against defective work)

And ’Pastorale’ stretch-covers, craftsmen-made, (Which do not shrink when washed in a machine) All finished off with pleated valances,

Piped cushion-covers and co-ordinated curtains.

As for the patio, with its splendid view,...

Od.: Yes, yes. What taste you have for a young man.

Your father Achilles would be proud of you. But first let’s eat, and then to business next. For we have much important work to do. Though he insists he won’t meet our demands, Philoctetes must be taught he can’t escape

Any more than we the new Community Charge

Or so-called Poll Tax. You have the leaflets?

Neo.: Yes.

Od.: Good. Then let us turn our thoughts to food.

(Enter a semi-chorus of mindless conformists, wielding boxes of Kellogg's Bran Flakes and singing.)

They're tasty! Tasty! Very, very tasty! (Etc. etc.)

(Enter the other equally gormless semi-chorus, dressed up as sunflowers wearing dark-glasses, and swaying as they sing)

Wake up in the morning. Want me some breakfast. Oooooooooooo ooooooooooooh, Vitalite.

(This goes on for half an hour. The whole audience disappears to make tea and sandwiches.)

HERACLES: BET HE CLEANS APPALLING BLACK STABLE

An excited young scholar comments:

There is much dispute about the use of chorus in these new-wave 'market-led' Greek tragedies. Some say they comment on the action; others, that they are merely a vulgar advertising interval. This is far too simplistic. We must understand that the chorus here structures a universal duality, posed insistently between ambiguous and competing modes whose subtle complexity makes problematic the diffused undercutting of the discourse’s self-interrogation of a basically enigmatic text which renews and invokes, while it oscillates and fluctuates between, the proliferating poles of a deeply unstable instantiation...

Penelope: The one you’ve got to come back for.
But once you've started off on this track, you can go on for ever (Thersites did). Odysseus and Nausicaa (washing powders, drip-dry clothes, and a whole range of exciting bath and body products For Men), the Greek victory at Troy (Thersites could imagine the watchman at the start of the *Agamemnon* trying to flog 'Greek Victory Tankard', crafted in fine-bone china and deep-sculptured pewter by Exekias, one of Greece's foremost battle-artists), Cassandra in the same play being urged to use Hexaglot ('holding 6,800 words in each of six languages, it can at the touch of a button bring up any word you wish to find', while 'for those wet days and long crossings from Troy to Greece, Hexaglot gives you anagrams and Hangman to solve in your language or whichever of the six you choose!'). And the smoking ruins of Troy at the start of Euripides' *Trojan Women* could carry a government health warning. Did those who could not afford the price of entry to Aeschylus' latest play apply for Suppliant Benefit? If you were feeling liverish, did you take Prometheus Linctus? As for paging your Oracle teletext... move over, Apollo. But Thersites, ever cautious, decided at this point not to push his luck with the Far Shooter too far. He didn't fancy all those arrows whizzing through his pint of Strongbow when he next felt...