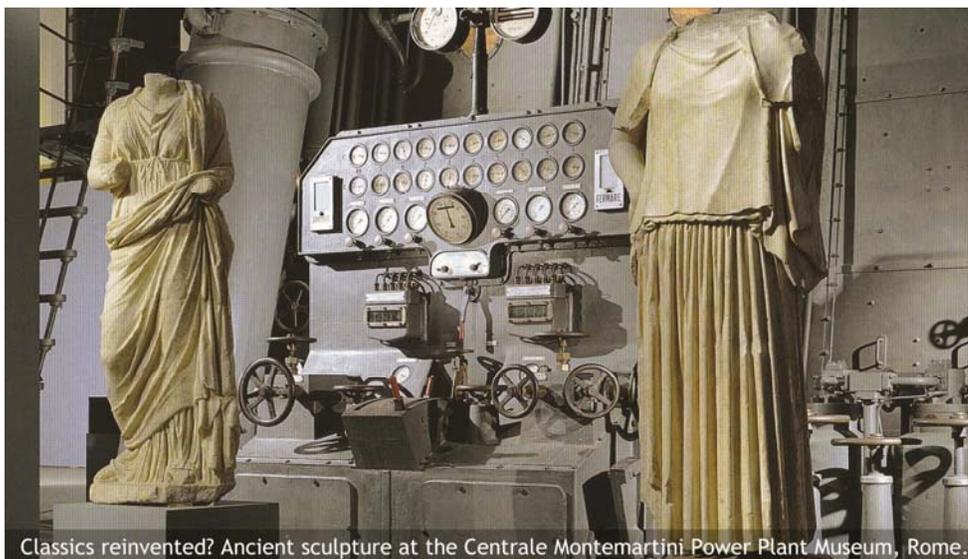


Classical Studies at McGill

Newsletter 2, 2009-10



Classics, it was recently pointed out in the TLS, remains a hard sell. With a triple threat of dead languages, vast temporal removal from the present and a long history of fascination with dead white males, Classics does not have the slickest image. Add the strategic disadvantages with regard to public funding. The research agenda of many Classicists simply does not generate applications for expensive equipment and high-end labs, which have become benchmarks for 'excellence'. Note that the world's largest editorial project currently under way in ancient Greek literature, *Brill's New Jacoby*, is carried out with no public funding at all.

At the same time, Classics' presence in popular culture, the media and in film is at its all-time peak. So is the output of the scholarly book industry. A recently published *Natural History of Latin* (OUP, 2004) sold over 80,000 copies. If anything, the Cultural Studies turn has witnessed the re-birth of Classical Studies as a field that is once again at the very center of many disciplines in the Humanities.

Here at McGill, we are in full swing of this trend. Student enrolment has perennially increased over the past five years. The launch of an all-new undergraduate curriculum this fall will no doubt add to this development and make our programs even more attractive for students with various academic interests. I am extremely delighted to see that some of our best graduating students have chosen our reopened graduate program over (cont. page 3)

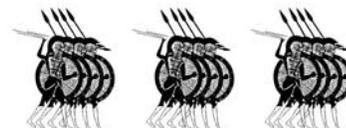


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Suae faber quisque fortunae!
To find out more, go to:
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Contents

Director's Welcome	1
Classical Reflections: Priam and Mezentius	2
Greek Legacies : Lord Byron revisited	2
Research Spotlight: Man vs. Structure	3
New Sessional Hire	3
Highlights in the new academic Year	4
Faculty and Profiles	4



Classical Reflections: Two Slaughters and a Funeral (by Bill Gladhill)

What does a student gain in reading about the slaughter of Priam or the funeral of Mezentius, and what does this have to do with Classical education? “That was the end of Priam’s age. On the distant shore the vast trunk headless lies without a name” (*Aen.* 2.554-8). The reader has just witnessed the slaughter of Priam upon the altar of Zeus within the palace, but the king oddly lies on the shore, decapitated. Later authors relate that this location derived from a tragedy of Pacuvius in which the king is sacrificed at the tomb of Achilles. Yet, they suggest that Vergil gestured to Pompey, Caesar’s adversary, whose decapitation in Egypt was a haunting reminder of Roman civil war. But *corpus sine nomine* may also be an allusion to *Odyssey* 8.552 where Alkinoos states that no man is completely nameless. Odysseus is famous for naming himself ‘Outis’ and in response to Alkinoos the heroic traveler generates his fame. Unlike Odysseus, Priam remains *sine nomine* forever; unlike Odysseus, his story will be unsung.

Mezentius’ burial begins *Aeneid* 11: “A big oak trunk lopped of its boughs, he planted on a mound and dressed it with Mezentius’ bright gear to make a trophy, god of war to thee. He fitted it with a crest of oozing blood, with javelins of the warrior, and his cuirass, twelve times cut and breached.” We know that only Mezentius’ groin and neck had suffered any wound, yet somewhere between *Aeneid* 10 and 11 blood splattered his helmet and his armor was driven through twelve times. The number, in the context of armor belonging to an Etruscan king, suggests that Aeneas did not honor Mezentius’ last request: “Let my body be hid in earth. I know on every hand the hatred of my people. Fend off their fury...” The twelve breaches in Mezentius’ armor represent the ancient Etruscan league of twelve allied cities. The limbless tree trunk takes on new meaning upon the realization that Mezentius has been dismembered, lying somewhere unknown.

What do Classical texts teach us? This chiaroscuro offers the opportunity of transcendence, to move from what is visible to the shadowy limits of knowledge. Through Classics we can experience transcendence, to see the hidden realities that give form to political discourse, to economic-corporate policy, and to war. Priam is not Priam, a trunk is not a trunk, reality is not reality. I am reminded of a famous quote by D.H. Lawrence that captures this interplay between text and reality: “Man must wrap himself in a vision, make a house of apparent form and stability, fixity. In his terror of chaos he begins by putting up an umbrella between himself and the everlasting whirl. Then he paints the underside of his umbrella. Bequeathed to his descendants, the umbrella becomes a dome, a vault, and men at last begin to feel that something is wrong. Then comes a poet, enemy of convention, and makes a slit in the umbrella; and lo! the glimpse of chaos is a vision, a window into the sun.” Classics is a window into the sun.

Greek Legacies: Philhellenism and Self-Preoccupation (by Nikos Poulopoulos)



Not a new Classics hire but Lord Byron (1788-1824), icon of Philhellenism in Europe.

The Greek revolt in the 1820’s was the earliest successful national liberation movement in Europe. The fight for independence against the Ottoman Empire was won with the crucial help of the European powers. In the battle of Navarino in 1827 an armada of British, Russian and French warships destroyed the Ottoman fleet and a new nation-state was created. The European support was, in a way, a proof of the strength of the new national-political dimension of classicism. There was, of course, in predominantly Christian Europe, also a strong religious current in the public protest against Muslim rule over Greek Christians, but the extent of mobilization among educated Europeans organized in so-called philhellenic movements was remarkable and can be partly attributed to the sense of a common European identity that traced back to ancient Greece.

The members of those movements in support of the new Greek state used the term ‘philhellenism’ to describe their convictions, although it has become all the more possible lately to question their motives. For example, the greatest champion of philhellenism at the time, Lord Byron, was not so much preoccupied with the question “how can I help in the Greek struggle for independence,” but rather with the solipsistic

query “where shall I, Byron, be happy and find self-fulfillment”. Such questions and discrepancies will inform our readings in CLAS 404, taught in the winter 2010, which focuses on various aspects of the classical tradition.

Research Spotlight: Hannibal vs. the *longue durée* of interstate-relations in Italy (by Mike Fronda)

Why do states behave the way they do? When are alliances honored or broken? How are wars won or lost? These issues were as pressing in the ancient world as they are today. In the late 3rd century BC, the Romans endured a profound military and diplomatic crisis. Following an escalation of tensions between the two great powers in the western Mediterranean, Rome and Carthage, Hannibal invaded Italy and defeated the Romans in a series of battles. So began the Second Punic War (218-202 BC). After the battle of Cannae (216 BC), many of Rome's allies broke away and began either to support Hannibal actively or, at least, to sit on the sidelines and deprive the Romans of valuable military aid. Yet despite appalling Roman casualties, and significant allied unrest, Hannibal could not bring Rome to its knees. Rome rebounded, rebellious allies were recaptured, and Hannibal's army was slowly eroded in a long war of attrition. In the end, it would be Carthage that surrendered, paving the way for the emergence of Rome as the Mediterranean's superpower.

Hannibal's inability to convince more Italian communities to break away from Rome was a significant reason for the Roman victory. Several theories have been posited to explain why the allies remained loyal: attraction to Roman culture, suspicion of "barbarian" Carthaginians, fear of Roman retribution, etc. Such explanations fail to account for why some allies revolted while others remained loyal. This question requires careful analysis of specific factors--the unique military, political, diplomatic, and economic conditions--that informed the policy decisions of each individual Italian state. Moreover, rather than viewing the events of the Second Punic War in isolation, the fateful choice of each state to side with Hannibal or Rome can be located in a

longer history of interstate relations. What emerges is a fascinating picture of the complexities of interstate relations in ancient Italy in the 4th and 3rd centuries.

Several larger Italian cities had a long history of expansionism. These states tended to side with Hannibal, seeing his victory as an opportunity to break free from Roman domination and pursue their own imperial policies. Nearby states, however, often sided with Rome, probably out of fear of their expansionist neighbors. Some smaller states were inclined to ally with each other in various wars, suggesting that they had longstanding ties or mutual interests. Several pairs of states, or "dyads," appear to have been what political scientists call "enduring rivals," which tend to oppose each other repeatedly in conflicts over long periods of time. When Hannibal won over one such state, its rival in the dyad was more likely to stay loyal to Rome. Thus, local conditions, especially interstate competition and long-standing rivalries, were key in shaping the course and outcome of the Second Punic War. Hannibal could not accommodate the particular interests of enough Italian communities to unite them against Rome.

My research is unique in focusing on the Second Punic War from the perspective of the Italian states besides Rome. It sheds light on this pivotal conflict between Rome and Carthage, but also on Roman imperialism in Italy, the nature of Roman hegemony, and the transformation of Roman Italy from numerous independent and often rivalrous states into a unified political entity. It draws on contemporary political science theory and recent archaeological evidence. The book will be published by Cambridge University Press later this academic year.

Director's Welcome (cont. from page 1)

more lucrative offers from elsewhere. Their hard work is invaluable for the vibrant intellectual discourse in our community.

With the award of various research grants, strong media presence and many wonderful classroom experiences, the past year was extremely successful for our Classical Studies enterprise. Everyone is curious to see what comes next. Let's get ready for another round of kickin' Classics in 2009-10!

Hans Beck, MacNaughton Professor and Director

New Sessional Hire: Sarah Burges Watson

Sarah Burges Watson comes to McGill from Harvard where she completed her Ph.D. in Classical Philology. The subject of her research is the mythical singer Orpheus, who was also known as the founder of the mysteries and the author of texts used in mystical rites. She has been investigating the relationship between the mystical and musical sides of his identity. Originally from the UK, Dr. Burges Watson studied Classics at Cambridge and singing at the Royal Academy of Music before moving to the USA to complete a Master's at the University of Pennsylvania.

Faculty and Teaching Staff, 2009-10

Baronowski, Donald	Faculty Lecturer	3610 McTavish, 23-4 514.398.8222	Language Instruction
Beck, Hans	Professor, Director of Classical Studies	LEA 626 514.398.2234	Ancient History
Burges Watson, Sarah	Sessional Instructor	LEA 625 tba	Greek Language and Literature
Fronda, Michael	Assistant Professor	LEA 828 514.398.7169	Ancient History
Fossey, John M.	Emeritus Professor	688 Sherbrooke, 477 514.398.6209	Greek Archaeology and Epigraphy
Gladhill, Bill	Assistant Professor, Advisor	LEA 825 514.398.2409	Latin Language and Literature
Menn, Stephen	Associate Professor	LEA 921 514.398.6056	Ancient Philosophy
Palczynski, Margaret	Faculty Lecturer	3610 McTavish, 11-4 514.398.3705	Language Instruction
Poulopoulos, Nikos	Papachristidis Assistant Professor	LEA 827 514.398.6254	Modern Greek
Serrati, John	Adjunct Professor, CEGEP Liaison	LEA 817 514.398.4889	Ancient History

Major Publications in 2008-9 (visit www.mcgill.ca/classics/ for the full slate)

- Hans Beck, Peter Scholz and Uwe Walter (eds): *Die Macht der Wenigen. Aristokratische Herrschaftspraxis, Kommunikation und edler Lebensstil in Antike und Früher Neuzeit*. Oldenbourg Publishers 2008.
- Hans Beck, Michael Fronda: 'The Cartoceto Bronzes. Enigma and History'. *The Ancient World* 40 (2009) 15-41.

Highlights in the New Academic Year

As usual, this year's academic calendar is packed with many activities and exciting events that go beyond the classroom. The current list of guest speakers includes Professors Raaflaub (Brown), Martindale (Bristol), Teffeteller (Concordia) and Hinds (Washington). The CAC lecturer this year is Professor Mark Lawall (U of Manitoba). In addition, we welcome Professor Ian Morris (Stanford) as an Onassis Fellow in the fall term. We are delighted to announce that Classical Studies has won the competition for one of the Faculty's prestigious Beatty Lecture Series. The first Beatty Lecturer in Classics will be Professor Barry Strauss from Columbia.

More hot items: The Classics Students Association (CSA) will hold another book sale in the fall. Watch out for those various wine and cheeses held by the CSA! Professor Beck's most recent SSHRC grant to conduct research, together with Professor Vankeerberghen, on 'Ancient World Elites' will include a series of public events with the of Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. The details will be announced soon. 'Les Causeries Classiques' features Dr. Burges Watson and Professor Serrati. Visit www.mcgill.ca/classics/ for details. hb

