

# Classical Studies at McGill Newsletter 3, 2010-11



New avenues of Classical reception? The motto of Greece's pavilion at the Expo in Shanghai mirrors the show's overarching theme "Better City, Better Life".

I recently visited the Greek pavilion at the Expo in Shanghai: no marble, no classicism, no reference to antiquity. Instead, an almost naked scene: a *kafenion* with an olive tree and rooms of mostly black-and-white slideshows, showcasing changes in Greek city-life throughout the 20th century. That's all. It soon dawned on me that a more voluptuous display might have exceeded the budget the Greek state had assigned to its pavilion project. Or was this a deliberate decision to promote Greece as a progressive country that has so much more to offer than its ancient foundations? On my way out, I spotted the Turkish pavilion, aptly located across the street from Greece. There you have it: ancient culture in columns and capitals, celebrations of city-life in ancient Ephesus, Miletus and Constantinople, all assembled under the pavilion's forceful motto 'The Cradle of Civilization'.

I'm relieved that Classics today has liberated itself from simplistic relevance debates. Global perspectives on ancient world societies allow us to put our research in intercultural contexts of comparison. This does not imply that the discipline itself loses its distinction, let alone its cultural agenda or social meaning. Those of you who attended Professor Morris' lecture in the last academic year will remember our lively debate on the eminent dangers of losing this very distinction.

In this sense, too, the new departmental designation of 'History and Classical Studies' is more than a name change. It propels the wide (*continued on page 3*)



McGill University  
Department of History and  
Classical Studies  
855 Sherbrooke Street West  
Montreal, Quebec, H3A 2T7

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## Contents

Director's Welcome	1
Everything Old is New Again	2
Classics in Colleges	2
Research Spotlight: Ritual Alliance in Rome	3
Major Publications	3
News from the Papachristidis Chair	4
Faculty Information	4



## Everything New is Old Again by Prof. Michael P. Fronda

Picture the scene. An extremely unpopular leader of the world's most powerful state departs. He had been criticized for manipulating a war and declaring victory prematurely for political ends, of pettiness, jealousy, lying, being controlled by his subordinates, and violating citizens' rights with trials of dubious legality and improperly gathered evidence. Under intense criticism he had largely withdrawn from the public's eyes. His departure was met with jubilant celebrations. The new leader was young and attractive. He had little experience but brought sense of hope and change for the better. He appeared the answer to prayers not only of his own citizens, but of all humankind(\*). Yet within two years he too suffered a precipitous decline in public opinion: accused of not taking foreign policy seriously, currying the favor of groups of constituents through pork-filled projects that drained the treasury, and resorting to rapacious taxation to pay for out-of-control spending. He was condemned for personal extravagance and for turning his back on his nation's traditions. Some chaffed at his messianic self-promotion, others whispered that he was a tyrant. The United States circa 2010, right? In fact, I am describing the Roman Empire circa AD 40.

As a historian, I am struck by how often current events call to mind people, places and affairs of the ancient world. Now, not every story in the Montreal Gazette finds an exact parallel in the pages of Tacitus or Xenophon: no two societies are identical, and the "rules" of ancient societies differed from

today's social and political codes. The Greeks and Romans often responded very differently than we do when confronted with similar circumstances. Yet there are many points of connection, intersection and overlap.

To explore the classical world can, therefore, teach us a great deal about ourselves. Of course, the study of any other society affords self-reflection. But this is especially true of ancient Greece and Rome because of the West's particular indebtedness to the classical past. Much of our political thought, aesthetic ideals, philosophical notions, literary forms, etc., derive from classical models. Is it surprising, then, that Thucydides' political theory, Catullus' tortured emotions, Demosthenes' rhetoric, Plautus' humor, Sophocles' dramatic genius, Virgil's ambiguous patriotism, the beauty of the Parthenon or the Medici Venus still resonate and inspire? The Greeks and Romans seem so modern, so relevant because they are our cultural ancestors.

This view is no longer politically correct, I think. But this is all the more reason to ponder why the ancient world continues to draw us in— why the Greeks and Romans matter. Indeed, in the (post-)modern intellectual milieu, where the privileging of the study of one culture over another is viewed with skepticism, the value (or even the existence) of the Western tradition is refuted, and truth is not merely debated but denied, classical studies is more necessary than ever. We look backward to look forward, we contemplate the classical past to disclose the present, and if we fail to do so we risk losing ourselves.

(\* ) Suetonius, Life of Caligula 13.1

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## Classics in Québec Colleges: The CÉGEP Initiative by Prof. John Serrati

The outreach initiative between McGill Classics and Montréal's colleges realised new heights in 2009-2010. The year began with the implementation of a groundbreaking agreement with John Abbott College whereby top students entering Classics were given freedom to proceed immediately to the 300 level. The Student-for-a-Day programme also continued in February with a dozen perspective applicants attending lectures and meeting professors. With a firm agreement between McGill and John Abbott in place, and with increasing ties between classics teaching at the two schools, Prof. John Serrati's position as 'CÉGEP Liaison' was formalised and he is now the first point of contact for matters concerning the collegiate system in Québec. This position additionally entails aiding our graduate students with CV and interview preparation in applying to CÉGEPs, as well as giving a yearly job talk on the subject. Finally, the annual John Abbott trip to the ancient Mediterranean took in Sicily and Tunisia in the summer of 2010, and featured the participation of McGill Classics undergraduates. The Classics faculty at McGill is working hard to ensure the continuation and growth of these initiatives in the hopes that our support for the discipline at the college level will see more students entering our programs with strong backgrounds in ancient culture and languages.

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## Director's Welcome

(continued from page 1) cultural horizon we associate with our course offerings and research in Classical Studies. As such, the union with History is the key prerequisite for the healthy future of our discipline as we envision it. As Classical Studies at McGill enters the 177th year of its history, I am more excited than ever to participate in the journey. Welcome to the new academic year!

- Hans Beck, *John MacNaughton Professor and Director*

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## Research Spotlight: Ritual Alliance in Rome by Prof. Bill Gladhill

The sacrifice of a piglet and the shaking of right hands, two ways of cementing a ritual alliance (*foedus*) in Rome, are the ultimate causes of Roman power and culture. Romans believed that the foundation of their city and the formation of its imperium were rooted in the performance of ritual alliance. Lucretius' *Agēs of Mankind* in the *DRN* emphasizes that at every progressive push forward in the advancement of human society—from the primitive desire to abstain from killing loved ones, through the creation of *respublica*, to the discovery that the universe is a federation of Nature (*foedera naturā*)—stands ritual alliance.

*Foedera* were ubiquitous. They could be recognized in acts of *amicitia* and *hospitium* or in the sacrosanctity of tribunes (*AUC* 4.6.7). The expansion of Roman imperialism was conditioned on the increasing role of international alliances, which were sanctioned by a particularly brutal sacrifice of a piglet. Some Romans even surmised that the *foeditas* ("foulness") of the sacrifice provided the etymology for *foedus*, a cognitive association revealing dark potentialities in the formation of Roman relationships. Roman origins were attributed to a *foedus* struck between Latinus and Aeneas, which was followed by *foedera* that resulted in the subsumation of the Sabines and Alba Longa into Rome. Italy followed. Philosophers could look at the processes of nature, the birth, growth and decay of trees, the revolving canopy of stars and constellations, the blowing of wind, the assassination of political leaders and the ensuing comets accompanying them as functions of the federation of nature. Roman society, Roman Empire, and Roman cosmologies provided infinite instances of alliance. Roman civilization in its broadest terms is based on ritual alliance; at every level of interaction within a Roman's experiential domain is the ritual event of the *foedus*.

My research on Roman alliance merges my interests in human relationships, narratives of social upheaval, problems attending competing views of the universe, geopoetics and Roman poetry. The vast majority of scholarship on Roman alliance has focused on the

historical consequences of alliance or on the formation of empire. My consideration of Roman alliance focuses more on the internal pressures and cognitive associations found in narratives of alliance in poetry. The poetry of alliance does

not view ritual alliance in terms of federalism or the formation of empire, but on the human cost in forming alliances, on the psychological and emotional forces that compel individuals to strike alliances, and on the consequent pain and suffering that ensues when alliances rupture. So Roman poets conceived of Civil War as the violation of the most ancient Roman alliances and this unleashed the *foeditas* of civil conflict, a pollution that can only be expiated through the further slaughter of Romans, which consequently only violates

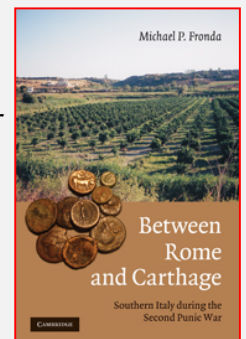
further those ancient ritual alliances. Poetic narratives about Roman federation center on the internal structure and systems of Roman society itself, while the multi-ethnic mythology of Rome's foundation provided poets with the sufficient analytical frames to situate the tensions and problems of an imperial society within a pan-Mediterranean context. At one instant *foedera* allow Romans to investigate the nature and consequences of Civil War while also providing sufficient means to conceive of cosmic, international and interpersonal relationships as ritually conditioned modes of behavior that serve to define Roman beliefs, attitudes, and thoughts, that is the syntax of Roman culture.



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## Major Publications, 2010

Fronza, Michael. P.  
*Between Rome and Carthage:  
Southern Italy in the Second Punic War*  
Cambridge University Press.  
404 pp., 2010



for a full slate, visit:

<http://www.mcgill.ca/classics/research/publications/>

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## News from the Papachristidis Chair by Prof. Nikos Pouloupoulos

The new minor concentration in Neo-Hellenic studies has been finally approved and will be launched this September. The new program is designed to immerse students in the rich tradition of modern Greece's language, literature, history and culture, and comes at a time when student enrollment in Modern Greek courses has seen a significant surge. The new minor means that in addition to our customary Modern Greek language and literature courses this fall, Dr. Effie Gavaki (Professor Emerita, Concordia University), thanks to the generous support of the Onassis Foundation, will offer an advanced course on the history of the Hellenic Diaspora in Canada (HIST 423); while in the winter, a new course will examine the history of Hellenism since the fall of Byzantium (HIST 349).

Meanwhile, Dr. Kerstin Jentsch-Mancor (PhD in Modern Greek studies, Oxford University) has joined the department as a Research Associate. She will continue her research on the history and literature of the Occupation period and the Greek Civil War era. Finally, we would like to welcome Darren Hunter, who will be our very first graduate student at McGill to pursue an M.A. in Classics/Modern Greek.

## Faculty and Teaching Staff, 2010-11

<b>Baronowski, Donald</b>	Faculty Lecturer	3610 McTavish, 23-4 514.398.8222	Language Instruction
<b>Beck, Hans</b>	Professor, Director of Classical Studies	LEA 626 514.398.2234	Ancient History
<b>Frona, Michael</b>	Assistant Professor	LEA 828 514.398.7169	Ancient History
<b>Gladhill, Bill</b>	Assistant Professor, Advisor	LEA 825 514.398.2409	Latin Language and Literature
<b>Kozak, Lynn</b>	Assistant Professor	LEA 625 514.398.2523	Greek Language and Literature
<b>Palczynski, Margaret</b>	Faculty Lecturer	3610 McTavish, 11-4 514.398.3705	Language Instruction
<b>Pouloupoulos, Nikos</b>	Papachristidis Assistant Professor	LEA 827 514.398.6254	Modern Greek
<b>Serrati, John</b>	Adjunct Professor, CEGEP Liaison	LEA 817 514.398.4889	Ancient History

## New Faculty Profile



**Dr. Lynn Kozak** (Assistant Professor, Greek) received her PhD in Classics from the University of Nottingham in 2009, after an MA in Classics at King's College London and a BA in Comparative Literature from Barnard College, Columbia University. She has taught a wide variety of courses in Classics at the University of Nottingham and the Intercollegiate Center for Classical Studies in Rome. Her research centres on the *Iliad*, Thucydides, Greek tragedy, and Plato, with broader interests in the reception and production of Greek drama, modern comparative texts, and critical theories. Current work includes contributions to The Oath in Archaic and Classical Greece Project at the University of Nottingham and the Classicizing Chicago Project at Northwestern University, while her main research focus continues thesis work on relationship dynamics and characterisation in Greek literature. This interest stems from a greater personal curiosity about how literary characters are constructed and received, particularly within traditions.

## Highlights in 2010-11

As usual, this year's academic year is packed with activities that go beyond the classroom.

Confirmed speakers for the year include Prof. Paul Cartledge (Cambridge), Prof. Clifford Ando (Chicago), Prof. Walter Scheidel (Stanford), Prof. Harriet Flower (Princeton), and Prof. Angela Kühr (Frankfurt), while the CAC lecturer will be Prof. Margriet Haagsma (Alberta).

Prof. Lynn Kozak is planning an English language production of the *Agamemnon* for a short run in the Spring- if you are interested in participating, please email her at [lynn.kozak@mcgill.ca](mailto:lynn.kozak@mcgill.ca).