

# Classical Studies at McGill

## Newsletter 4, 2011-12



**It's hard to imagine** that this is the entrance to the underground excavation area that contains the tomb of Alexander the Great. But, in all likelihood it is. In his lecture delivered here earlier this year, Professor Jonathan Hall (Chicago) argued that tomb 2 of the Vergina complex, which is frequently assigned to Philip II, was actually built to house Alexander's corpse. On the way from Babylon to Macedon, the funeral cortege was sidetracked to Egypt and the Vergina tomb stayed empty. That is, until Alexander's half-brother Philip Arrhidaios was executed by Olympias six years later. Hall's week-long visit to our department was made possible through the generous support of the Onassis Foundation, NYC. His stay was extremely inspiring for students and colleagues alike. The lecture on Macedon was dynamite. No doubt, it was among the most engaging papers I have ever heard.

The study of material culture has recently been reinvigorated in ways that are nothing less than breathtaking. The archaeology of the ancient world captivates anyone who seeks to unearth the ways in which early societies construed their multiple identities, for instance as ethnic groups or as citizen communities. I'm thrilled to see that our department is able to bring the discipline once again to where it should be: to the classroom. After many years of suspense, and thanks to another gracious gift of the Onassis Foundation, this year's course offerings include two thriving classes in Classical Archaeology. With this important addition, we (see page 3)



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## Classical Revolutions: what Pontano didn't know (by Bill Gladhill)

When Pontano (1426-1523) wrote his *Parthenopaeus* in Naples as one of the leading diplomats, intellectuals and poets in the court of Alphonso the Magnanimous, he hardly could have imagined that his poetic pyre would take flame at McGill University as part of Classical Revolutions. Under the direction of Professors Gladhill (Classical Studies) and Soranzo (Italian Studies), Classical Revolutions is producing the first English translation of Pontano's *Parthenopaeus*, a complex collection of polymetric poems which challenges not only the generic features of Roman Love Elegy as constructed by Catullus, Propertius and Ovid, but also the translator's abilities to capture the elegance and subtlety of thought in Pontano's verses. The *Parthenopaeus*, perhaps best translated as *Naples, the Book*, was published in four editions, each characterized by a differing ordering of the poems, which opens a window into Pontano's poetic laboratory where one can see how the poet is working out his conceptualization of Love Elegy over time, and then moves beyond the Roman tradition to create a

work of art that symbolizes the wit, elegance and charm of Renaissance Naples. Furthermore, the *Parthenopaeus* stands at the center of Pontano's prodigious poetic output. The polymetric nature of the work is more than a generic feature, it signifies a highly experimental phase of composition out of which come subsequent publications by Pontano, each written in a single meter first explored in the *Parthenopaeus*. In these later works Pontano marries meter to very specific thematic aims, which are only hinted at in the *Parthenopaeus*. It offers a rare glimpse into the process of poetics as both an act or reception and revolution. In addition to the series of talks on various aspects of Classics and its Reception, Classical Revolutions will finish the translation and commentary of the *Parthenopaeus* and begin work on the first English translation of Pontano's cosmological poem, the *Urania*. Students and faculty are invited to participate in the project. For more information email either Professor Gladhill ([charles.gladhill@mcgill.ca](mailto:charles.gladhill@mcgill.ca)) or Professor Soranzo ([matteosoranzo@gmail.com](mailto:matteosoranzo@gmail.com)).

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## New course: CLAS 206 Classics in Modern Media (Margaret Palczynski)

PREMIERE: JANUARY 2012. This interactive, fast-paced multimedia course explores modern receptions of the Ancient Greek and Roman 'hero' in film, art, literature, comics and other media. Guest appearances include Professors Hans Beck (Star Wars), Lynn Kozak (Star Trek), John Serrati (The 300).



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## Highlighting new Faculty



**Dr. Anastassios Anastassiadis** studied political science, sociolinguistics and history in the USA and France. His doctoral dissertation dealt with the topic of the passage to Modernity in Greece and more specifically with the role of activists in mixing foreign models and indigenous traditions in order to implement institutional reform through the case study of the Greek Orthodox Church in the 19th and early 20th c. Following the PhD (2006), he held teaching positions at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (EPHE) and Sciences-Po in Paris. His courses focused primarily on state formation and the passage from Empire to modern state, cultural transfers and the multiple usages of tradition, the relationship between religion and politics in Greece and the Balkans as part of global history. As a researcher for 3 years of the French School of

Archeology, Classical and Modern Greek Studies in Athens (EFA) he initiated an international research program studying inter-religious relations in South-East Europe and Eastern Mediterranean (<http://interconf.efa.gr>). His present project undertaken within this program examines missionaries as actors of transfer of social models and practises in the fields of education, social welfare and in regards with gender roles in the host countries and their conscious as well as involuntary role as actors of change using various published and archival sources from France, Greece, Italy, Turkey, United Kingdom, USA and the Vatican (Holy See).

## The Classics Play (by Lynn Kozak)

This past year a new tradition began here in Classics at McGill – or, rather, a very old tradition began anew. There's a picture in Peterson Hall of a student production of Plautus from 1897, so it is a great pleasure to recall a McGill institution established so long ago. This year's Classics Play (hopefully the first of many more to come) was Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, one of the oldest



extant Greek plays (first produced in Athens in 458 BCE), and widely regarded to be one of the most challenging in terms of its language. Students from McGill participated in every aspect of bringing this text back to life in a new, accessible English version. Classics

students Carina de Klerk and David Whiteside had an equal share in the translation with myself, with input from other Ancient Greek students in translation meetings throughout the fall. Casting took place in December and January, and rehearsals carried us through January. Classics students Ben Nikota and Brahm Kleinman (with drummer Steve Rachel) served as live musicians for the performance, and Brahm and Classics student Lizzy Ten-Hove, who played Cassandra, both added music to Chicago-based composer Jeffrey Levin's original hard rock score. The result was an electric hard rock version of the play with a full chorus of eight, performed at Montreal's La Sala Rossa. Over the course of the three night run in early February, over 300 people saw the play. *Agamemnon* went on to win the AUS award for the 'Most Outstanding New Event' of the 2010-2011 school year. The success of the play exceeded my wildest expectations, and I'm pleased to announce that every effort will be made to keep the Classics Play going as annual event for our students, for McGill, and for the greater Montreal community. This year's play will be a new version of Euripides' *Hippolytos*, with Carina de Klerk stepping in to direct. For more information on the play, to get involved, or to help support the play, please visit <http://www.mcgill.ca/classics/classicsplay>.

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### Director's Welcome (cont. from page 1)

once again accommodate the full slate of disciplines that are commonly associated with our field of study. All this will be complemented by a large number of workshops, guest events and an all-new Classics play. I'll stop here before I get too excited. Enjoy the new year. Oh, and do "follow us on Facebook"!

Hans Beck, MacNaughton Professor and Director

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### Performances of Power (by Mike Fronda)

In 194 BCE, the Roman general T. Quintius Flamininus returned to Italy. He had spent the last five years defeating king Philip V of Macedon and overseeing the post-war occupation of Greece. Flamininus landed at Brundisium. According to Livy (34.52), he then "marched through the whole length of Italy to the City in what was almost a triumphal procession, of which the captured

spoils formed as large a part as the troops themselves." Crowds from along the Via Appia came out to see the display. Spectators included both Romans and non-Romans, all of whom were impressed by the parade of captives and loot, the army, and the victorious general. In effect, all of Italy became the stage for the celebration of Roman martial prowess. This vivid episode exemplifies the major theme of my current research, which considers how the various communities of ancient Italy came to accept Roman political authority. In particular, my project examines Roman performances of power: displays of images, gestures, behaviors, and rituals, encoded with meaning and pregnant with symbols of power, which were played out before an Italian audience. I believe that the repetition of such performances slowly normalized Roman rule, contributed to a sense of common identity, and were critical in transforming Italy into a unitary state. In 2011-12, I will conduct my research in Germany as a guest scholar at the TU Dresden, with funding from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and SSHRC.

## Faculty and Teaching Staff, 2011-12

<b>Anastassiadis, Tassos</b>	Assistant Professor, Papachristidis Chair	LEA 827 514.398.4400 ext. 094283	Modern Greek
<b>Beck, Hans</b>	Professor, Director of Classical Studies, on leave	LEA 626 514.398.4400 ext. 09327	Ancient History
<b>Francis, Jane</b>	Onassis Visiting Professor	LEA 826	Classical Archaeology
<b>Fronza, Michael</b>	Associate Professor, on leave	LEA 826 514.398.4400 ext. 094246	Ancient History
<b>Gladhill, Bill</b>	Assistant Professor, Graduate Advisor	LEA 825 514.398.4400 ext. 089512	Latin Language and Literature
<b>Kozak, Lynn</b>	Assistant Professor, Undergraduate Advisor	LEA 625 514.398.4400 ext. 09267	Greek Language and Literature
<b>Palczynski, Margaret</b>	Faculty Lecturer	3610 McTavish, 35-4 514.398.4400 ext. 00946	Language Instruction and Civilization classes
<b>Roman, Agathe</b>	Sessional Teacher	3610 McTavish, 35-3	Language Instruction
<b>Serrati, John</b>	Adjunct Professor, CEGEP Liaison	LEA 817	Ancient History
<b>Sirois, Martin</b>	Sessional teacher	3610 McTavish, 35-3	Language Instruction

### Student trip to Italy and Turkey (with and by John Serrati)

In May and June of 2011, twenty-six McGill students journeyed to Rome and Istanbul to experience first-hand the two ancient capitals of the Roman empire. Over sixteen days, we explored major sites such as the Flavian Amphitheatre (Colosseum), the Forum, Pompeii, Hagia Sophia, and the Hippodrome, and also lesser known, more out-of-the-way places like the working Roman aqueduct under the basilica of San Clemente, the Via Appia (one of those roads that leads to Rome!) and the catacombs of San Sebastiano, the Baths of Diocletian, and the Basilica cistern.

McGill students on the walls of Theodosius in Constantinople



The trip also served as a course, HIST 413, in which participating students received credit for written analyses of archaeological monuments. Another unique opportunity for students was a lecture at the British School at Rome, after which the BSR treated everyone to a wine reception. A number of students from five other institutions in Ontario and Quebec also came along, giving the participants from McGill an excellent opportunity to interact with people in other classics programs. By all accounts, the trip was a smashing success, and I, along with Professor Bill Russell of John Abbott College, am already planning the 2012 trip, which will take in two of the wealthiest archaeological areas in the Mediterranean: Sicily and, if possible, Spain. If you're interested, check for details on the departmental website in October.

