

Classical Studies at McGill

Newsletter 5, 2012-13



Shiny hats and beaming faces. Professors Beck, Serrati, and Covino with nine students at the 'Tomb of the Scipios' in Rome.

This summer I made my third attempt to get access to the Tomb of the Scipios along the Via Appia antica outside the city of Rome. My previous efforts had died in vain either because the excavation was “chiuso per restauro” or someone was on strike. This time we were told by the *soprintendenza* that a guard would await our group to let us into the site which is otherwise closed to the public. When he finally arrived (he was about two hours late), he unlocked the gates and handed out hard hats. A second round of gates and more heavy locks, then ‘open, sesame’ – what we were about to see exceeded our wildest expectations: a mesmerizing complex of underground corridors and niches with sarcophagi of some of the republic’s most esteemed consuls, along with facsimile stone-inscriptions that recalled their deeds. Earlier in the day I explored the site of the famous *fornix Scipionis* which also commemorated events from the Punic Wars, and a few days before that our group had visited the main theatre of war on Sicily. In the tomb, all the threads came together. I was in ancient history heaven.

The annual trip to Europe, now in its sixth year, is a wonderful opportunity for students and professors alike to pursue their studies and extend their scholarly expertise by means of intensive field work. It is a true experience of inquiry-based learning, with students and teachers engaging in a joint research agenda. Professor Serrati has more to say about this in (cont. page 3)



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Greek Colonies and Italian Ancestors

By Michael Fronda

Last August I visited the archaeological site of ancient Kaulonia, on the southern coast of Calabria, the “toe” of the Italian peninsula. At the time I was researching the Italiote League, a confederation of Greek colonies in southern Italy that was organized in the fifth century BC. Even though my travel was work-related, the opportunity to spend several days in this beautiful, evocative and richly historic corner of the Mediterranean was certainly welcome.

Kaulonia appears to have served at the capital of the Italiote League. Indeed, some scholars argue that the Doric temple complex at Kaulonia, which dominates the excavated area, should be identified with the Temple of Zeus Homarios. This temple, according to Polybius, was built by the Italiote League as its federal sanctuary, in imitation of the Achaean League in Greece, whose federal sanctuary was the shrine of Zeus Homarios near Aegion.

The site of ancient Kaulonia lies in seaside resort of Monasterace. Some 25 kilometers to the southwest is modern Caulonia, a small, poor community of about 7500 inhabitants. The main town is situated 10 km inland, on a sheer outcrop 300 meters high. This Caulonia has little historical relation to its ancient namesake. It was called Castelvetera from at least 1067, until the name was changed to Caulonia in 1862, following the unification of Italy. This was clearly an effort to enhance the medieval hilltown’s prestige by asserting an ancient origin.

Caulonia has a personal resonance for me: thousands of Cauloniesi emigrated to the US in the 1910s and 1920s, among them my grandmother Carmela Maiolo. I decided to visit the historic center to learn more about my origins. Around the central piazza, I found several placards memorializing the five days in 1945 when the townsfolk declared an independent, communist “Red Republic of Caulonia,” before allied forces suppressed the movement. At last I came to the civic registry office, where I was invited by the director to search through the birth records, organized by decade, to find information on my ancestors.

Quickly we found entries for my great-grandparents and my grandmother’s seven siblings, but nothing on my grandmother, who was born (according to family lore) in 1902. I immediately began to develop theories: was my grandmother adopted? Did she lie about her name? Did she lie about her age? So I asked the director to look in the records for 1890-1899. She was skeptical and asked, “Does your grandmother have a grave?” “Yes,” I answered. “What is written on the stone?” “1902,” I answered. “So there,” she said. “But,” I explained, “when she died, no one in the family knew for sure when she was born.” The director looked dubious but relented, and within in minutes, we found the missing birth record in 1899!

As a scholar in ancient history, this experience struck me deeply. The director assumed that the tombstone inscription was an indisputable fact, and indeed ancient historians often put great faith in epigraphic evidence without considering that they are subject to the same distortions, inaccuracies and fabrications found in, for instance, literary sources. But, what is a historical “fact”, other than an assertion accepted by a given audience in a specific moment? Had we not looked in the next volume, the “fact” that Carmela Maiolo was born in 1902 would have triumphed, leaving my family to develop theories to explain her apparent absence from the records. Moreover, my grandmother’s birth date was hidden in part by the organization of the records into decades linked to a specific dating system. This is an artificial structure that we superimpose upon time to help us organize and make sense of the past. Yet the past is never static, but rather it is always contested. Whether it is the ancient Kaulonians promoting an alleged Achaean heritage or modern Cauloniesi laying claim to ancient roots or celebrating a short-lived political moment in the 1940s as an expression of their spirit of independence, the past is invoked, interpreted, (re)shaped, (re)organized, and (re)told to provide meaning and coherence to the present.

Professor Fronda is teaching Ancient Historical Methods this fall.

The *novissima regna mundi* returns to Cumae By Bill Gladhill

Outside of the Bible, no text has had as profound an impact on Western Culture as the *Aeneid*, and within the *Aeneid*, no book has been as influential as *Aeneid* Six. Ovid was perceptive enough to recognize its profound novelty, when his Sibyl refers to Vergil's underworld as *novissima regna mundi* (*Met.* 14.111). By the time of Servius (4th cent. CE) the *novissima regna* had been arranged according various intellectual disciplines such as *historia*, *philosophia*, and theology with numerous scholiasts commenting on the many cruces posed by the text. The novelty and intellectual expansiveness of Book Six allowed the text to have a number of reincarnations and afterlives, which continue to this day.

Over the coming year I will be conducting a number of workshops which will evaluate *Aeneid* Six' reception of prior Greco-Roman traditions as well as consider its influence on the formation of Western thought and literature from Ovid to Joyce. These workshops are designed to lay the groundwork for an international

conference to be held June 25-28 in Cumae, Italy under the auspices of the Vergilian Society.

How does conceiving of *Aeneid* Six as a product of reception as well as a catalyst for other receptions illuminate receptions studies? How does Vergil channel the vast complex of prior literature, philosophy and religion into his poem and how does this contribute to the meaning of the *Aeneid*? Does Vergil create a coherent eschatology or does the polyphony of traditions result in contradictory stances? How do later thinkers and artists respond to Vergil's artistic vision? How and why was *Aeneid* Six established as a central text for reception, and just as importantly why has it been displaced within the last few generations?

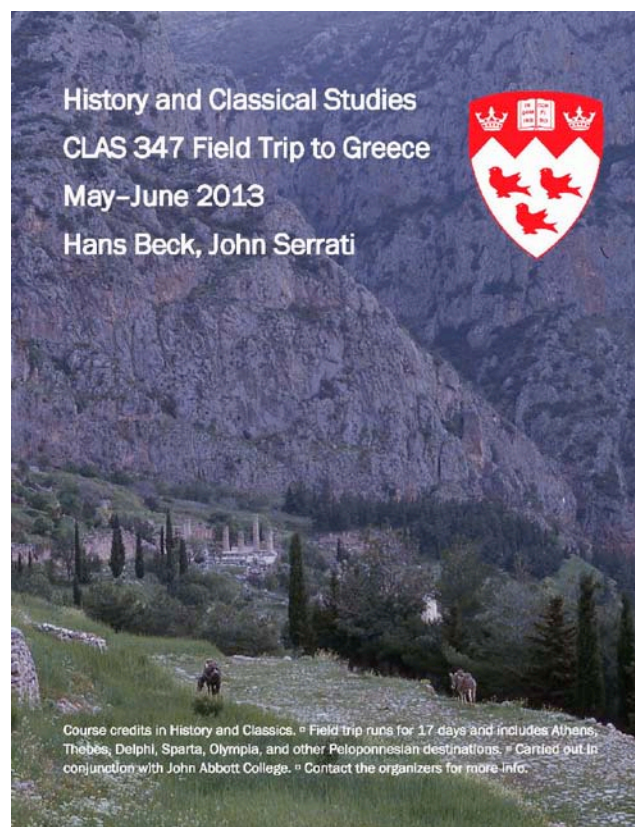
If you are interested in participating in any of these workshops or would like to learn more about the conference itself, please contact Professor Gladhill at charles.gladhill@mcgill.ca.

Director's Welcome

(cont. from page 1) his contribution. The notes in this newsletter outline many opportunities for students to participate in projects and events that speak so vividly to the spirit of Classical Studies at McGill, including its Modern Hellenic Studies branch. Professors Fronda and Gladhill offer intriguing insights into their present research and teaching agendas. Professor Kozak captures the excitement of the Classics Play, on stage and in her research. Alex McAuley adumbrates how much there is to be done for a graduate student.

Classical Studies at McGill is a boutique enterprise in the best sense: our students study in an environment that is driven by cutting-edge research performance on an international stage; at the same time, we fully embrace the idea of accessibility and close intellectual exchange with students. The field trip is but one example. I hope you'll be able to come along in 2013. Welcome to another exciting academic year!

Hans Beck, MacNaughton Professor and Director



Vision in Greek Tragedy from Page to Stage

By Lynn Kozak

My experiences directing with the Classics Play the last two years have really inspired me to rethink what we know about how staging Greek tragedy relates to the texts of Greek tragedy that have survived the millennia since these plays were first performed. The process of producing a play forces you to approach the text from a different direction. You are not just translating for accuracy, you are translating for style, for tone, and, most basically, for ease of communication. The text becomes alive, something that leaps off the page and into the mouths of actors. It is always a delightful shock to hear our translation performed aloud for the first time when auditions roll around.

This living language of tragedy functions in more ways than is immediately obvious. One of my students recently wrote that Greek tragedy is diegetic, not mimetic, and while I do not entirely agree with that statement, there is an element of truth to it. There is a lot of 'telling' in tragedy, and not just in the famous messenger speeches that announce whatever terrible death or bloody violence (or both) has happened off-stage. From the very beginning of the play, things are being pointed out: places, objects, approaching characters, corpses. When you begin to stage a play, these moments start to jump out at you. Actors complain, "Why is this all so deliberate?" Producing challenges you to figure out how to stage all these

moments without looking cheesy. In her opening speech in Euripides' *Hippolytos*, Aphrodite says "But now I see the son of Theseus coming in, having left behind the heat of the hunt, Hippolytos, and so I will leave this place. With him come a great many followers, a revelry that shouts out, honouring the goddess Artemis with hymns—he doesn't know that the gates of Hades are open for him, and the light he sees today will be his last." This poses all kinds of questions: Where is Hippolytos entering from? Where does Aphrodite exit? How do we time his entrance, from the moment he is seen? Do the audience see him when Aphrodite does? How do you stage the scene so that it's plausible that Aphrodite sees Hippolytos, but Hippolytos doesn't see Aphrodite? (cont. page 6)



Highlighting new Faculty

Martin Sirois studied classics in Quebec and the USA. After a B.A. and a Master's thesis on the Homeric shield of Achilles at the Université de Montréal, he went on to pursue his education at Princeton University, where he also taught language and history courses. He is currently completing a Ph.D. dissertation on the early Greek Cynics. His research investigates how the first Cynic philosophers (4th-3rd cent. BCE) quickly established a tradition around their figurehead, Diogenes of Sinope. Through the fragmentary (and often dubious) evidence, the dissertation aims at uncovering the relationship between the historical figure of Diogenes and the cultural and literary paradigms involved in the creation of his 'Cynic character'. Since his return to Quebec he has taught at various universities in Montreal. His general research interests include Classical and Hellenistic culture, early Cynics, ancient literary criticism, and History of ideas; more specifically he is interested in satire, mimesis, and Alexandrianism. His future goals include a study of the cultural traffic from Alexandria to Italy and the import of Greek culture into the Republican Rome.



Notes from the Classics Play

By Carina de Klerk and Elizabeth Ten-Hove

The goals of the annual McGill Classics Play are simple: to give our Classics students a new perspective on material that they usually only experience as written texts in the classroom, to give non-Classics students an opportunity to experience ancient drama, and to bring that drama to the greater Montreal community. Inclusivity is key to these goals, and everyone who wants to participate can. Carina de Klerk, graduate student and co-director of the 2012 *Hippolytos*, reports:

“From a live rock band to electronic dance music, the Classics Play accommodates and makes possible a great range of artistic visions, helping enrich the way that students and audiences see ancient Greek tragedy. I am honoured to have had the chance to participate in the McGill Classics Play in the role of co-director in both the 2011 *Agamemnon* and the 2012 *Hippolytos* productions. In 2012, my vision was to create a *Hippolytos* that pushed the exploration of destructive desire. Cross-casting the role of Hippolytos (Elizabeth Ten-Hove) and Aphrodite (Alex Myhr) was a part of this strategy. Professor Kozak’s choreographic work with the chorus complemented this vision, creating a space that responded to Aphrodite’s destructive power.

The McGill Classics Play enables creative possibilities that go beyond the Roddick Gates. This past summer, the *Hippolytos* was successfully recast for the 2012 Montreal Fringe Festival. While the production was unassociated with the university, Classics Play vets Lewis Innes-Miller, Elie Gill, Elizabeth Ten-Hove, Lauren Wilson, Negar Banakar, Andrew Chaban, Hinda Young, and Ben Nikota participated on or off the stage alongside professional actors. The production garnered a nomination for the Mainline Theatre Next Stage Award and an honourable mention for the Centaur Best Production Award.

The McGill Classics Play has proven itself to be an invaluable asset to Classical Studies. A great part of its success comes from the dedication and enthusiasm of the students. But due recognition must go here to Professor Kozak, the backbone of the Play. Thank you

for giving us this creative outlet. I can’t wait to see the 2013 production!”



Elizabeth Ten-Hove, undergraduate student and director of the upcoming 2013 *Philoktetes*: “The Classics Play has been a highlight of my year since its inaugural production of Aischylos’ *Agamemnon*: not only have I come to know both my fellow students and the texts in a way that would be impossible in a classroom setting alone, but I have also had the pleasure of seeing people from all over Montreal – people who might ordinarily think of Greek tragedy as something boring, dusty, and longwinded – engage with and enjoy something I love.

It is my hope that this year’s production of Sophokles’ *Philoktetes*, which I am excited and honoured to direct for a run of five performances at the ‘Montréal, arts interculturels’ (MAI), will continue in this tradition of bringing ancient drama alive. Set on a dreamscape desert island, the production will incorporate elements of English folk dance and nineteenth-century sea shanty to evoke a naval culture that exists outside of time, space, and possibly reality. A dedicated group of volunteers has already begun work on the translation, and auditions are planned for early October. Anyone interested in becoming involved, whether as a translator, actor, crew person, donor, or audience member, can visit www.mcgill.ca/classics/classicsplay.”

2012 Field Trip to Sicily: the Charms of Megara Hyblaia

By John Serrati

Physical remains are one of the most immediate legacies of the classical past. Researchers and students have come to view travel as a vital tool in their quest to recognise and understand ancient sites, and to visualise how ruins fit together and interconnect with each other. In Classical Studies, such trips are thus no longer viewed as mere academic tourism, but as important methodological components in the development of scholarship. As such, modern travellers not only follow in the footsteps of eighteenth and nineteenth century amateur scholars who were some of the first moderns to journey to Greek and Roman sites, but we also walk on the footprints of the ancients themselves.

With this in mind, in May and June of 2012, Professors Beck and Serrati, Bill Russell (John Abbott College), Professor Covino (Tennessee-Chattanooga), and nineteen McGill students journeyed to Sicily to experience some of the most extensive archaeological sites in the Mediterranean. Over sixteen days the travellers constructed a narrative that began at the native site of Segesta; through the Carthaginian settlement at Lilybaion; thence deep into the era of Greek colonisation at Selinos and Akragas; before reaching Syracuse, one of the great cities of the Hellenistic world. The journey focussed on topography and urban space, as well as the relationship between

city and hinterland within *polis* territories. As such, we also had the chance to divert from the main roads in order to explore lesser known sites such as Morgantina and the Greek colony of Megara Hyblaia. The trip also



served as a course, HIST 413, in which students received credit for written analyses of archaeological sites and monuments. By all accounts, the trip was a smashing success, with extensive field work by day and beautiful surroundings at night. Photo image: Professor Serrati lectures to students on the site of the Epipolai gate near ancient Siracusa. In the background, Mount Etna is visible, as is Sicily's largest oil refinery complex.

Vision in Greek Tragedy from Page to Stage

(cont. from page 4) These questions are central to my current research project – how the language of seeing in Greek tragedy might affect staging, change the dynamics of action going on on-stage, and even affect the emotional response of the audience. For the audience, there is a difference between just seeing something in the playing space and being told what to see in the playing space, and I am trying to figure out what that difference is.

Sometimes it is as simple as creating anticipation in the audience, like in the example above, where the audience is now expecting Hippolytos' entrance into the playing space. But there are other examples where the effect must be more extreme. How do we respond as an audience when we see Herakles, in Sophocles' *Trachiniai*, suffering in terrible physical pain, and then he cries out, "Look, look at my struggling body! Look at me, wretched, at how pitiful I am!?" I cannot believe, like Aristotle does, that we do not feel any differently when the suffering is not just words on a page, but a living, speaking, suffering body before our eyes. And I cannot wait to see how this dynamic plays out in Elizabeth Ten-Hove's McGill Classics Play version of Sophocles' *Philoktetes* in February!

What's new in Modern Greek Studies? By Tassos Anastassiadis

This past year has been an exciting one for Neo-Hellenic Studies. First of all, we witnessed the graduation of the first student with a minor in Neo-Hellenic Studies (and there were two more, as a matter of fact). In the meantime the minor in Neo-Hellenic Studies was enhanced thanks to the addition of new History and Classical Studies courses (especially a revamped Classical Tradition course, a new Byzantine history, and a course on the post-classical connection of language and identity in the Greek world) as well as offerings from other departments (philosophy, art history, political science). The new minor aims to offer students more possibilities as well as a more encompassing vision of Greek language and culture from antiquity to the present. We followed up this effort with joint lectures, workshops, and a brown-bag lunch discussion series on the Greek-EU crisis, hosting both McGill faculty (our discussion on democracy with Hans Beck was rather memorable) as well as invited academics. Coming up on the screen this year? More events, a partnership with the Classics play and the Montreal Greek film festival and maybe some summer treats. Stay tuned!

Seleucid Royal Women in Montreal By Alex McAuley



Over the past two years a dynamic group of ancient historians united by a common interest in the Seleucid Empire have come together at meetings held at the University of Exeter (August 2011), the University of Waterloo (November, 2011), and most recently at l'Université de Bordeaux. Through engaging papers and lively discussions the group has put together several edited volumes and published numerous articles, bringing various disciplines within Classics to bear on this fascinating but under-appreciated dynasty of the Hellenistic World. Now this coming February the Seleucid group will be hosted by McGill Classics for the first conference to be dedicated to the theme of Seleucid Royal Women. Organised by Altay Coskun (Waterloo) and McGill's Professor Beck and Alex McAuley, the meeting will be a truly international effort welcoming researchers from the UK, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Switzerland, Holland, Israel, the United

States, and Canada. The conference will be funded with the generous support of Classical Studies McGill, the Waterloo Institute for Hellenistic Studies, and SSHRC.

Although over the past decade Hellenistic women have stepped more and more into the scholarly limelight, Seleucid women have by and large remained in the shadows and remain as a large void in our understanding of gender, power relations, and, in general, the role of women in governance and empire in the diverse milieu of the Hellenistic world. What roles these women were expected to play, what status they held within the dynasty, how they were represented, and how they were expected to aid, either indirectly or directly, in the maintenance of one of the most diverse and complex empires in history will be the subject of three days of papers, presentations, and discussions.

The conference will also feature a public lecture and wine reception to which all are cordially invited, which will be given by Dr. Lloyd Lewellyn-Jones of the University of Edinburgh. The presentations and discussions produced over the few days will be compiled into a volume – the first ever to address Seleucid Royal Women – co-edited by Altay Coskun and Alex McAuley, which will appear hopefully within the coming year. In the meantime, research on the personalities, relations, and dynamics of the Seleucid dynasty itself continues at McGill with Alex McAuley's on-line *Genealogy of the Seleucids* website: <http://www.seleucid-genealogy.com>

Faculty and Teaching Staff, 2012-13

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Fronza, Michael	Associate Professor	LEA 826 514.398.4400 ext. 094246	Ancient History
Gladhill, Bill	Assistant Professor, Graduate Advisor	LEA 825 514.398.4400 ext. 089512	Latin Language and Literature
Kozak, Lynn	Assistant Professor, Undergraduate Advisor	LEA 625 514.398.4400 ext. 09267	Greek Language and Literature
Palczynski, Margaret	Faculty Lecturer	Ferrier 474 514.398.4400 ext. 00946	Language Instruction and Civilization classes
Serrati, John	Adjunct Professor, CEGEP Liaison	LEA 817	Ancient History
Sirois, Martin	Faculty Lecturer	Ferrier 442 514.398.4400 ext. 00883	Language Instruction

Classics Students Association (CSA)

By Katrina Van Amsterdam

It is my pleasure to serve as the President of the Classics Students' Association, CSA, during the 2012-2013 academic year. The CSA is comprised of all students who take at least one course associated with Classical Studies. As a departmental association, the CSA endeavors to celebrate the diversity of its students, whose interests cover the broad spectrum of topics pertaining to the ancient Mediterranean world. By holding events such as receptions, lectures, ancient history movie nights, and the informal Classics Fun Nights, the CSA furthers its objective to promote Classics on McGill's campus in a visible, enriching manner.

In addition, *Hirundo*, McGill's undergraduate Classics journal, will put out its eleventh publication this year. Entirely authored, edited, and organized by undergraduate students, the journal has won several awards and continues to strive for excellence in its coverage of the language, literature, history, and culture of the ancient world. I know that I speak for myself, the *Hirundo* Editor-in-Chief, and the other CSA officers in saying that the CSA and *Hirundo* play an ever-growing part in the vibrant student life present at McGill University. We look forward to the upcoming academic year and, as always, welcome new Classics and Ancient History enthusiasts to join our association.

