

“THE TIME IS THE PRESENT, THE PLACE IS ANCIENT GREECE”: THE (VERY) CONTEMPORARY COMEDY OF ARISTOPHANES

by Elizabeth Scharffenberger

In the summer and fall of 2004, New York City witnessed an extraordinary “Aristophanes-event.” Theater-goers had the opportunity to see professional performances of *three* comedies by Aristophanes. The show with the highest profile was the production of *Frogs* by Lincoln Center Theater (LCT), which opened in July at the Vivian Beaumont Theater. LCT’s *Frogs* closed on October 10, but before it did, the National Theater of Greece brought their production of *Lysistrata*, fresh from the Summer Olympics in Athens, to City Center for six performances beginning October 6. That same week saw the Off-Off-Broadway premiere, at Theater Three on West 43rd Street, of an adaptation of the rarely performed *Acharnians* (see Fig. 1), presented by a new troupe called Freshly Squeezed Creative Juices Theatre Company (FSCJTC).

The majority of critics in the New York press panned LCT’s *Frogs*, which Nathan Lane (who played Dionysus) adapted “even more freely” from an already free adaptation of the comedy that Stephen Sondheim and the late Burt Shevelove created in 1974 (see Fig. 2). Yet poor notices did not keep it from being enthusiastically received by spectators. The large audience at the performance I attended stood for an ovation, and I understand that such ovations were common. Although I agree with some of the critics’ complaints, I am delighted that Lane, director Susan Stroman, and the other members of the *Frogs*’ production team found a way to make Aristophanic comedy appeal to a broad audience that extends far beyond the academic circles of classicists and theater historians.



Fig. 1. Dicaeopolis (played by Liat Ron), on the right, conversing with Euripides (played by J. M. McDonough) in the Freshly Squeezed Creative Juices Theatre Company production of Aristophanes’ *Acharnians*, 2004. Photo credit: Jonathan Slaff.

To appreciate what may lie behind the current surge in Aristophanes’ popularity, it is helpful to reflect on why there has not been an abundance of professional productions of his comedies. We could list as causes their infamous obscenity, admittedly less of a problem today than in the past, and their “political incorrectness,” especially in jokes about women and foreigners. Yet the chief impediment is undoubtedly the topicality of the comedies. How does one make jokes about Pericles and Cleon intelligible, not to mention funny,

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Boston’s Quincy Market: Classical Style and the Puritan Instinct

by Charles Rowan Beye

In 1826, John Quincy, the mayor of Boston, was proud to open a new market on the waterfront, a building that he had labored three years to bring into being. Behind it stood Faneuil Hall, the market that Quincy Market, as it was soon called, was about to replace (see Fig. 3). In a city where streets were laid out in the most random fashion – as the tradition goes, following the old cow paths – Quincy planned an orderly arrangement of several straight roadways, running perpendicular to each other, grid fashion, especially two broad streets either side of the market building. Each of these two streets was bordered on its other side with a parallel row of buildings, and to the west of the market, there was a large open space fronting Faneuil Hall. The ensemble resembled the classical organization of the ancient Athenian agora or the Market of Trajan in Rome or what in 1830 Charles Foster would erect in the center of Covent Garden, the piazza that Inigo Jones (1573-1652) had created for London. It was Jones who had brought the Italian Renaissance to England, after seeing first hand the architecture of Andrea Palladio (1508-1580), whose masterpieces

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to audiences who have absolutely no basis for appreciating them? Where is the reward for staging a comedy that makes no one laugh? The exception has been *Lysistrata*. Its representation of the differences between women’s and men’s interests, though rooted in the particular social arrangements of ancient Athens, meshes with stereotypes still thriving in contemporary American culture; it garners laughs easily and therefore gets performed on a relatively regular basis.

But current events are rendering Aristophanes’ topicality less of an impediment. For better or worse, comedies that question the purposes and benefits of a war that has no clear end nor “exit-strategy” – and that satirize the self-serving behavior of political leaders, the undue influence of “special interests” and “insiders,” the inefficiency and dysfunction of political institutions, the lack of accountability, the stifling of free speech, and the apathy and gullibility of the public – seem extremely relevant these days to theater professionals, even if the individual jokes are about long-dead Athenians. Judging by the applause, I would say that they seem relevant to audiences, too.

Today, the political phenomena that Aristophanes addresses are objects of concern across ideological lines. Most recently, however, the ancient comedian has attracted keen interest from those who oppose the current Bush administration’s post-9/11 policies. The success of *The Lysistrata Project* in March 2003 surely boosted the reputation of Aristophanic comedy as a potent vehicle for protest. Although both LCT’s *Frogs* and FSCJTC’s *Acharnians* were in development by 2003, more recent events in Iraq and elsewhere shaped the final visions of both productions, which shared the goals of criticizing the rush to war in Iraq and – with the November 2004 elections approaching – of encouraging their audiences to rise above apathy and complacency.

Modern plays, such as Tim Robbins’ *Embedded*, might appear to have the advantage over *Acharnians* and *Frogs* because audiences can instantly recognize the targets of their satire. But *Acharnians*, in which a frustrated Athenian citizen named Dicaeopolis makes a private truce with the Spartans during the Peloponnesian War, and *Frogs*, in which the god Dionysus journeys to the underworld and presides over a contest

of poetic skill with far-reaching political and cultural implications, perhaps gain something from their very antiquity. That Aristophanes is an *ancient* Athenian playwright – the author of “classics” – grants contemporary stagings of his comedies an imprimatur of authority that is otherwise hard-won. Especially in a time when many are concerned about “unpatriotic” criticisms of current policies and practices, it is useful (and natural) to seek out some traditional authority that legitimates criticism and protest. Because they are “classics,” Aristophanes’ comedies give artists authorization to engage in political satire, and audiences have permission to listen. Moreover, his plays afford both artists and audiences some valuable breathing space because they offer what are, by necessity, oblique, indirect perspectives on our current events. The topicality of *Acharnians* and *Frogs*, and their setting in a long-gone era that may resemble but is not identical to our own, are thus assets as much as liabilities.

Nonetheless, directors and actors face challenges in helping their audiences feel at home with these ancient comedies. To maximize laughs and also get their messages across, the production teams of both FSCJTC’s *Acharnians* and LCT’s *Frogs* took pains to generate a sense of contemporaneity by rework-

ing the texts and introducing markedly modern elements into their presentations; the desired effect in both productions was to convey (and here I paraphrase the very first words of Burt Shevelove’s script) that “the place” may be “ancient Greece,” but “the time is the present.” In itself, the laughter generated by the introduction of anachronistic elements is a boon; if spectators start chuckling because (for example) the protagonist of an ancient Greek comedy enters holding a martini glass, they are primed to keep laughing during the rest of the show.

Music played a crucial role in giving both productions an up-to-date feel. Songs by Stephen Sondheim, who supplemented his edgy, Stravinsky-inspired score of 1974 with several new numbers in a variety of contemporary styles, created a thoroughly modern musical landscape for *Frogs*; Susan Stroman’s breathtaking dances gave the show the look of the latest Broadway blockbuster. In *Acharnians*, the Sex Pistols’ “God Save the Queen” introduced Dicaeopolis’ defiant stand on the Pnyx; Outkast’s “Hey Ya” marked the party atmosphere of the conclusion. Stage properties added to the anachronistic fun. In *Acharnians*, the dyspeptic Dicaeopolis swilled Pepto-Bismol in the prologue; later on, the tragedian Euripides was rolled out on a dolly, scribbling furiously on a yellow pad with a giant pencil. In *Frogs*, Dionysus and Xanthias first appeared with the aforementioned martini glasses in hand; the sartorially savvy Heracles had a closet full of lion skins and clubs, and Charon lit up a joint on the long journey across the Styx. In the second act of *Frogs*, Pluto’s glitzy underworld palace and leggy female attendants evoked a Las Vegas casino, complete with showgirls.

Although the strategies of LCT and FSCJTC for staging Aristophanes were similar, their approaches to reworking his texts differed. Adopting Douglass Parker’s translation of *Acharnians* as the basis for their script, FSCJTC’s Liat Ron and Gregory Simmons strikingly transformed Dicaeopolis into a woman, played by Ron. The comedy thus became a story not just of a citizen’s self-empowerment but also of a woman’s rejection of the outdated, counterproductive ideals upheld by the hyper-macho general Lamachus. Ron and Simmons excised several scenes that could complicate

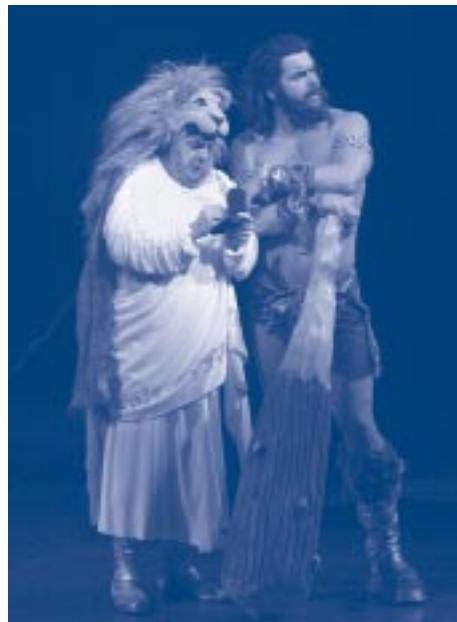


Fig. 2. Dionysus (played by Nathan Lane), on the left, conversing with Heracles (played by Burke Moses) in the Lincoln Center Theater production of Aristophanes’ *Frogs*, 2004. Photo credit: Paul Kolnik.

Boston's Quincy Market: Classical Style and the Puritan Instinct continued from page 1

built in the style of Greece and Rome are still the glory of Italy's Veneto region. In the late eighteenth century, Boston, just then getting its second wind as a major seaport of North America, was ready for the grandeur only antiquity could provide.

Boston's first European settlers were Puritans whose ideology and aesthetic were quite the opposite of Palladio, or his English admirers like Jones, or Robert Adam, the seventeenth-century builder of so many great English country houses. The earliest Boston dwellings were made of wood, in form not much changed from medieval housing in Europe, characteristically having a larger second story that overhung the downstairs entrance door. Since wood is flammable, almost all this early housing stock burned over time; those who tramp the Boston tourist's "Freedom Trail" can see the one surviving example, which is the house in which Paul Revere lived, in what is nowadays called the North End. As an indication of the change that was coming, there stands adjacent to this wooden structure a brick building, the so-called Pierce-Hitchborn house (1710, restored 1950), the windows of which are surmounted by shallow pediments, a feature associated with the architectural detailing of antiquity, hinting at the Palladian style that was then finally making its way to Boston.

In England, by choosing Palladian classicism, Jones turned his back on the prevailing Baroque architecture of Europe, which advertised absolutism in monarchy and Roman Catholicism in religion. His St. Paul's Church on the western side of Covent Garden was a radically new design for a church: a replica of a Greek temple. Alexander Parris may well have had this building in mind when he designed a temple for St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral (1820) on Boston's Tremont Street, a structure with an elegant Ionic portico (over which a tympanum presides, its stone blocks still waiting almost two hundred years later for someone to carve the bas-relief). As has often been said, Inigo Jones created an architecture for the bourgeoisie. This English Palladian style – or more specifically the architectural fashion that is called Georgian after the British monarchs of that name – made its way to New



Fig. 3. The long building with the circular dome in the center of its length is Quincy Hall. The almost-square-shaped building behind it is Faneuil Hall. Josiah Quincy, *A Municipal History of the Town and City of Boston During Two Centuries*, Boston: Little and Brown, 1852. Photograph courtesy of Jeffery Howe, Boston College.

England when the area of which Boston was the center became an English Royal Colony, the Anglican Church its established religion. The style became predominant after the American Revolution when the aristocracy had fled and the merchant class was in the ascendancy.

Builders throughout the region could learn the Palladian manner by studying the widely circulated work of James Gibbs, *A Book of Architecture* (1728). In Boston, the style was translated into reality by an autodidact, Charles Bulfinch (1763-1844), whose legacy is still a significant feature of the city. His most beautiful building is perhaps the second Harrison Grey Otis house on Mt. Vernon Street on Boston's Beacon Hill, his most important is the State House three blocks beyond it, and his most successful make-over is Faneuil Hall. The original structure was built in 1742 with money supplied by a wealthy citizen, Peter Faneuil, because he personally wanted the convenience of a solid market building. Burned to the ground in 1761, and almost immediately rebuilt, this edifice was enlarged by Bulfinch in 1805 to three times its original size. Faneuil Hall is considered to be a fine example of what is called the Federal style. This term, like neo-classicism, or Greek revival, means pretty much what you want it to mean. In essence, it is an architecture that leans heavily on Greek and Roman structure and detail, self-consciously projecting an image of a new

nation that had revived an ancient system of democracy. Bulfinch used classical elements with exceeding grace, delicacy, and elegance, the treatment of the windows in Faneuil Hall being a case in point. His Massachusetts State House building on Beacon Hill, however, is sometimes considered to be somewhat insubstantial when compared with Benjamin Latrobe's use of similar elements in the Capitol Building in Washington, D. C.

Alexander Parris (1780-1852) was the man whom Mayor Quincy engaged to draw up plans for the new market. Parris, a follower and assistant of Bulfinch, was more engineer than architect. His plan for Quincy Market is in every way a dramatic demonstration of strength and stress, as befits a person whose calling is to determine the soundness of structure. Although a traditional English conception, his two-story building was colossal in scale: 535 feet long with an interior unobstructed first-floor colonnade running 512 feet, 14 feet high with a 12-foot wide center aisle. Sixty slender tapered wooden Doric columns lined each side of this aisle, providing in the space between and recessed slightly from the aisle places for the vendor's stalls. The columns housed a major innovation of Parris. Twenty four on each side were sheaths for iron columns that rose from foundations in the basement to support the wood trusses

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THE LIBRARY OF ALEXANDRIA REBORN

by James J. O'Donnell

Fabled for its treasures, the ancient Library of Alexandria died a long time ago, but no one is quite sure when. Created by the successors of Alexander the Great in the third century B.C., the Library was fabled in antiquity for owning a copy of every book in the world. It was the center of intellectual and poetic activity for the Hellenistic world and continues to exemplify for many the summit of ancient cultural achievement. But it was destroyed. If you visit Egypt today, you will find that the likely suspects for the destruction of the Library include Julius Caesar and the Christians, but elsewhere you will also hear it said that Muslim invaders in the early Middle Ages did the worst damage. These suspects are too predictable; pondering the matter from the perspective of a university provost, I suspect that budget cuts, bad management, and the wearing passage of time are far likelier candidates!

Whatever the reasons for its downfall, the Library of Alexandria has now been reborn. Rising dramatically on the waterfront, a remarkably successful new building now bears the name (see Fig. 4). Opening in 2001 under the patronage of the first lady of Egypt, Suzanne Mubarak, the Library has an ambitious and impressive director recruited from the World Bank, Ismail Serageldin, its own Web site (<http://www.bibalex.org>), and a collection of only 250,000 print volumes.

The building is nothing short of spectacular. Its terraces rise seven levels back and up from the waterfront, each open to a high translucent ceiling that fills the grand space with light and air (see Fig. 5). Outside, the building looks like a tilted cylinder, marked over its granite sides with characters from all the world's writing systems, ancient and modern.

In April 2004, as a scholar of ancient libraries and practitioner of the modern craft of electronic publishing, I had the good fortune to be invited to visit the library as part of a "brainstorming committee" comprising computer scientists, librarians, and scholars, convened and chaired by Bill Wulf, himself a computer scientist with a long history of supporting the use of information technology in the humanities. A founder of the Institute for Advanced Computing in the Humanities at the University of Virginia, Wulf now serves as President

of the National Academy of Engineering and is a member of the Board of Trustees of the Library of Alexandria. We spent two full days touring the library and exploring its future.

For the classicist at this meeting, there were special thrills, of course. The most acute moment of cultural clash came when I sat at a computer and pulled up on the screen a Greek text of Callimachus from the *Perseus* Web site, acutely conscious that I was doing so within a few hundred yards (and perhaps much less than that) of the site on which those lines were written in the third century B.C.

Modern Alexandria is short on ancient remains, but the setting of the city is dramatic, beautiful, and evocative. The modern city, neglected by the Egyptian government since Nasser and long since bereft of the raffish glamor that Cavafy and Durrell evoked for it in their poetry and fiction, stretches out along fifteen kilometers of magnificent Mediterranean seafront that positively pleads for development – with any luck, of a sensitive post-twentieth century form. (Indeed, one intended function of the Library is to be an anchor for urban redevelopment.) What one realizes gradually on visiting Egypt is that the Egyptian tourist industry reflects a local political ideology: pharaonic Egypt is the real Egypt, while Greco-Roman and even Muslim/Ottoman Egypt are memories of a colonized and dominated past and have not been put on display for tourists with anything like the vigor that gives us the pyramids and Luxor. Alexandria, as a result, has been quite left off the beaten path, which is both a misfortune and an opportunity.

But what of the new Library of Alexandria? What can become of it? The collection now in the building is tiny and hardly even a serious resource for the general public. Hundreds of people flood into the building at opening hours every day, but they seem to be there as much to use the Internet-connected computers as to explore the print collections. The Net flourishes in Egypt, though connections to the outside world run slow to an American's taste, and we learned that getting better bandwidth for the library was, for the moment, prohibitively expensive as a result of a regulated telecommunications economy. I did some wandering in the open stacks and found that the Greek



Fig. 4. View of the esplanade from inside the new Library of Alexandria and above, with the Mediterranean Sea in the distance. Photo credit: James J. O'Donnell.

and Latin section was an odd mixture. There were complete or semi-complete runs of Loeb Classical Texts, texts from the German Teubner series, and the Cambridge "green and yellow" texts of ancient authors, and then a few shelves of a collection of gifts, finds, and oddities. The American Philological Association has donated a copy of the spectacular Barrington Atlas of the ancient world, but it was not among the things I stumbled on. (To be quite fair, the "public" collection in the new Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris is very nearly as odd – they too had bought a complete set of English Loeb's, but no French Budé texts – interspersed with a few randomly chosen contemporary works of very variable quality.)

Could there ever be a serious collection of print literature in the building? It has room for at least four million titles. The challenges to building a collection from scratch today are considerable: financial in the first place (it would take many tens of millions of dollars and many years to do it at all well), and access in the second place (many of the books we depend on in our great libraries are simply not in print and difficult to obtain in print). For the moment, the center of attention has been the development of electronic resources and the elaboration of the institution's program of conferences and scholarly events. The week before our visit, an important forum of Arab scholars had issued a strong and interesting



Fig. 5. Interior of the new Library of Alexandria. Photo credit: James J. O'Donnell.

manifesto about the future of political freedom in the Arab world; and as we left, scientists from around the world were arriving for a biotechnology conference. The history of Latin language and literature as known and practiced in Alexandria was the subject of a recent French-convened session.

There are some interesting and unique electronic resources in the Library. Two home-grown products, <http://www.culnat.org> and, particularly, <http://www.eternalegypt.org> are as impressive as anything American institutions produce and should be known to all teachers and students of Egyptian history and culture. At the same time, there is also a local mirror copy of the "Internet Archive" (<http://www.archive.org>), a project as promising and puzzling there as it is here – but of no special local relevance in Alexandria, for there is still much uncertainty about just what the function of the library will be.

The most interesting conversations we had went well beyond the technologies in which we were expert. To ask *where* Alexandria is located might suggest a mission and identity for the library – but is it Egyptian? Arab? Muslim? African? Mediterranean? Each of those words suggests a choice and set of possibilities. Could the Library mediate information about Egypt to the world and about the world to Egypt? That is what it has implicitly begun to do, but I think all of us felt that to do only that would mean to fall short of the possibilities of the magical place and the magical name. Could the Library become a

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Fig. 6. Bust of Julius Caesar from the Vatican Museum, Rome. Image courtesy of the VRoma Project (<http://www.vroma.org>).



Book Review: *Julius Caesar: A Beginner's Guide*

by James S. Ruebel

Antony Kamm. *Julius Caesar: A Beginner's Guide*. Hodder & Stoughton, 2002. Pp. 86, 2 charts, 5 maps. Now part of the series Headway Guides for Beginners, Headway Books, Hodder & Stoughton. Paperback \$9.99. ISBN 0-340-84456-6.

It is no easy thing to write for beginners, for real beginners start from different levels of preparation and approach what is written for different purposes. To select the complex character of Julius Caesar and the complex times in which he lived as a topic to be illuminated in under a hundred pages is a bold venture indeed. On the whole, Antony Kamm succeeds quite well in balancing a designedly superficial but provocative narrative with a striking amount of detail (peppered here and there with quotations from Appian, Suetonius, Lucan, and Catullus) that will not only hold the attention of beginning students but perhaps encourage further exploration of one of Rome's greatest historical figures (see Fig. 6).

Kamm proceeds chronologically from beginning to end (birth to death and aftermath). He places Caesar's youth within its Marian and Cinnan context in swift strokes to bring us into the time of Sulla's dictatorship when Caesar defied Sulla's order to divorce his wife Cornelia and barely survived. We hear all this, a summary of Caesar's education, and the colorful story of his capture by pirates within eight pages. The highlights of the Roman constitution and religious practices, as well as the makeup of the army, occupy but few pages to bring us to the beginning of Caesar's active political career. The heart of the narrative follows the various military campaigns within the context of Caesar's political ambition and advancement, from service in Spain as propraetor through the civil war and his accession to the dictatorship. The strategic issues of the military campaigns are necessarily oversimplified. The conspiracy, assassination, and subsequent rise of Octavian complete the story, followed by an assessment of Caesar's "achievements and legacy." On almost every page, sidebars provide "Key Facts" about Roman life, customs, or politics.

The first question must be, *cui bono* – what sort of beginner would use this "beginner's guide" to advantage? I tested this book on a small class of fourteen college students; three or four of them were classics majors, but most were just dabblers in and newcomers to the Roman world. In general, they all enjoyed the two sections I asked them to read: on Sulla and on the assassination. I found that I did not much mind, in practical terms, that some details had been glossed over and some ambiguous events rendered plain because the students did, in fact, learn enough to use the material in the other contexts of the class (which was not a classics course), and the material was so clear and well written that they read it with ease and enthusiasm.

As a serious introduction to Caesar, however, *Julius Caesar: A Beginner's Guide* must either be supplemented and corrected or used with caution because of the gaps in the discussion and the compressed presentation of events. Kamm presents some doubtful tales as fact, dwells on Caesar's alleged bi-sexuality (complete with splendidly saucy translations of Suetonius and Catullus), condemns on one page while praising on another, whirls over the surface of the domestic events of the 50's B.C. (Pompey, Clodius, Cicero), and concludes with a largely positive assessment of Caesar that seems strangely at odds with the rather more mixed and sensational picture presented in the narrative. Throughout, he sacrifices nuance for immediacy. Without a doubt, he knows this and has made a choice for "popular" reading.

His suggestions for "Further Reading" are every bit as idiosyncratic as the text itself: among only eleven reference works given, Meier's biography is included but Gelzer's is not, and three fictional biographies (one of them about Alexander the Great) have parallel place with Meier's biography and Everitt's new study of Cicero. Finally, the book does nothing to clarify (as often, so it seems to me with books about Caesar) how the Caesar portrayed in this book could have simultaneously inspired the extremes of loyalty and admiration as well as vitriolic hatred and mistrust that the historical Caesar clearly did in Romans of equal intelligence.

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Book Review: *Achilles: A Novel*

by Roxanne Gentilcore

Elizabeth Cook. *Achilles: A Novel*. Picador, 2001. Pp. 116. Paperback \$11.00. ISBN 0-312-31110-9.

For those seeking an antidote to the recent large-screen, popularizing epic version of the Trojan War, you cannot do much better than take up a copy of Elizabeth Cook's slender novel, *Achilles*. Cook's novel is a perfect modern epyllion. It is intricately structured, allusive, and psychological. In evocative and poetic language, Cook takes us both back to Homer and forward to the "afterlife" of his poem to reveal for us the transcending power of literature.

The novel has a tripartite structure. Each section is divided into short chapters with titles. This simple structure belies the intricacy of the novel's narrative. Repeated images and the shifting of time and place are continually sending us back to reinterpret what we have read.

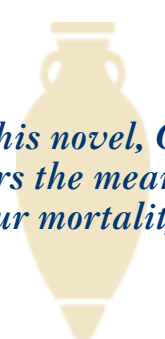
The first section, entitled "Two Rivers," starts at the end. We first meet Achilles as a shade in the underworld summoned to speak with Odysseus. Here in the underworld we also meet some familiar characters: Patroclus, Agamemnon, and Iphigeneia. In deft, telling strokes Cook defines these characters from Achilles' point of view. The chapter ends with Achilles' famous comment: "Don't you know that it's sweeter to be *alive* – in any shape or form – than lord of all these shadows?" (12) We are then taken back to the beginning of Achilles' story, to Peleus' wild struggles to mate with Thetis and to Thetis' horrifying attempt to make Achilles immortal by dipping him in the River Styx. Cook evocatively depicts Achilles' upbringing, his tutoring by Chiron, his "girlhood" (particularly his relationship with Deidamia, his first female lover), and his eagerness to fight.

Cook excels in capturing an event or a character with an image. In one scene Achilles, chafing under his disguise, climbs a tall pine tree to see the Greek fleet amassing. In a later scene, a lonely Helen whispers to the Greek men inside the wooden horse, mimicking the voices of their wives. It is the moment pregnant with its future outcome that stays with the reader.

The second half of "Two Rivers" is the most Homeric part of the novel. No sooner do we

learn of Achilles' choice of two destinies than we are plunged into his duel with Hector and then into the charged and poignant scene of his surrender of Hector's body to Priam. The last section of "Two Rivers" is Cook's most surprising and psychologically insightful. In it, she shows us Achilles as a lonely figure cut off from life and love. Achilles goes after the Amazon Pentheseleia [sic], whose strength and independence remind him of Iphigeneia. But his attraction to her and her resistance ultimately lead him to kill her violently. Cook describes Achilles as a man who seeks love, who tries, "to follow the brightness of one face before it is eaten by dark" (56) when he follows Polyxena to his eventual death. Achilles has lost everyone he loves and everyone who gives his life meaning. "Two Rivers" ends, as it began, with his death.

The second section of the novel, "Gone"



*In this novel, Cook
ponders the meaning of
our mortality.*

concerns the effects of Achilles' death upon Troy and upon Thetis and Chiron. Through her juxtaposition of Achilles' wound with Chiron's, Cook contrasts Achilles' mortality with Chiron's immortality. For Achilles' mother and his teacher, the curse of immortality is to see the ones they love die. Thetis asks, "what is the point of immortality if your child does not share it?" (65)

In the final section, entitled "Relay," Cook takes us into the life of John Keats. She does this primarily through brief anecdotes, interior monologue, and quotations from his writing. On first reading, I found this somewhat jarring since I was so immersed in that other, Homeric world. Yet, upon successive readings, I came to admire how gracefully and suggestively the author has conveyed the act of translation. Cook links Homer, Chapman's translation of Homer, and Keats' poetry. The symbol or talisman that Cook uses to link

these different times and places is a lock of hair. Earlier in the novel, we witness Achilles shearing off a lock of his russet hair as an offering to the dead Patroclus. The act prefigures Achilles' own death by crushing Peleus' hope that it would be given to the river Spercheus upon his son's safe return from Troy. Cook calls the offering "a forerunner, part of him, a hostage in the underworld" (50). The author then shows Keats' literary response to the gift of a lock of Milton's hair. Even more symbolically, Keats discovers a lock of russet hair among the falling autumn leaves while out walking. The lock becomes for him a literal and figurative bookmark. He places it in Cary's translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, the book he has with him, only to discover later that he has placed the lock in the passage where Dante sees Achilles in Hell among the lovers. Finally, Keats offers a lock of his own russet hair for Achilles, as a forerunner of *his own* impending death. Deftly, Cook shows us how, through literature, human experience is shared and passed from generation to generation like a baton in a relay.

In this novel, Cook ponders the meaning of our mortality. Our existence is corporeal; we live through our actions in the here and now. One human body, like that of Achilles, may die and turn to dust, but the form of the human body continues to exist. Just as Keats sees the sameness of the locks of hair, he reflects on the similarity between his own body and that of a cadaver in a medical amphitheater. The intricate structure of skeleton, brain, and nerve is the same in each of us. Keats takes comfort that within his body a heart like that of Achilles still beats.

I highly recommend this imaginative retelling of Achilles' life to all with an interest in myth, literature, and the continuity of the classics. It sends us back to Homer, yearning to hear that poetry, that story again. And what could be better than that?

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GLADIATORIAL GAMES: ANCIENT REALITY SHOWS?

by David Frauenfelder

Professor Margaret Imber was not expecting a phone call from the *Los Angeles Times*, but when it came, she was up to the challenge.

“The reporter [Hilary E. MacGregor] was looking for an angle on celebrity boxing,” Imber recalls via e-mail concerning the 2002 encounter with mainstream journalism. “Someone in the newsroom said, ‘Hey, that sounds like gladiators.’ My name came up on an Internet search.”

MacGregor had browsed over to the on-line syllabus for Spectacles of Blood, a Roman civilization course on gladiators and Christian martyrs that Imber teaches at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine. An attractive photo of a gladiator’s helmet adorns the course homepage.

The national wire story featured Imber as a classicist who saw a definite connection between gladiatorial contests and the much-hyped 2002 fight between shamed skating champion Tonya Harding and Paula Jones, the woman who in 1994 went several rounds with Bill Clinton over sexual harassment. Imber made the point that as individuals who became celebrities despite their low socio-economic origins, Harding and Jones paralleled gladiators closely, making them perfect choices for the modern arena.

Other experts in the story (including ancient historian Ian Worthington of the University of Missouri) downplayed the connection, but journalists regularly assume it. Our wildly-popular reality shows are short on sword fights but long on psychological warfare, humiliation, and simulated executions. Are reality shows a new form of gladiatorial entertainment? To judge, we might leave the media hype behind and take a fresh look at what classicists know about gladiators – and about the ancient religious context in which they fought.

Most of us know the gladiatorial games as entertainment, pure and simple. For the Romans, however, the games also meant religion; the arena was sacred space. Religious ritual preceded and accompanied death in the games, so elaborately that the Christian apologist Tertullian (writing in the third century A.D.) prohibited the faithful from

attending on grounds they would be endorsing paganism. The code of the gladiators – to go into battle with their whole hearts committed – paralleled the Romans’ desire for a sacrificial animal to go willingly to the altar. Bloodshed and death, in this context, meant religious duty fulfilled.

Not just anyone could be killed, however. Slaves, criminals, and other undesirables (anyone who could be categorized as subhuman) made up the population of the earliest combatants. Under these circumstances, Romans could claim that they did not practice human sacrifice.

Paradoxically, as the games and individual fighters developed a mass audience, private citizens began to volunteer for combat. In the first century A.D., citizens in significant numbers were becoming gladiators – with the result that the emperors Augustus and Tiberius legislated to ban the practice among members of the senatorial and equestrian classes. Citizen gladiators gave up their rights and endured the same uncertain, difficult life as their slave counterparts – with public humiliation for their decision in addition – for the possibility of popular acclaim and monetary gain.

Ancient writers such as the satirist Juvenal (A.D. 55-130?) criticized this status-lowering practice as shameful. *Satire* 8 pans one Gracchus, a nobleman who fights in the arena bare-headed so that everyone recognizes him. “Such a get-up condemns him,” sputters Juvenal.

But the criticism did not extend to the games themselves. Respected writers such as Cicero (106-43 B.C.) and Pliny the Younger (A.D. 61-112) felt that the fights toughened spectators, lessening their fear of death. Even the tender-hearted, those who could not bear to look, were regularly chastised for their perceived weakness. Pliny, in a speech praising the Emperor Trajan, writes that games, in their best form, raise in spectators a desire to endure wounds and death for the empire “when they see even in the bodies of slaves and criminals the love of praise and the desire for victory.” Thus, the games conditioned Romans to desensitize themselves to the deaths of human beings for the good of the state.

American reality shows differ from Roman gladiatorial games in at least one significant respect: they keep their contestants alive. But similarities between the two forms of entertainment encourage comparison and media speculation.

Survivor, television’s most-recognizable reality show, offers an array of suffering. Contestants spend weeks in an electronic arena, followed by an enormous virtual audience. Instead of copious bloodshed, the show offers physical and psychological discomfort, forcing players to live in primitive circumstances, to hunt and gather for daily sustenance, and to compete in carrot-and-stick “challenges.”

The program also offers a kind of death. In each episode, the contestants scheme to pare their numbers by voting off one of the competitors. After the voting, the host of the show, Jeff Probst, ritually snuffs the designated one’s “torch of life,” a moment that brings home to the TV audience exactly how *Survivor* got its name.

The modern audience, too, resembles the ancient. We pick our heroes and villains as our fellow human beings suffer for our entertainment. Some turn away, but the genre encourages us to categorize and objectify contestants, and enjoy their suffering.

So is it justified for the media to equate the Roman gladiatorial games with a show like *Survivor*? To be sure, these ancient and modern forms of entertainment share affinities. But the religious element in the ancient games distances them from our modern reality shows.

When the Romans entered the arena, they entered a kind of separate world – a sacred precinct in which bloodshed was a religious necessity and builder of character. Right relationship with the gods required sacrifice in order to ensure control over otherwise uncontrollable forces. Death here, even potentially, of fellow citizens, fulfilled this requirement. When the spectacle was over, the Romans returned to their lives, with the understanding that, by following the gladiators’ example with their own selfless loyalty to Rome and to the emperor, they would be strengthening themselves and the state.

In *Survivor*, the snuffing of the con-

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BIRTHPLACE OF EMPIRE: THE LEGACY OF ACTIUM

by William M. Murray

Late in the afternoon on September 1, 31 BC, Octavian, the man destined to become Augustus, looked from his hillside camp toward the setting sun, studying the horizon. No ordinary man, Octavian was complex, driven, and focused on the struggle that faced him. How could he know that the following day would witness a decisive change in his fortunes and allow him to chart a new course for Rome that would alter the course of world history and make him the first in a long line of Roman emperors?

Inside the Ambracian Gulf, toward the south and southeast, plumes of smoke rose skyward from scores of smoldering warships. Antony was sending Octavian a clear message by burning his own surplus gear. That night, deserters arrived confirming what Octavian already knew: Antony and Cleopatra would try to escape the next morning.

Antony and Cleopatra. Just the names exude sex and intrigue. Paired with Octavian, they are principal figures in a clash of culture and power marking an important turning point in world history – the birth of the Augustan Principate, the first phase of what we popularly call the Roman Empire. Today, near a town called Preveza, visitors can still see evidence from these events that changed the course of history so long ago.

In the first century B.C., Rome was the sole superpower of the Mediterranean basin. Her government was dominated by a number of powerful families who constituted a ruling class cooperating under a set of rules we call the Roman Republic. For some years, the Republic was wracked by struggles between powerful generals that threatened, at times, to replace the oligarchy with the rule of a single, powerful man. Such was the nature of the struggle between Antony and Octavian. By 32 B.C., Antony had identified himself with the Roman territories of the East and the Hellenistic successors of Alexander the Great, cemented through a marriage alliance with Cleopatra VII of Egypt. Octavian represented himself as the protector of Italy, Roman culture, and the West. Because control of Rome was critically important to either man's ultimate success, Antony headed westward in 32 B.C. with an invasion force.

His goal: first Italy, then Rome. Octavian prepared his own force to block Antony's advance and crossed from Italy to Greece early in 31 B.C., as soon as winter gave way to spring.

During the summer that followed, both sides faced off in the region of the Ambracian Gulf, south of Corfu. The forces on each side were huge, numbering in the hundreds of thousands. As the summer progressed, Octavian's general Agrippa progressively disrupted the enemy's supply lines. By late August, Antony had no other choice but retreat. The critical moment came on September 2, when historians agree that Octavian successfully blocked Antony's escape in a sea battle off Cape Actium, a low peninsula that covered the entrance to the Gulf. Only Cleopatra's squadron of sixty ships and a few others got away. In less than a year, Octavian had tracked Antony and Cleopatra to Egypt, where they committed suicide and left him alone in power. In the years that followed, Octavian "restored the Republic," accepted the honorific name Augustus, and reformed the state into what we call the Principate, or rule of the first man. Dio Cassius, a second century historian, was the first to state it boldly (51.1.1): "I do not mention this date [September 2] without reason . . . but because this was the first time Octavian alone held all the power of the state in his hands."

Dio further relates that Octavian celebrated his victory off Actium by building a memorial at his campsite adorned with warship rams captured from the enemy fleet. He established a "Victory City" (Nikopolis) where his army had bivouacked and collected into it the populations of the surrounding region.



Fig. 7. Augustus' Naval Trophy at Nikopolis from the Southeast. Photo credit: William M. Murray.



Fig. 8. Augustus' Naval Trophy at Nikopolis. View of the southern retaining wall showing sockets for the warship rams. Photo credit: William M. Murray.

Others tell us he dedicated at an ancient shrine of Apollo on Cape Actium a full set of ten warships, one from each class or size in the enemy fleet. And finally, he re-established the quadrennial athletic festival in honor of Actian Apollo and transferred the site of the games to Nikopolis.

These actions, plus the fact that Augustus served as the city's "founder," reveal that he personally selected Nikopolis for greatness. His elaborate memorials marked the "birthplace" of his new regime, and the city he founded served to revitalize a region economically drained and physically depopulated by years of warfare and pirate raids.

Historians have long been troubled by the emphasis Augustus placed on his Actian victory as the pivotal event in his rise to power. This is because no "objective" historical account survives from this period; all the battle accounts were written well after the battle and exhibit clear traces of pro-Augustan bias. We suspect, moreover, that these accounts were also influenced to some degree by the self-serving version of the victor himself, now lost, but quoted more than once in what survives. As a result, skeptics will always question the details of the final naval battle. The "big picture," however, is much clearer. Recent archaeological discoveries have allowed us to advance our understanding of the ships that fought in the battle, the importance of the victory to Augustus, and the great success of his reconstruction efforts once victory was secured – all important elements in understanding the legacy of Actium.

In 1995, Dr. Konstantinos Zachos and the Greek Archaeological Service renewed excavations at Octavian's campsite overlooking Nikopolis. These excavations have laid bare the remains

of a large podium, reinforced with masses of concrete, supported by a long retaining wall of massive limestone blocks (see Fig. 7). On the lower terrace created by the retaining wall, one can still see the complex sockets in the wall's southern face where thirty-six *rostra*, or warship rams, were displayed at ground level (see Fig. 8). One can also make out some of the foot high words from the long inscription that once crowned the display: . . . BELLO QUOD PRO RE PUBLICA GESSIT IN HAC REGIONE . . . "in the war which he waged in this region on behalf of the Republic . . ." PACE PARTA TERRA MARIQUE MARTI NEPTUNOQUE CASTRA . . . [CON-SACRAVIT] . . . "after peace had been secured on land and at sea . . . he [consecrated] his camp to Mars and Neptune."

Atop the podium, a stoa enclosed the north, east, and west sides of a courtyard, its open side facing southwest toward the sea and the battle zone. The courtyard also held two large statue bases and a long rectangular altar, originally faced with marble slabs sculpted in high relief. Sometime in late antiquity, these reliefs were systematically broken into small fragments, more than 21,000 of which were recovered during the course of the excavation. Since sixth-century Nikopolis is well-known for its numerous Christian basilicas, we might ascribe the destruction of this pagan shrine to the Christian community. Ironically, 1,129 broken pieces still display traces of their original decoration and give us hope that some day the pieces may be rejoined. Although this process will take many years, preliminary analysis reveals a number of different themes, including ships or naval accessories (like rams, stern ornaments, and steering oars), an amazonomachy (?), armor, floral decoration, and a procession with sacrificial animals. It is likely that the procession was part of a scene depicting the famous Actian triumph in Rome since five adjoining fragments were found in 2001 that clearly show Octavian in a triumphal chariot, accompanied by two children and followed by a group of togate senators. Astonishingly, one child bears the unmistakable features of Cleopatra as she is depicted on coins and portrait statues. Do we see here a reference to Cleopatra Selene and her brother Alexander Helios, the two children of Cleopatra and Antony?

Perhaps further analysis will answer these and other questions, such as: How

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Boston's Quincy Market

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holding the second story. The rest concealed iron tie-rods that were secured in the truss above and went down through the colonnade floor to attach to cross beams on the underside of the aisle. This system of suspension obviated the need for giant masonry supports in the cellar, thus opening up the space for further shops.

At each end of this market building is a giant portico with four columns hewn from solid pieces of Vermont granite surmounted by a pediment, undecorated except for an *oculus* at its center. The style is known as the "Tuscan order," that is, Doric columns without fluting beneath an entablature devoid of molding or other design. This plain style, which was not used at Rome, is found in the remains of Etruscan buildings, hence the name. Palladio suggests that it is suitable for outbuildings on an estate, such as the barn or stable area. Parris may well have had that in mind; certainly he was creating a utilitarian space. But one could argue that Quincy Market is in an aesthetic and ideologic dialogue with its predecessor Faneuil Hall, that the new market building shows a stronger, more honest, immediate expression of its function, that this was the new revolutionary, American way. Its resemblance to a temple is a more direct expression of ancient Greece and its democracy.

Parris demonstrates the American instinct for eclecticism when he balances the portico with a distinctly Roman feature, a great oval dome in the center of the building's length. It is a design feature to be found as well in the Custom House built in lower Manhattan in 1833 (one wonders if its architect was influenced by Parris). The exemplar is the Pantheon of ancient Rome whose enormous circular interior is dominated by its great dome in which an *oculus* provides light to the space. As Greece created post-and-beam temple construction (originally wood, later stone), so the Romans made much use of the dome, based on their extensive experience with the arch. Unlike the New York building where the view is open from the ground floor up to the top of the dome, Parris made a continuous second-story floor in Quincy Market, so that it was not until the twentieth-

century renovations of the building by Ben Thompson and Associates that the dome was opened up to the lower floor. Still the dome is another example of the architect/engineer's invention. It was in fact two domes separated by a small space of two feet, the inner suspended by laminated wooden hangers that were lighter than wood trusses. The space beneath was a pavilion, one seventh of the total space of the building, its granite walls supporting a special eight-sided sectional wall rising above the two long wings. An intricate system of laminated ribs together with the hangers brought the downward thrust of the inner dome back up into the outer dome and distributed its weight down through the octagonal wall into the granite pavilion walls.

Parris innovated still further in his use of glass with the granite post and beam construction. Viewed from the side, the rhythm of giant granite blocks forming verticals the length of the building separated by large glass windows gives the effect of the peristyle temple, where the rhythm of the vertical columns is accentuated by the open spaces in between. The plain, severe, unadorned style of the granite exterior was Parris' challenge to the extravagant Palladianism of Faneuil Hall, signaling in an interesting way a return to the instinct for puritanism that has identified the city of Boston and its environs down into the twenty-first century.

Quincy Hall was saved from the destruction that has ravaged so much of our urban beauty in the name of progress when it was renewed and refurbished in the twentieth century. The story of its construction, decline, and rebirth is delightfully told by a descendant of Mayor Quincy, John Quincy, Jr., in *Quincy's Market: A Boston Landmark* (2003).

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Medea My Mind

by Alison Traweek

And indeed nothing is better or nobler than this:
when a man and a woman keep their house with
their minds
in perfect agreement; this brings many sorrows
to their enemies,
many pleasures to their friends; they have the
best reputation.
— *Odyssey* 6.182-5

He makes me catch my breath, the Poet,
even after all these readings
he trips me up.
His honeyed words fill up my throat
which grows heavy with the repetition of
these lines
across time. Euripides will put them
in the mouth of Medea
to a different use, a sinister distortion
of this first, innocent meaning,
and after her we all are guilty
of saying it both ways at once.
But when Odysseus says this to Nausikaa,
says it for the first time, not knowing
if she is a goddess or a nymph
or just a simple woman, not sure
if he will ever return
to the home he keeps in perfect agreement
with his wife, here the Poet
makes me catch my breath.
I, too, want to keep my home
in perfect agreement of mind. I, too, want
to bring
sorrows to my enemies and
pleasures to my friends
simply by loving. About loving
he was never wrong, the Poet.
The best loving is in well-matched minds.
My mind, that wild foreigner, that beast,
never sits still at her weaving,
feels more at peace with a knife than with
a shuttle,
prefers the chariot of the sun
and the corpses of her children
to twenty years' waiting. My mind,
that wily sorceress, that witch,
is always Medea.

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NATTY BUMPPPO QUOTES HORACE

by David H. Porter

A recent experience suggests the degree to which the classics can leave their mark without our knowing it. For years I had recalled with pleasure reading James Fenimore Cooper's *The Deerslayer* (1841) when I was in high school, and last summer I decided to reread it. Cooper's language was as florid as I remembered, but I found it a bit more manageable than I had as a tenth-grader. In contrast, sensitivities honed by the intervening fifty years rendered me decidedly less comfortable with Cooper's treatment of native Americans and women.

The most marked change in my response came, however, from an unexpected source – the Latin poet Horace, who has been a constant companion since my college years but whom I had not met when I first read Cooper's novel. And it was Horace who sprang immediately to mind when I read the following passage, in which Natty Bumppo, “the Deerslayer,” warns the lovely Judith, one of the two women involved with him in many of the novel's key episodes, that beauty such as hers is but transient:

Yes, good looks may be sarcumvented, and fairly outwitted, too. In order to do this you've only to remember that they melt like the snows, and, when once gone, they never come back ag'in. The seasons come and go, Judith, and if we have winter, with storms and frosts, and spring with chills and leafless trees, we have summer with its sun and glorious skies, and fall with its fruits, and a garment thrown over the forest, that no beauty of the town could rummage out of all the shops in America. 'Arth is in an eternal round, the goodness of God, bringing back the pleasant when we've had enough of the onpleasant. But it's not so with good looks. *They* are lent for a short time in youth, to be used and not abused . . . (*The Deerslayer*, State University of New York Press, 1986, 450)

What classicist could read these words and not think of Horace's *Odes* 4.7, “*Diffugere Nives*”?

immortalia ne speres, monet annus et alium
quae rapit hora diem:
frigora mitescunt Zephyris, ver proterit aestas
interitura simul

pomifer Autumnus fruges effuderit, et mox
bruma recurrit iners.
damna tamen celeres reparant caelestia lunae:
nos ubi decidimus
quo pater Aeneas, quo Tullus dives et Ancus,
pulvis et umbra sumus.
quis scit an adiciant hodiernae crastina summae
tempora di superi?
(Horace, *Odes* 4.7.7-18)

The year, and the hour which snatch-
es away the lovely day, warns that you
not hope for eternal things. The frosts
soften with the Zephyrs, summer
wears away spring – summer itself
destined to die as soon as fruit-bearing
Autumn has poured forth its fruits,
and soon lifeless winter returns. The
moons, however, recoup their celestial
losses; as for us, when we have fallen
where father Aeneas, where wealthy
Tullus and Ancus have fallen, we are
dust and shadow. Who knows whether
the gods above will add tomorrow's
time to today's sum?

The similarity piqued my curiosity,
and a little rummaging in the library
turned up Cooper's account of his expe-
rience with James L. Kingsley, his Latin
Professor at Yale:

I had been early and highly educated
for a boy, so much so, as to be far
before most of my classmates in latin
[sic], and this enabled me to play – a
boy of thirteen! – all the first year. I
dare say Mr. Kingsley never suspected
me of knowing too much, but there
can be no great danger, now, in telling
him the truth. So well was I grounded
in the latin, that I scarce ever look'd at
my Horace or Tully until I was in his
fearful presence; and if he recollects,
although he had a trick of trotting me
about the pages in order to get me
mired, he may remember that I gener-
ally came off pretty well. (*The Letters
and Journals of James Fenimore Cooper*,
Harvard University Press, 1960, vol.
II, 99)

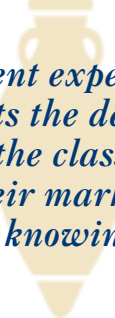
Recent research suggests that I
should not have been surprised to find
Horace lurking in Cooper's novel. A fas-
cinating article by Nanette C. Tamer
shows that in late eighteenth-century
America, when Cooper was growing up,
Horace had long been a staple of both
the schools and the popular press –
indeed, translations and imitations of
him far outnumbered those of other clas-
sical authors (“*Sibi Imperiosus*: Cooper's

Horatian Ideal of Self-Governance in *The Deerslayer*,” *Papers of the 14th International James Fenimore Cooper Seminar and Conference*, 2003). Dr. Tamer shows, in particular, that *Epode* 2, with its focus on the self-sufficiency of those who live in the country, was a favorite text and that writers of the time frequently used other Horatian passages to exemplify similar independence. A 1744 newspaper, for instance, printed a version of *Odes* 1.22 in which “a young Gentleman in New-York” praised the man who, “Contemning death, and ev’ry hideous form, /Out-braves the tempest, and derides the storm, /Calm and compos’d.” Around the same time, a poet writing in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* teased from *Odes* 2.10 a similar figure, “A Monarch in my rustic bower, /O’er whom even fortune has no power.” Dr. Tamer convincingly proposes that Cooper’s portrayal of Natty Bumppo, a self-governed and highly independent rustic, builds on this popular Horatian paradigm, especially as it is elaborated in *Satires* 2.7.83-88 (*sapiens, sibi qui imperiosus . . .*: “the wise man, who is master of himself . . .”). She points out also, though, that while most writers of the time used Horace almost as a commonplace book, culling passages apt to their themes, Cooper read whole poems and was alive to the startling twist Horace gives to the close of *Epode* 2, or to the rich irony of poems like *Odes* 1.22 and *Satires* 2.7. She further suggests that Cooper’s in-depth reading of Horace is one reason his Natty Bumppo is so much more complex than the “Horatian” figures evoked by most of his contemporaries.

Given all this, it is hard to believe that Cooper did not have *Diffugere nives* in mind as he wrote Natty’s words to Judith. True, Horace’s warning is about the passing of life, not the fading of beauty, but in other respects, the excerpts cited are strikingly similar. Both take their cue from the passage of the seasons, give vivid descriptions of their swift progression, and conclude by contrasting the seasonal cycle with the linear nature of human life: the moon repairs its losses, winter’s chill yields to spring breezes (cf. Natty’s “the goodness of God, bringing back the pleasant when we’ve had enough of the unpleasant”), but good looks, and human life, pass away once and for all when we reach *our* winter. The similarities go well beyond the parallelism of thought: Natty’s “fall with its fruits” is close to a literal rendering of *pomifer Autumnus*; his “*They* are lent for a short time” echoes the commercial language Horace uses of

both the moon’s “losses” and the sum of our days; and his warning that good looks “melt like the snows” recalls the opening line of Horace’s poem, *Diffugere nives* – “The snows have fled.”

When I returned to *The Deerslayer*, I found other significant resonances of *Odes* 4.7. A striking passage in the novel’s opening pages explicitly draws the contrast between human existence on the one hand, the cycle of the seasons on the other: “Whatever may be the changes produced by man, the eternal round of the seasons is unbroken” (16-17), with “eternal round of the seasons” closely foreshadowing Natty’s “Arth is in an eternal round.” At the end of the novel, Natty and Chingachgook, his native-American friend, return after fifteen years to Glimmerglass, the upstate New York lake where the action of the novel unfolds. Once again Cooper sounds the same theme in describing how the recurrent seasons – and especially winter – have ravaged the lake-surrounded “castle” that had once been



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their refuge: “The storms of winter had long since unroofed the house, and decay had eaten into the logs . . . [T]he seasons rioted in the place, as if in mockery at the attempt to exclude them. The palisades were rotting, as were the piles, and it was evident that a few more recurrences of winter, a few more gales and tempests, would sweep all into the lake, and blot the building from the face of that magnificent solitude” (546; one suspects here a reminiscence also of those poems where Horace castigates landlords who extend their dwellings out into the waters – *Odes* 2.15.2-4, 2.18.20-22, 3.1.33-37, 3.24, 3-4; *Epistles* 1.1.83-5).

As this last Cooper passage suggests, the mortality of human creations – and of humans themselves – is a central theme of the *The Deerslayer*. Not only is the novel dotted with tragic and brutal deaths, but the fact of our mortality is never out of mind – indeed, Natty himself often muses on death and on the possibility of afterlife. And the sense of

how much has passed, how many have died, dominates the final visit to the lake and is underscored by the terse but eloquent reminder that Hist, Chingachgook’s promised bride and the motivation for his and Natty’s first journey to Glimmerglass, “already slumbered beneath the pines of the Delawares . . .” (546). To all this, what could be more appropriate than echoes of Horace’s warning that we not entertain immortal hopes (*immortalia ne speres*, 4.7.7), his reminder that we are but dust and shadow (*pukis et umbra sumus*, 4.7.16)?

As I thought back to my first reading of *The Deerslayer*, I realized that even though I had been unaware of its Horatian overtones, I had absorbed the elegiac tone they help evoke. The sadness that colored my memories of the novel went beyond the fact that so many people die or that the love Judith develops for Natty comes to naught, with the two departing in separate directions at the end. It was rather that for all the heroism and moral courage Natty evinces in his coming of age, I had been moved above all by his loss of innocence, by his realization that he had left behind the simplicities of youth. The response the book had elicited was, in fact, quintessentially true to *Diffugere nives*, which begins as a celebration of spring’s arrival but leads inexorably to a very different theme – the warning that in the cycle of human life, spring arrives but once.

In the same way, *The Deerslayer* celebrates Natty’s arrival at maturity, but Cooper tells his tale so as to suggest less the ripe flowering of Natty’s manhood than the loss of his youthful springtime. That *The Deerslayer* conveys this poignant mix of achievement and loss suggests how fully Cooper had absorbed the complex cross-currents of *Diffugere nives*. That this mix left its mark on my adolescent sensibilities and remained with me across the decades without my knowing Horace’s role in its creation, suggests how deeply the classical authors are woven into the texture of our lives and how profoundly they can affect us even when we do not know they are there.

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A History of Alexander on The Big Screen

by Jeanne Reames-Zimmerman

Oliver Stone's *Alexander* arrived in theaters on November 24, 2004 – one of two big-budget films slated to deal with the life and times of the conqueror. The other, to be directed by Baz Luhrmann and produced by Martin Scorsese, will not begin shooting until 2005. And despite Luhrman's protests that his film will go forward, the general mood in Hollywood seems to be "wait and see." In addition to these two high-profile Alexander projects, a small, independent film about Alexander's youth, *Alexander the Great of Macedonia*, produced by Ilya Salkind (known best for *Superman*), was filmed and slated to appear this fall, but it is now simply listed as "coming soon" and may never appear at all.

The last attempt to put Alexander on the big screen came almost fifty years ago, in 1956, with MGM's *Alexander the Great*, featuring a young Richard Burton in his first starring role. Charlton Heston was initially offered the role of Alexander but turned it down, saying later, "Alexander is the easiest kind of picture to make badly." If Burton's Alexander is the best known, there have been other celluloid Alexanders since. Nicolas Clay starred in a 1981 BBC docudrama, *The Search for Alexander the Great*. There was also a 1917 black-and-white silent Swedish film called *Alexander den store*; an Indian political film *Sikander* in 1941 with an Indian Alexander (Prithviraj Kapoor); and a black-and-white, never-sold pilot episode for a TV series called *Alexander the Great*, starring a pre-*Star-Trek* William Shatner as Alexander and a pre-*Batman* Adam West as Cleander (essentially Hephaestion). This pilot was originally shot in 1964 but not seen until 1968 as a TV special.

The three-time Oscar-winning Oliver Stone (*Midnight Express*, *Platoon*, *Born on the Fourth of July*) has been captivated by Alexander since his youth and produced an initial Alexander script in the mid-1980's, beginning serious movement forward on the project in the early 1990's. But there were other competing proposals that fell by the wayside. These included a ten-hour miniseries project for HBO, produced by Mel Gibson, who (if rumor is to be

believed) may join instead the Luhrmann production in the role of Philip, Alexander's father. Christopher McQuarrie (*The Usual Suspects*) also proposed an Alexander project, which he reputedly sold to Warner Brothers. Yet the next thing anyone knew, Martin Scorsese was involved, and Leonardo DiCaprio had been tapped for Alexander (instead of McQuarrie's choice of Jude Law). Then Scorsese began to be associated with the Baz Luhrmann project, previously under Dino de Laurentis, not Christopher McQuarrie. McQuarrie himself says he is primarily a writer, not a director, yet the Luhrmann/Scorsese script is based on a trilogy by Italian novelist Valerio Massimo Manfredi (Luhrmann's original choice), not the one penned by McQuarrie and Peter Buchman. Meanwhile, Warner Brothers is handling Stone's film. Confused? So was anyone trying to keep track of the mad shuffle, and exactly what happened is difficult to know. Even Ridley Scott, the director of *Gladiator* (2000), toyed with an Alexander project, proposing what might have been the wisest casting idea of all – a complete unknown for Alexander, to be surrounded by a supporting cast of name stars.

It was far from certain that Stone's *Alexander* would ever make it to the box office since it has been put on hold numerous times for one reason or another. For



Fig. 9. Colin Farrell rides in as the first big-screen Alexander in almost fifty years (*Alexander*, Warner Brothers, 2004).

instance, in November 1998, according to the Athens News Agency, the Greek government rescinded its earlier promise of assistance in filming, and Culture Minister Evangelos Venizelos said, "At the present time, it is not at all certain whether we would find any grounds for cooperation, at least on the script." Apparently, among other things, the Greeks were not thrilled by Stone's interest in portraying Alexander's homoerotic affairs. Even earlier problems included Stone's initial choice of scriptwriter, Gore Vidal, who turned him down in no uncertain terms: "I'd never work for you. You distorted Kennedy, you distorted Nixon, and you lack the one quality a director needs most – talent" (quoted in *Salon* in 1996).

Alexander is, arguably, Stone's most ambitious production to date and a long-time pet project. Certainly, the narrative departs from more conventional linear storytelling, moving back and forth in time with events linked thematically rather than chronologically, as an aged Ptolemy (Anthony Hopkins) narrates certain events in Alexander's life that he regards as particularly pivotal. In the film's official production notes, historical consultant Robin Lane Fox says, "Cramming every incident of Alexander's extraordinary life into one feature film would be quite literally impossible."

Early rumors and an old quote from Stone himself suggested that (in the spirit of his other biopics) Stone would follow conspiracy theories about the deaths of both Philip II and Alexander. In December 2002, Stone told *The Guardian*, "I was intrigued to discover that his famous father, Philip II, had been assassinated under mysterious circumstances . . . [and] In Alexander's own untimely death at 33, we have again strong evidence of a conspiracy of family clans." Philip's murder and Alexander's final illness are topics over which historians themselves have disagreed, and questions of conspiracy were present even in antiquity. Although many Alexander specialists believe the conqueror died of illness and conspiracies do offer dramatic appeal, Stone, in the end, adopted a compromise. No clear conspiracy is ever laid out; it is merely intimated as one possible cause for the conqueror's death, leaving viewers to

draw their own conclusions.

The film's accuracy of detail owes much to Lane Fox, the film's historical consultant. Examples of this accuracy include Alexander's armor and helmet, modeled on ancient descriptions and artwork; the purple and gold cloak sported by Alexander, modeled on the cloak taken from Tomb II at Vergina; and the blue-glazed recreation of the Ishtar Gate for Alexander's entry into Babylon. The military costuming is generally well done, and great attention has been given to recreating reality on several levels, from the dust and confusion of battle to the scars on Farrell's body – the kind of detail easily dropped in a Hollywood blockbuster but one that suggests a respect for small things on the part of Stone. Lane Fox himself told *The Australian* in July 2004, "My colleagues told me that for historians, Stone was supposed to be like Satan . . . Like the poet John Milton, I have to say I quickly became very fond of Satan. Anyway, the claim that Stone has no historical sense is completely untrue."

Yet ahistorical choices were made. Some are for dramatic or pragmatic reasons. For instance, the horse used as Bucephalus is a North Light Friesian, a small draft horse, and enormous by the standards of ancient Greek horses (see Fig. 9). Nonetheless, Friesians are known for their showy trot, intelligence, and easy natures, and are, thus, popular in Hollywood. Furthermore, several events in Alexander's campaigns are conflated or simplified; for example, two mutinies become one, two conspiracies become one, and the Hydaspes and Malli battles are combined. Such substitutions make sense even if the historian may recognize the inaccuracies of them. Likewise, Stone's decision to have actors employ a variety of accents (Irish, English, Scottish, Welsh, and Albanian for Olympias) was an attempt to convey the ethnic variety in Alexander's expedition – a choice that some will call clever and some will call merely forced.

Other elements in the film are more difficult to justify. For instance, and in contrast to Alexander's helmet, the crown sported by Angelina Jolie as Olympias in some scenes is anachronistic despite the fact we have quite a few examples of women's jewelry and diadems from female graves in

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THE LIBRARY OF ALEXANDRIA REBORN

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Fig 10. Patrons using the new Library of Alexandria. Photo credit: James J. O'Donnell.

mediator of high quality scholarly and scientific information to the whole of the Arab world? That has the look and feel of a worthy ambition, but one hesitates to assume blithely that other Arab nations will accept Egypt's leadership. Could it perform a similar function for Africa? Could it help us reconstruct a notion of Mediterranean community? These are essentially political choices for Egypt, choices that the Library can try to influence and reflect but probably not determine.

To think of what makes some libraries great may help mark some of the paths forward that the Library can follow. Libraries achieve real greatness not from their collections but from what happens in them. Hermetically sealed caves of books are not libraries, though they have the potential to become such. The crowds of people fairly bursting into the building (see Fig. 10) present one opportunity: to find the way for them to have the distinctive experience of a great library and to practice the kind of reading such a collection fosters, reading that is critical, reflective, contentious, and productive. We do not yet have a model for how that kind of behavior can be produced in buildings that *are not* full of traditional print materials.

The wider challenge and, at the same time, opportunity is for the Library to become a cultural force in its own right, and there the conference programs and political engagement are surely on the

right track. To use the name of the ancient library is to remind one and all that this is a place that was once very nearly the center of the Western civilized world. Though ancient Alexandria began as a colony, it became a metropolis in its own right. In a comparable way, this reborn library should hope to become a home for progressive and critical intellectual activity in twenty-first century Alexandria, for this is an institution that now can be neither Western nor Eastern, neither imperial nor colonial, but one that stands on its own terms as a competitor and partner to other institutions promoting learning and inquiry around the world.

No American visits the Middle East these days without thinking of the cultural conflicts and cultural risks of our time. But to see this new avatar of an old monument rising boldly from the sea, as it were, makes it possible to think that there are some old strategies that can offer hope of illumination and understanding in our time.

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ANCIENT LANGUAGES IN MEL GIBSON'S *THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST*

by Matthew Dillon

“It is as it was.” With these words, Pope John Paul II seemed to endorse the historical accuracy of Mel Gibson’s controversial film *The Passion of the Christ* (2004) – at least until Vatican officials later denied it. So the question of the film’s authenticity is apparently still open, to be debated by more fallible authorities, including, of course, archaeologists and classical scholars. Unfortunately, many of the relevant questions cannot be decided. Of the physical setting of ancient Jerusalem, practically nothing remains. In many ways, archaeologists are in a much better position to judge the accuracy of Wolfgang Petersen’s *Troy* (2004) since the material culture of the Bronze Age Aegean is better preserved than that of first century Judaea. It is also important to note that *The Passion* is a religious film first and foremost. Gibson was following the New Testament rather than the *Cambridge Ancient History* as his guide. His Pontius Pilate, a flawed but basically decent official, corresponds to the character in the gospels rather than the despot described by the Jewish historian Josephus. Concessions also were made in certain details of the crucifixion: Jesus carries the full cross rather than the crosspiece (*patibulum*), and his hands are pierced in the palm rather than the forearm because this is traditional iconography; Gibson evidently felt that to “correct” that tradition would draw attention to itself and disturb the concentration of pious viewers, his true target audience. As an aesthetic principle, this is debatable, but the point is that Gibson was not obsessed with historical detail. This must be kept

in mind as we turn to what was ostensibly his most drastic artistic choice, the use of Aramaic and Latin as the authentic languages of the time.

At first, most of the “buzz” about the film concerned this apparently crackpot decision, especially since the initial rumor (perhaps a publicity ploy) was that Gibson did not plan to include subtitles. The general feeling was that the whole project was a self-indulgent exercise, well intended perhaps, but doomed to failure. As the proceeds now approach a billion dollars, it seems the industry pundits underestimated the general public’s hunger for ancient languages.

Not really, of course. The film is far more visual than verbal, and Gibson (who wisely added subtitles) clearly did not want the words to get in the way. This seems all the more astute compared with other biblical ventures on film – especially the made for TV specimens – where modern diction (by turns ponderous or slangy) and accent (British seems somehow more convincingly ancient) undermine our attempts to take the characters seriously. By contrast, the use of Aramaic and Latin in Gibson’s film very effectively adds to the atmosphere of authenticity; it draws us in instead of distracting us. But is it really authentic?

I can say little about the Aramaic, other than what I have learned from my colleague Fr. William Fulco, NEH Professor of Ancient Mediterranean Studies at Loyola Marymount University, who translated the script and coached the actors on site. He insists that the overall grammar and syntax of first-century Aramaic are not problematic. Occasionally vocabulary had to be substituted from Hebrew or Arabic, with the appropriate phonetic changes when the Aramaic term was missing from the lexicon. Far more troublesome is the question of Greek, which is completely absent from the film. After all, the primary source, the New Testament, is written in Greek, not Aramaic, and there is no doubt that Greek was more widely used in the Roman East than Latin at the time of Jesus. When I asked Gibson about this during a Q & A session at one of the previews of the film, he replied, “I thought two dead languages were enough” – an amusing answer, under-



Fig. 11. Pontius Pilate (Hristo Naumov Shopov), on the left, interviews Jesus (James Caviezel) in *The Passion of the Christ* (Icon Productions, 2004).

scoring again that complete historical accuracy was not the ultimate value in the director’s vision. The preference for Latin also might well be more personal than scholarly: Gibson is a conservative Roman Catholic who still attends the Tridentine mass in Latin. But we should not underestimate the use of Latin in Judaea: Pontius Pilate’s name is attested in a Latin inscription found in Caesarea Maritima in 1961. More significantly, throughout the empire, Latin remained the language of the law courts and the army, precisely the two major contexts where it occurs in the film. But it still seems unlikely that Pilate and Jesus would have conversed in Latin. To be sure, it is dramatically effective when Jesus startles Pilate by replying in Latin to Pilate’s question in Aramaic (see Fig. 11). But while Pilate may have picked up enough Aramaic during his seven-year stint in Judaea, why would Jesus, from the obscure town of Nazareth, be fluent in Latin when the high priests from Jerusalem who indict him apparently know hardly a word? If, in fact, the conversation took place without translators, Greek would undoubtedly have been the common tongue. Practically speaking, that would indeed have placed an extra burden on the actors, as also on the voice coach: how would the Greek be pronounced? Would the *koine* be *koy-NAY* (as in Classical Greek) or *kee-NEE* (as in Modern Greek)? Probably closer to the latter, since there is certainly evidence of “itacism” – the shift of certain vowels and diphthongs towards an “ee” sound – by this time. Most of the important phonetic changes in Greek occurred roughly from the fourth century B.C. to the first two or three centuries A.D., and with respect to pronunciation, the language has remained remarkably stable from then on.

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Spelling Bee

In the absence of Greek, that question is unfortunately moot, but pronunciation is, of course, also an issue for Latin. Most classicists are dismayed to hear the ecclesiastical pronunciation in the film, with its soft c's and hard v's. Linguistically this does seem rather to anticipate the Middle Ages by a few centuries although here, too, there is some wiggle room. The ancient scholars who addressed questions of pronunciation were invariably conservative in approach, trying to standardize the "classical" pronunciation of the highly educated elite. What the Vulgar Latin of the street actually sounded like is more difficult to say. In the film, there is some effort made to distinguish two broad levels of diction: the rough, colloquial language of the soldiers (drawn in part from barracks' graffiti, according to Fulco) contrasts with the cleaner, more elegant style of Pilate and his wife, but the pronunciation is largely the same. Probably that is anachronistic, but, again, even if scholars were to agree on the matter, accuracy was not Gibson's paramount concern. In addition, a practical consideration came into play: most of the Latin-speaking actors were European, to whom the later ecclesiastical pronunciation came naturally. As compromises go, this seems acceptable to me – a venial sin at most. (Too bad about the Greek, though.)

Whatever the merits of the film as a whole, I give Mel Gibson high marks for his recreation of the time and place of the Passion. Unlike most Hollywood blockbusters, the physical surroundings are understated; as background they create atmosphere without offense and are likely to stand the test of time better than, say, the glaring Technicolor sets of Cecil B. De Mille's *The Ten Commandments* (1956). But most impressively and most effectively, the courageous use of ancient languages creates the illusion of reality. To expect more reality than illusion from film is to misunderstand the medium. Amidst the various groups who have raised their voices to protest one aspect or another of this controversial work, classical scholars have the least to complain about.

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A History of Alexander on The Big Screen

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Macedonia. Even if those examples are early Hellenistic, any would have been more authentic than what Jolie wears. Likewise, the drape and cut of Macedonian civilian clothing seems off despite the input of Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, author of *Aphrodite's Tortoise: The Veiled Woman in Ancient Greece* (2004) and *Women's Dress in the Ancient Greek World* (2002); and there is an overabundance of unmitigated white although the Macedonians were not particularly noted for undecorated, unbordered clothing (much less for blindingly white cloth).

Yet one must admit that a story is an organic whole that succeeds or fails based on more fundamental criteria than the cut of a costume. One ought not to miss the forest for the trees, and if author Flannery O'Connor famously said, "Fiction is after truth," nonetheless, historical films are not documentaries. That may make their validity dubious for historical purists, but they are fiction, which has a different aim. Where is the story in the history? The novelist (or director) will have to make choices about what to include, what not to include, and what to modify in order to render something comprehensible to a modern audience. That does not excuse laziness or failure to do research. One should practice the art of getting it right, to paraphrase historian and published novelist Dr. Judith Tarr.

Nonetheless, capturing the period spirit is, in my own opinion, more critical than creating detail-perfect sets. Otherwise, one has only an elaborate costume drama. The real challenge of this genre is to allow characters to be properly historical without pushing them past a point with which modern viewers can identify. I believe it is precisely in how well an author/director/screenwriter blends the needs and goals of the story with attention to authentic detail that creates the alchemy of good historical fiction, either in print or on film. If I approached Oliver Stone's *Alexander* with trepidation, I came away pleasantly surprised. If not *Lawrence of Arabia* (and Colin Farrell certainly is not Peter O'Toole), it is easily the best fictional portrayal of Alexander produced to date on film.

Jeanne Reames-Zimmerman

(jreameszimmerman@mail.unomaha.edu) studied *Argead Macedonia* under Eugene N. Borza at the Pennsylvania State University and is now a member of the history faculty at the University of Nebraska, Omaha. In addition to more scholarly pursuits, her hobbies include collecting fiction about Alexander the Great. For seven years, she has maintained the Web site, *Beyond Renault: Alexander the Great in Fiction* (<http://home.earthlink.net/~mathetria/BeyondRenault/beyondrenault.html>). She would particularly like to acknowledge the members of the *Dreamworks SKG Bulletin Board* for their assistance in locating stills and other information.

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BIRTHPLACE OF EMPIRE: THE LEGACY OF ACTIUM

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soon after the battle did Augustus build this monument? What messages did he wish to portray through its design and decoration? How much do the themes and motifs displayed here anticipate what we see years later on the Ara Pacis and other Augustan monuments and thus reveal how quickly and effectively the victor began to promote his Actian victory as the starting point for his new order?

The monument's lower terrace preserves additional clues. Here, thirty-six bronze warship rams once studded the monument's facade. Although the rams disappeared long ago (one six kilo fragment has miraculously survived), deep cuttings remain that once held the back ends of the weapons firmly fixed in the podium's retaining wall. Under the general direction of Dr. Zachos and with the help of Donald Sanders and the Institute for the Visualization of History, we are trying to recreate one of the lost warship rams from traces preserved inside the largest cutting. Using digital technology, we have made a three-dimensional computer model of an authentic, but smaller, warship ram found in 1980 off the coast of Israel and are expanding this "virtual ram" so that it will slide into the monument's largest socket. We hope eventually to make a full-size display piece out of fiberglass or hard plastic foam so that visitors to the site will be able to appreciate the scale of Antony's largest weapon and imagine the offensive "punch" of ramming warships, whose designs quickly passed from memory soon after the battle.

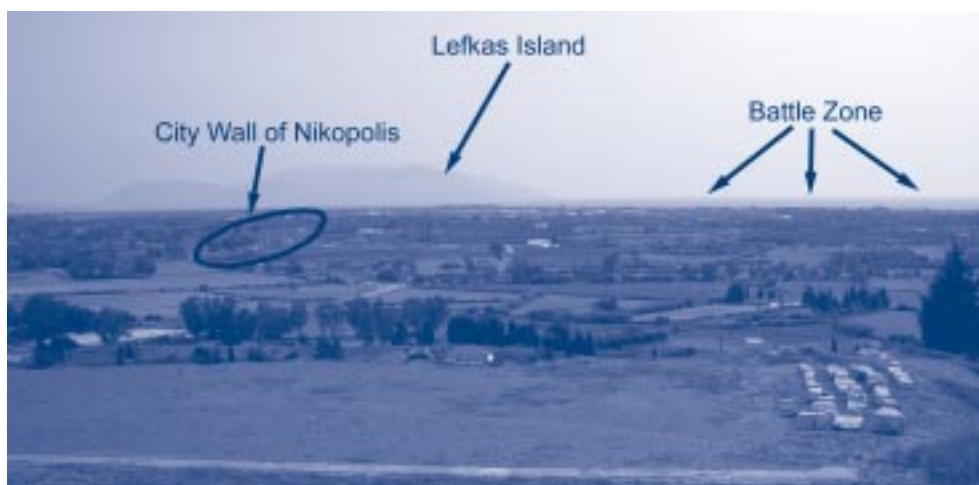
The most enduring element of Actium's legacy can be found in the overwhelming success of Augustus' economic reconstruction following his victory. What eventually confirmed Actium's importance as the start of a new age was not Augustus' battle account (published between 25 and 22 B.C.), or even the monuments he erected to honor his victory, but rather his success in providing stable government, peace, and prosperity during the generation that followed. Tangible evidence for this success can be seen everywhere around the monument's hill in the ruins of Nikopolis. For more than a decade, under the watchful eye of Dr. Zachos, the 12th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities has conducted a methodical program of survey and excavation in and around the ancient city. As

the city slowly emerges from the ground, an extensive number of signs help the visitor understand what has been found and how it relates to the city's growth and long prosperity.

Above Nikopolis, at Octavian's campsite monument, you can physically survey the full legacy of Actium (see Fig. 12). In the foreground lie the ruins of the Actian trophy monument, built on the site where Augustus pitched his personal tent, slept, ate and, no doubt, laid his plans. In the middle ground, you can easily make out the Byzantine walls of Nikopolis, still undulating like a great stone snake through the countryside. And in the distance, beyond the peninsula, you can see Lefkas island and to its right, the battle zone where 600 warships once stretched toward the horizon. If any place can be dubbed the "Birthplace" of Empire, this is it – this site, this city, this region.

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Fig. 12. View of the site of Nikopolis and the battle zone of Actium. Photo credit: William M. Murray.



The Oresteia Project Continues

by Andrew Earle Simpson

The *Libation Bearers*, part two of The Oresteia Project, a trilogy of one-act operas on Aeschylus' tragic cycle, received its concert workshop premiere at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D. C. on March 19 and 20, 2004.



Fig. 13. The grave of Agamemnon. Still image captured from the film shot to accompany the performance of *The Libation Bearers*. Photo credit: Nicholas Ferrario.

Whereas the previous staged production of *Agamemnon*, part one of the trilogy, involved dance, this concert performance of *The Libation Bearers* allowed us to introduce a new element – film. Chicago-based filmmaker Nicholas Ferrario shot approximately fifteen minutes of black-and-white film sequences especially for this production (see Fig. 13). Projections of supertitles of Sarah Brown Ferrario's libretto within the performance space were joined by film images at dramatically powerful moments. Work on the final opera, *The Furies*, began in fall 2004. Further information is available on the opera Web site, <http://music.cua.edu/libationbearers> and in issue 2.2 (Fall 2003) of *Amphora*.

“THE TIME IS THE PRESENT, THE PLACE IS ANCIENT GREECE”

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their interpretation of *Acharnians*; some authenticity was thus sacrificed so as to present a vision of Dicaeopolis’ personal journey that could be intelligible (and inspirational) to a modern audience. Nonetheless, the impression that the production gave of Aristophanes’ relevance was not purely the consequence of the adaptors’ artifice. Two scenes in particular – the prologue, in which the frustrated, antacid-imbibing protagonist exposed the charade of “free speech” in the Athenian assembly, and the confrontation with the blustery Lamachus, who vainly vaunted that he was a “qualified patriot” while trying to bully Dicaeopolis into silence – spoke volumes about why Aristophanes still has something to tell us.

LCT’s *Frogs* was the product of an even more aggressive approach to reworking Aristophanes. As Burt Shevelove and Stephen Sondheim envisioned it in 1974, Dionysus’ mission to Hades is spurred by his determination to rescue humankind from its apathy. Contrasted with Dionysus is the care-free chorus of frogs whom the god meets while traveling to the underworld; as one song explains, “The frogs like things the way they are. Earth is well enough, they say.” Instead of seeking Euripides, this Dionysus wants to retrieve George Bernard Shaw “with all his gravity of thought,” and the *agon* between Euripides and Aeschylus is accordingly transformed into a brief contest between the unsentimental Shaw and his nemesis, the poetical William Shakespeare. Realizing that Shaw, though witty, will not be heeded, Dionysus decides to return to the land of the living with Shakespeare; as he explains to Pluto, “The theater needs a poet . . . Someone to lift them out of their seats, to get them going . . .”

This is only one of many alterations that Shevelove and Sondheim introduced to eliminate allusions that might confuse spectators and detract from the primary message of their *Frogs*: that we must learn to involve ourselves in the world around us, lest we all become “frogs.” This message itself – and the development of the frogs as symbols of complacency and carelessness – capitalizes on an idea that is at most indirectly expressed in the ancient text. The self-conscious concern with the messages conveyed by dramatists and poets, on the other hand,

directly stems from Aristophanes.

In his “even more free” adaptation of the Shevelove-Sondheim script, Lane has his Dionysus explain in the opening scene that he dreads frogs because they have “narrow little minds that match their narrow little points of view” and are emblems of a “sick, sedentary universe.” Not only are we at risk of turning into frogs on our own, but the frogs actively seek to recruit us into their ranks, and in the long scene depicting the journey across the Styx, the god is attacked by the amphibian chorus that seeks to quash his world-saving mission. Lane’s jibes at the Bush administration (for example, complaints about leaders whose “words fail them . . . even the simplest words” and about “a war we shouldn’t be in,” and a joke about the “Big Bully Bush Frog that makes preemptive strikes and then forgets why it attacked in the first place”) lay bare the political polemic underlying Dionysus’ anxiety about a world that “is going to the frogs.”

The political agenda that Lane advanced by means of his embellishments to Shevelove and Sondheim’s adaptation of *Frogs* differs little from what Ron and Simmons strove to convey in their version of *Acharnians*. Yet, because he added material to the script, Lane had the opportunity to be more obvious in his development of the themes that concerned him. On occasion, his choices led him to stray from the sophistication, nuance, and ironic self-awareness that constitute (in my mind) the essence of Aristophanic comedy. For, if Aristophanes is one part Michael Moore, he is also another part Jon Stewart on *The Daily Show*, mischievously challenging us to peek behind his mask and contemplate his complicity in the very phenomena he critiques. Much as I enjoyed LCT’s *Frogs*, I would have been happier if it had tilted a little more in Stewart’s – and Aristophanes’ – direction.

It would be naïve to suppose that these adaptations of Aristophanes would play well in every part of the United States. Some Americans would doubtless be put off by the criticisms of George W. Bush and the war in Iraq that emerge from these particular productions. Yet contemporary revivals of Aristophanic comedy are not obliged to advance such partisan agendas; the joy-

ously rambunctious yet politically prudent *Lysistrata* performed by the National Theater of Greece, which was designed to entertain an international audience at the Olympics, demonstrates the viability of more neutral interpretations. In all events, I would like to see more of Aristophanes’ boisterous and flamboyant brand of comedy in a theater near me – and you – soon. My hope is that we classicists can help him find his way to as many stages as possible.

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(es136@columbia.edu) currently teaches in the Department of Classics at Columbia University. Her research has focused on Aristophanes and Euripides; among her recent publications is “Aristophanes’ Thesmophoriazousai and the Challenges of Comic Translation: The Case of William Arrowsmith’s Euripides Agonistes,” in *American Journal of Philology* 123.3 (Fall 2002), 429-463.

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Audio Review: Selections from Ovid Read in Classical Latin

by Jerise Fogel

Robert P. Sonkowsky. *Selections from Ovid Read in Classical Latin*. Jeffrey Norton Publishers, Inc. (1-800-243-1234), 1999. 2-cassette recording, with booklet containing complete Latin text of selections with facing English translation. Published as part of *The Living Voice of Greek and Latin*, series ed. Stephen G. Daitz. \$39.95. ISBN 1-57970-047-0.

This lovely set of readings from Ovid's various works is a delightful and valuable addition to the important series edited by Stephen Daitz. Almost all of Ovid's works are represented, and an attempt is made to include especially the more famous or often-read passages (although the ultimate arbiter seems to be whether or not a passage has interesting sound-play in it). Robert Sonkowsky has also contributed oral interpretations of Catullus and Horace to the series. He is a founding member of the Society for the Oral Reading of Greek and Latin Literature (SORGLL – Web site at <http://www.rhapsodes.fll.vt.edu>) and is well known for his performances at the Society's annual open reading session each year at the meeting of the American Philological Association.

Sonkowsky's style is pleasant, fluent, and meticulous at once, even striking the listener as operatic at times. Sonkowsky, who reads in a soothing, flexible baritone, adheres to the Restored Pronunciation as reconstructed by W. S. Allen in *Vox Latina* (2nd ed., 1978). Listeners familiar with the selected passages in Latin will enjoy pitting their own interpretations of scenes against Sonkowsky's. Those less familiar with the Latin will enjoy sitting back and listening to a good story, in Latin, as read by a pro – dactylic hexameters and elegiacs performed comfortably and with panache. All listeners may well be surprised and tickled at the sound effects they are made aware of in Ovid as they listen attentively.

Sonkowsky is particularly good at character drawing during direct quotations. Listen for impersonations of stern Apollo and playful Cupid, nicely contrasted in *Metamorphoses* 1.486-87; desperate, out-of-breath Apollo resting on (running toward?) his laurels as he chases Daphne (lines 504 ff., especially 517-18: "Wait! Jupiter is my father! I know the

future and the past!"); Echo (a tour de force, *Met.* 3.380 ff., with a reprise introduced by Ovid for ring-composition effect after the Narcissus story at 493 ff. – *Ēchō* and *ēheu* are well exploited here, as Ovid surely meant them to be); enraged Pallas Athene (especially *Met.* 6.185-87); numerous "prophet" and "witch" types (note the scratchy Bacchant voice at *Met.* 11.7 and the effect of speaking from afar that Sonkowsky captures in *Met.* 6.159-62); a Philomela who is heading into melodrama, *Met.* 6.533-48; various "old men" (my favorite is Lelex, *Met.* 6.618 ff.). Apollo as the teacher's teacher in *Ars Amatoria* 2.497-508 is sketched as authoritative, while the humor of the situation is subtly hinted at in the acceleration of his commands (503-08).

One of the many delights of Sonkowsky's reading is his ability to draw out the humor and drama in Ovid, even beyond character delineation. The narrator's audible resignation at *Amores* 1.1.27-30 is priceless, as is the aural "shrug" at *Ars Amatoria* 2.509-10 ("Thus did Phoebus advise; when Phoebus advises, obey him!"), brought out through tones and pace that contrast with the force and speed of the preceding "commands." The narrator's alternation between what he *tells* himself about his girl and what he *knows*, at *Remedia Amoris* 317-22, is extremely well timed. Hushed tones are used effectively at *Fasti* 1.421-30 (*nox erat . . .*, an irreverent allusion to Vergil's *Aeneid* 4.522-31, where night falls about a tormented Dido), and the braying of the donkey in the following lines correspondingly breaks the hush humorously through Sonkowsky's use of the sounds of Ovid's verse: *ecce rudēns raucō . . . ōre sonōs* (433-34). My favorite of the longer selections is Sonkowsky's energetic rendition of *Amores* 1.6 (*lanitor . . .*), with the alternately pleading, whining, and shouting refrain (*tempora noctis eunt; excute poste seram!*). Of the shorter pieces, note the gem-like four famous lines from *Tristia* 1.3 (p. 60), which really do sound as though the poet were ready to weep.

The recording will be especially useful for teachers wanting to help students to hear meaningful sound effects in Latin poetry: hissing *s* at *Met.* 6.482; the "wrenched"

sound of multiple elisions at 6.616-19; the "airiness" of 6.174-75; the emotive effects of voice pitch, effectively used at *Met.* 8.220-30; the "strolling" effect achieved at *Met.* 8.628 ff., due to calm, measured execution of the lines; and even an occasional dramatic "sung" line (*Met.* 11.26). Sonkowsky's occasional use of a sort of quavery "horror flick voice" (*Met.* 6.574 ff. springs to mind) sometimes shades into melodrama, but generally he follows his own precept, laid out in the introduction, that a reader should avoid campiness, conscious or unconscious. On a more elementary plane, *Amores* 1.1, for instance, gives a clear aural presentation for some "difficult" sounds, for example, nasalized final *-m*, both elided and unelided, and nasalized *-gn-*. Students and teachers alike will benefit from hearing how quantity, accent, tone, and velocity of delivery can intermingle in an artistic reading to produce emotion and drama – one can easily imagine Sonkowsky as a Roman father, reading best loved tales and poems to his little child, who listens rapt, seated on his lap.

The accompanying booklet, while it provides a very useful Latin text (complete with long marks and indications of elision), is less helpful on the English side, partly due to the use of public domain translations (including Dryden, Pope, and their contemporaries). On occasion, a bit is missing (whether unintentionally, as with the four lines at the end of the Phaethon story, or because of some scruple of the translator, as in *Met.* 2.527-32, ignored presumably for decency's sake). At other times, periphrasis makes it more difficult than it need be to reference the Latin lines. If you are using an English translation as you listen, you may want to use a newer and less florid one for these sections (the occasional translations by Sonkowsky himself work just fine), preferably organized by line. I noticed only one technical sound difficulty: the volume on the tape sharply decreases at *Met.* 2.60 and remains low for the rest of that side. This is easily corrected by adjusting the volume, but perhaps future editions will correct the tape.

Sonkowsky offers a pleasant and belletristic four-page introduction, in which he strides easily along in the company of Plato, Petrus

Francius, W. S. Allen, Stanislawski, Stravinsky, and Samuel Johnson, to name but a few. While the introduction is brief and unavoidably idiosyncratic as an overview of the problems and joys of reading ancient literature aloud, Sonkowsky touches on a few points that deserve more attention than they generally receive in the Latin classroom: 1) silent reading and “eye-philology” must be supplemented by reading aloud for critical/scientific as well as personal or entertainment reasons; 2) certain rules (namely those of Restored Pronunciation and of prosody as analyzed by ancients and moderns) do exist and should be taken up without hesitation or argument; 3) emotion and its expression is to be honored, and all pseudo-emotion (“campiness,” self-conscious melodrama, “arm-waving and silliness”) is to be cast aside, as a sort of scholarly nervous giggle, at best, and as destroying analysis of and appreciation for poetic technique, at worst. Overall, Sonkowsky recognizes that “authentic” performance is a *chimaera* (he calls it the “museum of authenticity” approach to performance); but he holds on to a certain positivist stance and finds that the existing evidence is enough to provide a rational jumping-off point for serious artistic interpretation. Such interpretation may also enlighten scholarship – but it freely and without blushing makes aesthetic choices that go beyond the aims of scholarship.

It sometimes comes to the attention of those of us working as scholars and teachers of Greek and Latin that classics as a discipline is neither an “art” nor a “science” – and most decidedly not a performing art (unless perhaps one wishes whimsically to call conference papers actual, not metaphorical, “performances”). Efforts such as this series remind us that most of the *subject* matter of our field nonetheless is a performing art and that our literary critical tools therefore need to include a concrete understanding of performance and its demands.

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GLADIATORIAL GAMES: ANCIENT REALITY SHOWS? continued from page 7

testants’ torches approximates a traditional religious ritual, but otherwise *Survivor* simply asks the question, “What do ordinary people do in an extraordinary situation?” Tertullian’s original exhortation to avoid pagan practices has, in a way, taken hold here: the producers of *Survivor* leave little evidence of ancient religion in their modern games. They do not burden the action with ceremony and ritual, nor do they separate the contestants from us. They suggest that the contestants are just like us (no criticism attaches to their status as citizens), that their backstabbing and self-interested cooperation are somehow acceptable. Indeed, the idea of selflessness in *Survivor* is anathema. The show instead tests the notion of the survival of the fittest – twisting our strongly-held ethos that hard work and fair play produce individual success.

In a nation that enshrines the equality of human beings, the spectacle of real people being tricked, humiliated, and hurt for the sake of entertainment has caused controversy. The producers of *Survivor* might consider the Romans’ careful practice and signal more clearly to their audience that their show is special, unusual, and not a model for everyday life. The religious element of the gladiatorial contests actually circumscribed violence – showing where and how it should take place. Even in this most “barbarous” of settings, the Romans imposed the order for which – along with the games – they are so well known.

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Troy Panel at the Annual Meeting of the American Philological Association in Boston

by Mary-Kay Gamel

Troy, a Hollywood blockbuster starring Brad Pitt as Achilles, was released by Warner Brothers in May 2004 (see Fig. 14). The film did not attract the hoped-for summer audiences or much critical praise. Regardless of its accuracy or value, however, *Troy* will certainly affect the way students and the public think about the ancient Greek world. A recent article in the *New York Times* announced that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are currently outselling all other poetry books in Britain but remained uncertain whether the cause is *Troy*’s “thrilling narrative or Brad Pitt in a skirt.”

A panel on *Troy* (organized by Mary-Kay Gamel, University of California, Santa Cruz, and Robin Mitchell-Boyask, Temple University) will be presented at the annual meeting of the American Philological Association (on Saturday, January 8, 2005, from 11:15 a.m. to 1:15 p.m.

(place Back Bay B). Nick Lowe (Royal Holloway, University of London) will speak on “Writing *Troy*,” Robin Mitchell-Boyask (Temple University) will speak on “*Troy* on Film,” Alison Futrell (University of Arizona) will speak on “*Troy* the Film,” and Sandra Joshel (University of Washington) will speak on “Projecting *Troy*.” We hope you will join the discussion!



Fig. 14. Brad Pitt as Achilles in *Troy* (Warner Brothers, 2004).



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