

OF BATTLES AND THE WRITING OF HISTORY: THE BATTLE OF THE TEUTOBURG FOREST

by Madelyn Bergen Dick

Sometime in the fall of the year A.D. 9, three Roman legions made their way through a wooded and marshy area, now the community of Kalkriese northwest of modern Osnabrück, Germany (see Fig. 2, page 2). While negotiating narrow sandy paths through a great moor located at the foot of a modest hill, they were attacked by a large force of German tribesmen hidden among the trees. The guerillas were led by Arminius, a German warrior of one of the ruling clans of the Cherusci, who had been an officer in the auxiliary branch of the Roman army. The commander of the Roman legions was P. Quintilius Varus (also known in some sources as P. Quinctilius Varus), a relative by marriage of the Emperor Augustus, who had been appointed Legate of the Rhine Army with the added responsibility of establishing a new Roman province in northern Germany. Over the next three days, some 15,000 soldiers and assorted camp-followers were massacred in that moor: this is now called the Battle of the Teutoburger Wald or the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest. The Romans lost three legions (XVII, XVIII, and XIX). Varus committed suicide on the battlefield; his head was later sent by the Germans to Rome via another tribal chief. The victor Arminius did not enjoy the fruits of his labors long; he was killed about a decade later by members of his own family, and his wife and son died in Roman captivity. Eventually the moors and wild animals and the relative silence of German oral tradition buried the site of the battle in the mists of time.

The German tribes did not leave a written record of their triumph since their culture was not a literate one. The



Fig. 1. Granite blocks showing the path of the Roman army at Kalkriese. The disarray in the foreground illustrates the disintegration of the Roman line during the ambush by the Germans. Photo credit: Madelyn Bergen Dick.

Romans retreated from northern Germany after Germanicus' incursions in A.D. 15 and made no further attempts to colonize the area, but the Germans may have venerated the battle site as a sacred place (Peter S. Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome: Emperor Augustus, Arminius, and the Slaughter of the Legions in the Teutoburg Forest*, 2003, 177-199,

continued on page 2

Book Review: *Cattus Petasatus*

by James B. Rives

Jennifer Morrish Tunberg and Terence O. Tunberg, trans. *Cattus Petasatus: The Cat in the Hat in Latin*. Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 2000. Pp. 75. Illustrations throughout. Paperback \$16.95. ISBN 0-86516-472-X; Hardcover \$22.50. ISBN 0-86516-471-1.

One of the more curious literary sub-genres is that of Latin translations of classic children's books. Over the last forty-five years we have had *Winnie ille Pu* (Alexander Lenard, 1960), *Fabula de Petro Cuniculo* (E. Peroto Walker, 1962), *Alicia in Terra Mirabili* (Clive Harcourt Caruthers, 1964), *Domus Anguli Puensis* (Brian Staples, 1980), *Ursus nomine Paddington* (Peter Needham, 1999), the Tunbergs' own *Quomodo Invidiosulus nomine Grinchus Christi natalem abrogaverit* (1999), *Regulus* (Augustus Haury, 2001) and, most recently, *Harrius Potter et Philosophi Lapis* (Peter Needham, 2003); Hellenophiles will be pleased that an ancient Greek version of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* has also now been published (Andrew Wilson, 2004).

I must confess that I have not always been a huge fan of such works. One of the pleasures of good children's literature is the simplicity and lucidity of the writing, the

continued on page 3



CLASSICS AND THE 77TH ANNUAL SCRIPPS NATIONAL SPELLING BEE	4
NOTABLE WEB SITE: "THE VROMA PROJECT"	5
THE STORY OF THE ALPHABET	6
SHE'LL ALWAYS HAVE PARIS: HELEN IN WOLFGANG PETERSEN'S "TROY"	10
WHAT'S COOKING? NEW (AND OLD) IN ANCIENT FOOD STUDIES	12

BOOK REVIEW: "GARDENER'S LATIN: A LEXICON"	13
BOOK REVIEW: "CLIMBING OLYMPUS: WHAT YOU CAN LEARN FROM GREEK MYTH AND WISDOM"	16
AN ADVENTURE ON MOUNT OLYMPOS	17
GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS	20

OF BATTLES AND THE WRITING OF HISTORY: THE BATTLE OF THE TEUTOBURG FOREST continued from page 1

235). It is perhaps not impossible to find obscure traces of this battle and its aftermath deeply buried in the myths that have come down through oral traditions in the guise of epics that are the basis for the *Nibelungenlied* and *Gudrun* and related stories. One particular memory might be enshrined in the battle between Siegfried and the dragon; the latter is a beast with scaly armor and fiery breath. It has been suggested that this may be the monstrous image of a Roman soldier (Wells, 30).

The Romans themselves were not eager to advertise this disastrous event; they were profoundly superstitious about such horrendous defeats of their well-trained and much-feared legions by obscure tribesmen. This may have prevented the reestablishment of the three lost legions. The Roman sources do not deliberately hide the battle from our view, but they are not particularly forthcoming with details either.

The earliest account comes from C. Velleius Paterculus, a Roman officer who, sometime about A.D. 30, published a *Compendium of Roman History*. Velleius concentrated on the personality of Varus and briefly described the battle. P. Cornelius Tacitus wrote an account in his *Annals* after A.D. 110; his very full discussion was really about Germanicus who went to northern Germany in A.D. 15, found the battle site, buried all the bones of the dead soldiers, and defeated the German tribes at the Weser River. In the reign of Hadrian, L. Annaeus Florus included a description of the events in his *Epitome* (ca. A.D. 125). To this we must add the account of Hadrian's personal secretary, C. Suetonius Tranquillus (ca. A.D. 69-ca. 140), who in his *Life of Augustus* left a vivid description of Augustus as he received the news of the destruction of three of his legions. Suetonius also reported information on the disaster, much condensed, in his *Life of Caligula*. At the beginning of the third century, the Greek historian Cassius Dio (ca. A.D. 150-235) reassembled the story from many sources into a dramatic retelling.

What then happened in A.D. 9 in the *saltus Teutoburgiensis*, that fearsome place somewhere northeast of the Rhine frontier? This is the story Roman historians have told us and archaeologists have expanded: Augustus sent Varus to northern Germany to finish the job of

creating the province of Germania that had been started by Drusus, the brother of the future emperor Tiberius. Varus, assuming that the German tribes were

sufficiently pacified and that he could move quickly in establishing full Roman rule, did not pay too much

continued on page 8



Fig. 2. On this map of Roman military camps at the time of Augustus and Tiberius, Kalkriese is marked with an X (<http://www.geschichte.uni-osnabrueck.de/projekt/frame2.htm>). The little squares mark the Roman camps. The arrows mark troop movements during the time of Augustus. The map is part of the Web site *Kalkriese: Die Örtlichkeit der Varusschlacht, Ein studentisches Projekt an der Universität Osnabrück* (<http://www.geschichte.uni-osnabrueck.de/projekt/start.html>). The map is by Edward Menking, Universität Osnabrück, ©1997, and is used courtesy of Dr. Wolfgang Spickermann, Universität Osnabrück.

Book Review: *Cattus Petasatus* continued from page 1

way that the authors achieve striking effects while limiting themselves to ordinary vocabulary and constructions. Yet words and idioms that are ordinary in English are not necessarily easy to render in Latin, a challenge that the translators generally meet with great labor and ingenuity. As a consequence, the translations themselves often strike me as more belabored and ingenious than simple and lucid, a shift in register that, in my view, pretty much defeats the whole point.

And then a friend gave me a copy of *Cattus Petasatus* (see Fig. 3). My expressions of polite gratitude quickly turned to unfeigned delight as I opened the covers and sampled what lay inside: here at last is a Latin translation that truly captures the spirit of the original. And what an original! As most people know, Dr. Seuss wrote *The Cat in the Hat* in 1957 as a book for beginning readers, with the idea that it had to be simple enough for them to read on their own but also fun enough for them to want to read it at all. He achieved the simplicity by strictly limiting his vocabulary to 220 words, virtually all of them one-syllable, and by using only the most basic syntax. But it was in the fun that his genius lay. Quite apart from his absurdist scenario and imaginative illustrations, his very use of language was fun: the insistent rhythms and rhymes of his verses make them almost impossible to stop reading. In these respects, *The Cat in the Hat* would seem one of the worst candidates for translation into Latin since insistent rhythms and rhymes are not things that most of us associate with Latin literature.

To a large extent, however, we do this not because accentual rhythms and end-rhymes are incompatible with the Latin language but simply because classical authors deliberately avoided them. Strong rhythms and rhymes seem to have played more of a role in popular verse and came into their own in the Middle Ages. It is from this tradition that the Tunbergs have drawn their inspiration, as they explain (in English as well as Latin) in an appendix on their verse form. In place of Dr. Seuss' largely anapestic rhythms and end-rhyme in alternating lines, they use a line of four trochees with a very high coincidence of word accent and

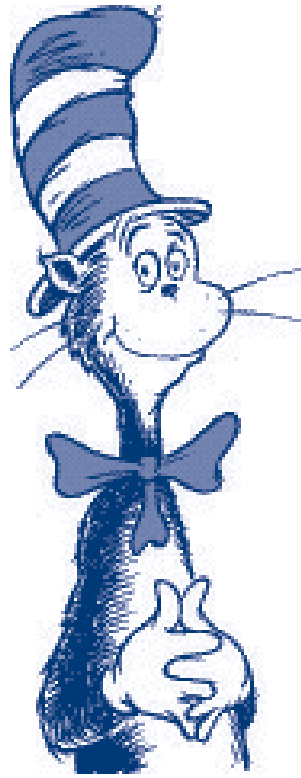


Fig. 3. The Cat in the Hat.™ & © 1957 Dr. Seuss Enterprises, L. P. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

metrical beat (hence the insistent rhythm) and end-rhyme in the last two syllables of every couplet (hence even more insistent rhyme than the original). Here, for example, is their version of the Cat's opening lines on page 7:

“Cur sedetis?” inquit ille,
“Ludos vobis dabo mille!
Cattus, etsi sol non lucet,
Ludos vobis huc adducet!”

Obviously, this is not Vergil, but then neither is Dr. Seuss Milton, and it is wonderful to see the Tunbergs achieve the same sorts of effects in Latin that Dr. Seuss did in English. These effects are so basic and yet so delightful that one does not need much Latin to enjoy *Cattus Petasatus*. (The Tunbergs have now applied the same techniques to a translation of *Green Eggs and Ham* [2003] with apparently equal success.)

Could this book serve beginning readers of Latin in the same way that Dr. Seuss' original serves beginning readers of English? Undoubtedly. Although the Tunbergs did not manage to restrict themselves to

only 220 words, their vocabulary is fairly straightforward, and they provide a convenient glossary at the end. Likewise, their sentences are short and simple, and the context will make the meaning clear even to readers puzzled by the grammar. For beginning students, the strong rhythmic pattern should make this a painless lesson in pronunciation and word accent; for more advanced students, it could serve as the basis for a discussion of quantitative versus accentual meters. Most importantly, for everyone, it will make Latin fun, and that is a rare achievement. As the Cat himself says (on page 18 of the original), “It is fun to have fun/ But you have to know how.”

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CURRENT EVENTS IN CLASSICS

Barbara Gold, the APA Vice-President for Outreach, and two members of the APA Outreach Committee, Mary-Kay Gamel and Judith P. Hallett, will establish an APA Web site for “Current Events in Classics” (lectures, museum openings, outreach events) and find people in key areas around the country who can feed steady information to that site. Mary-Kay Gamel will coordinate theatrical productions, films, and videos in particular. They will create links to existing Web sites of this nature and also use state coordinators to help identify classically-related events around the country; many of these coordinators will ideally be leaders of the state classical organizations. Any ideas for creating and maintaining such a Web site would be welcome. Please contact Barbara Gold at bgold@hamilton.edu.

CLASSICS AND THE 77TH ANNUAL SCRIPPS NATIONAL SPELLING BEE

by Judith P. Hallett

I arrived at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in downtown Washington, D. C. – headquarters of the 77th Annual Scripps National Spelling Bee – on the morning of June 2, 2004, just in time to catch Round Two of the competition. *Amphora* had asked me to attune my reportorial antennae to the classical reverberations of this event: the words of Greek and Roman provenance chosen to measure orthographical knowledge, and the students and teachers of the Latin and Greek languages participating as spellers, officials, and staff. And as the occasion literally demanded, I made a beeline for the press desk in order to obtain my *2004 Bee Week Guide*, the official kit for members of the media.

Also available online at www.spellingbee.com, the *Guide* contained the schedule for Bee Week (the final rounds and social events held in the nation's capital from Sunday, May 30 through Friday, June 4); details about the Scripps National Spelling Bee program, competition, and prizes; media information; contest rules; statistics about the 2004 Bee participants and previous finalists; a list of past champions and their winning words; photos and brief biographies of Bee officials and staff; and photos accompanied by longer biographies of all the 265 middle school student spellers who qualified for the 2004 finals.

And, yes, swarms of representatives from both broadcast and print media surrounded me. The cable television sports network ESPN had exclusive live coverage rights for much of the competition. Other media outlets were also allowed to broadcast the event live up until ESPN's live broadcast began and even to tape the event during ESPN's live broadcast for airing at a later time.

What I gleaned from the *Bee Week Guide* was welcome as well as edifying, the culmination of a year-long learning process. I was a spelling bee champion myself in my senior year at Cheltenham (Pennsylvania) High School, triumphing when the other finalist, himself a former victor, missed the “s” in “grosgrain.” Yet I knew almost nothing about the Annual Scripps National Spelling Bee prior to June 2003, when my daughter – a journalist who had just finished a

vignette on the Bee for *U. S. News and World Report* – insisted that I accompany her to *Spellbound* (2002), a cinematic chronicle of the 1999 competition, publicized by the promotional logo “Little kids. Big words. American dreams.” Directed by Jeffrey Blitz, an alumnus of The Johns Hopkins University Writing Seminars and the University of Southern California film program, *Spellbound* fully lived up to its title, mesmerizing me with the power of both its narrative and message.

While it lost out to Michael Moore's *Bowling for Columbine* in the category of Best Documentary Feature Film at the 2002 Academy Awards, *Spellbound* offers a glimpse of contemporary American society and values that is every bit as perceptive and affecting as Moore's. But, as Anton Bitel, an Australian classicist now based in England, noted in his review (available online at www.movie-gazette.com/cinereviews/461), Blitz's subtle, indeed lyrical, mode of cinematic expression contrasts sharply to Moore's signature, showboating approach.

Blitz himself accounts for his film's gross of more than \$5 million, and the popular appeal that a figure of this magnitude implies, by observing that some viewers regard the Bee as a “kind of American Dream, where ‘mastery’ of English suggests mastery of culture.” He also suspects that the film's focus on the support and unconditional love afforded the contestants in the Bee by their families resonated widely.

The film interweaves the stories of eight Bee finalists: middle school students from different social and economic backgrounds, educational institutions, ethnic groups, and regions of the United States. Classics gets a significant cut of the cinematic action. “Big” words of Greek and Latin provenance pose some of the most unforgettable challenges to the contestants. Some of the finalists are



Fig. 4. Professor Jacques Bailly at the 2003 Scripps National Spelling Bee. Image used courtesy of the Scripps National Spelling Bee. Photo credit: Mark Bowen/Scripps National Spelling Bee.

identified as Latin students, and one as a major beneficiary of intensive tutoring in Latin and Greek etymology. Most important from the perspective of classicists, Jacques Bailly, a former national champion, does a star turn on screen as the Associate Pronouncer: he holds a doctorate in classics from Cornell University and is Associate Professor of Classics at the University of Vermont (see Fig. 4).

In 2003, Bailly ascended to the position of Pronouncer. According to the *Bee Week Guide*, once the Word Panel for each Bee creates the final word list for that year's competition, the Pronouncer then researches each word's pronunciation or pronunciations, compiling detailed notes about various aspects of these words. During the oral rounds of the Bee, after Professor Bailly has pronounced the word to be spelled, a speller may not only query him about how the word is pronounced but also ask him to define it, identify what part of speech it is, use it in a sentence, and give its etymology. When providing information about the language of origin for each word, Bailly draws heavily on *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, one of the competition's sponsors. And as the words given the contestants in 2004 alone testify, those with Greek and Latin roots vastly predominate.

Of the twenty-five qualifying words in Round One, eighteen derived from Greek or Latin, for example, Boeotian, onomatopoeia, rhinorrhagia, separate, supererogatory, and triskaidekaphobia. Among the Greek and Latin words in Round Two were apocope, corybantic, flebile, Laodicean, litotes, Pierian, pyrrhic, and urticant. Strikingly, many words of classical derivation on these lists are, in fact, “technical terms” that classicists habitually employ in learned discussions of ancient Greek and Roman literature, history, geography, and religion.

Speaking about the Bee several months later at the October 2004 meeting of the Classical Association of the Atlantic States (CAAS), Bailly acknowledged and explained the pride of place awarded in the 2003 and 2004 Scripps National Spelling Bees to words of Greek and Latin origin, including specialized vocabulary items beloved of classicists. To some extent, this classical emphasis is predictable. As the pedagogical material posted on the Bee website (under the rubric of “Carolyn’s Corner”) documents, difficult spelling words in English are overwhelmingly Latin and Greek in origin.

This classical emphasis also belongs to a longstanding Bee tradition. The very first Bee champion, in 1925, earned his crown with “gladiolus”; his four immediate successors captured theirs with “abrogate,” “luxuriance,” “albumen,” and “asceticism.” Decades later, two champions of my own acquaintance won with “meticulosity” (in 1950) and “eudaemonic” (in 1960). Bailly owes his own 1980 victory to “elucubrate”; the 1981 winner who now directs the Bee – Page Pipkin Kimble – owes hers to “sarcophagus.” And though “Purim,” “luge,” and “kamikaze” are to be found on the roster of winning words from 1983 through 1993, words of classical derivation have more than held their own as makers of champions in the past decade: viewers of *Spellbound* may recall that Nuper Lala, the 1999 winner, now a University of Michigan undergraduate and a Bee staff member, acquired her laurels with “logorrhoea.”

In media interviews held between rounds of the competition on June 2, 2004, Bailly shared some thoughts on what he, as an educator, regards as the goals and achievements of the Bee. He defined the Bee as a quintessentially democratic educational program, insofar as winning depends on both merit and luck. In addition, he underscored that the biggest winner of any spelling bee is

continued on page 19

Notable Web Site: The VRoma Project

<http://www.vroma.org>

by Barbara F. McManus

On the VRoma homepage, a globe with a Roman gate at its center invites visitors to time travel to an interactive simulation of the ancient city of Rome (see Fig. 5). The adjoining scroll offers links to classical images and other cultural and pedagogical Internet resources created by VRoma core faculty.

Launched with the help of a 1997 National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Teaching with Technology Grant, the VRoma project has been bringing “the excitement of classical studies” (to quote *Amphora’s* mission statement) to a diverse group of users. They range from a middle-school student who wrote “I have never really been interested in history until the subject of Rome came up,” to a high-school student studying Latin in New Zealand who wants to “to get a feel of the ‘experience’ rather than just studying it,” to a concert pianist and conductor “with a passionate interest in Ancient Greece and Rome,” to a non-academic from the Netherlands who desires to “keep the Classics alive, show Romans might be all dead but were never boring.”

Central to the VRoma community is an online “place,” a virtual environment combining Web and MOO (Multi-user dimension, Object Oriented) technology that can be visited as a guest or as a registered user with personal password, character name, and avatar. Here users can chat with other connected users in real time. They can also virtually walk through the fourteen regions of Rome, learn about the various buildings and how they were used, converse with

“bots” with preprogrammed dialogue (some of it in Latin) such as the emperor Antoninus Pius and a greedy landlady in the Subura, and take a chariot ride in the Circus Maximus.

A tour guide, *Let’s Go, VRoma! (Eamus VRomam)*, helps visitors navigate the streets of this complex city. Although the



Fig 5. VRoma homepage (<http://www.vroma.org>).

simulated city is rich with images, this is not a three-dimensional virtual-reality re-creation of Rome. The technology has been kept simple deliberately so that people all over the world can connect with equipment no more sophisticated than a browser and an Internet connection. This also encourages users to draw actively on their own imaginations in order to weave together the images, textual cues and information, and interactive objects into a meaningful vision of the ancient city. The VRoma MOO aims to offer an immersive, emotionally engaging “virtual field trip” to ancient Rome.

The other resources offered by VRoma do not require logging in to the MOO. The most widely used of these is the Image Archive, containing thousands of high-quality images related to classical antiquity and designed for use on the Web. These photographs were donated by classics faculty and are available without charge for non-commercial Internet or classroom use. They include photos of many objects and artifacts not easily accessible from other sources, especially a growing collection of detailed images of ancient coins.

For example, without VRoma, one would have to visit the Terme Diocleziano,

continued on page 6

Aristophanes' Frogs Now Available on CD

The original Broadway cast recording of the 2004 Lincoln Center Theater production of Aristophanes' *Frogs* is now available on CD from PS Classics (<http://www.psclassics.com>). For a discussion of this production as well as other recent productions of Aristophanes' comedies, see “The Time is the Present, the Place is Ancient Greece’: The (Very) Contemporary Comedy of Aristophanes,” by Elizabeth Scharffenberger in *Amphora*, Issue 3.2 (Fall 2004). An electronic link to this issue may be found at the APA Web site (www.apaclassics.org).

Notable Web Site: The VRoma Project

continued from page 5

National Museums of Rome, to see a second-century A.D. bronze owner's stamp (*signaculum*) of a businesswoman who imported wine and oil (particularly appropriate to this publication since small amphoras are used as word dividers on the stamp). The image has been reversed so



Fig. 6. Bronze owner's stamp of Coelia Mascellina (http://www.vroma.org/images/mcmanus_images/signaculum.jpg). Photo credit: Barbara McManus.

that the letters read in the order that they would appear on the stamped item: the outer circle gives her name in Latin, "[belonging to] Coelia Mascellina, daughter of Gnaeus," while the inner circle is an abbreviated version of her name in Greek (see Fig. 6). An image like this, presenting little-known information about women's participation in Roman trade, helps VRoma to fulfill its mission of bringing to a broad audience "the excitement, immediacy, and 'virtual re-creation of lost contexts' that modern technology can expedite" (quoted from the VRoma NEH grant proposal).

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THE STORY OF THE ALPHABET

by David Frauenfelder

If you have ever wondered what it takes to convert a scholarly subject into popular yet intelligent nonfiction, just ask two lovers of classics, John Man and David Sacks. They will tell you it takes a lot of perspiration – and a little inspiration from Homer.

Sacks and Man have both written good reads on the history and use of the alphabet, from its roots in Egypt to its various contemporary offshoots. Man's book is *Alpha Beta* (2001); Sacks' book is *Letter Perfect* (2004). Neither is a professional classicist, but each strives to give the Greek and Roman aspects of the alphabet their full due. And they are inspired rather than daunted by the mass of data surrounding our ABC's. Sacks catalogues, letter by letter, the enormous impact of the alphabet on the world, compiling facts and history ranging from the ancient Phoenicians to the origin of the phrase "O.K." Man, for his part, focuses on the alphabet as a whole. In an interview graciously granted to me for this article, Man reveals that he wrote *Alpha Beta* using the alphabet "like a character in a story. It has an origin and a journey, and evolves, and along the way, fascinating things happen." And Man does mean one alphabet with one origin: "The alphabet, despite its multifarious forms, was a unique idea, arising only once, spreading across cultures and down centuries."

Man's earliest experiences with classics provided a solid foundation for his visualization of the alphabet as the hero in a kind of epic journey. At twelve, he listened raptly as his Latin teacher in a British boarding school read to the class an English translation of the *Odyssey*, a little every day, until they finished the poem. "There's a tremendous arc to that story," he continues in the same interview. "All the various storylines come to the same point. You never feel as if you're in a digression." In fact, the Cyclops episode of the *Odyssey* so captured Man that he leads off *Alpha Beta* with an account of his first encounter with the monster. "From those vivid readings . . . I received a clear message: the story – speaking so directly from so remote a time – mattered."

At first glance, the development of the alphabet might promise a story more compelling to scholars than to general readers. But Man sees the hidden potential in recounting the journey of the essential medium for transporting so

many ancient tales to the present day.

Man begins with a fascinating account of the alphabet's infancy. In 1990 at Wadi el-Hol, a little-known archaeological dig near Egyptian Thebes, Egyptologist John Darnell discovered stone-carved marks resembling a proto-alphabet. Immediately, he feared that robbers would hack the inscriptions out of the rock and sell them on the black market. The race against time described in the book was first told to Man by Darnell's wife Deborah Darnell, also an Egyptologist. "Deborah felt a violent rush of adrenaline," Man writes of the Darnells' discovery of robbers at the dig site, then quotes Deborah Darnell directly, "All I can compare it to is if you were to come home and there was somebody beating up your children" (72).

The vividness of Man's description adds interest to what potential readers in the popular audience might have considered mere squiggles, an early form of a script found in the Sinai desert called Proto-Sinaitic (Sacks also includes a detailed discussion and photographs of the script). The Darnells had found what they considered to be the alphabet in its infancy emerging from its mother script, Egyptian hieroglyphics. Semitic "mercenaries" (Sacks) or "marauders" (Man), who lived in Egypt around 2000 B.C. and spoke "Proto-Sinaitic," would have been responsible for the invention, having seen the potential in hieroglyphics to express their own language. This inscription, the argument goes, is a record of that early expression.

Man speculates that the Exodus (another good story) may be a memory of the migration of this Semitic people to Israel with the new type of writing that was eventually used to record the major events of the monotheistic Hebrew religion. From there, the neighboring Phoenicians acquired this form of writing as well and spread it to Greece through traders and artisans.

In Greece, Man finds, the alphabet becomes a powerful engine for the transmission of ideas. He writes that, without the alphabet, none of the Greeks' achievements would have survived them. Like a happy coincidence in a novel or movie (except that this is a true story), "They [the Greeks] just happened to live near one of the cultures that had stumbled on the alphabet, and they just happened to be at a crucial



stage in social evolution that made them open to its adoption” (16). This happy coincidence led to a number of stunning intellectual and social achievements.

This enticing side discussion – a variation on how small groups of people produced great change, explored in books such as Thomas Cahill’s *How the Irish Saved Civilization* (1995) and *The Gifts of the Jews* (1998) – still takes second place to the alphabet as character in a story. Man wonders how, if the Greeks got along fine as an oral society (as Milman Parry and others have taught us), the alphabet found its place in the Hellenic world. How did it, like Odysseus among the Phaeacians, prove its worth?

To answer the question, Man let his imagination work on a very early and incomplete inscription from the Dipylon Vase, a large, wide-mouthed, intricately-painted piece of pottery dating to about 750 B.C., which reads “Who now of all dancers dances most playfully, let him . . .” Man writes (219):

Imagine the end of a dance contest, the winner recalling the herald’s opening invitation and wanting some reminder for his family or his patron of what the pot means. He shouts to the crowd: “Does anyone here know Phoenician writing?”

An eager hand reaches up . . . “What should I write?”

“What the herald said: Who now of all dancers dances most playfully, let him be rewarded with this pot.”

The man scratches with a sharp stone on the black paint. “Look, now the pot speaks!”

Man does not suggest that this episode happened in an actual ancient Greek dance contest. He uses the story to illustrate his argument that “Writing, rather than being imposed from the top down, is a bottom-up activity, spread not by scholars but artisans” (222-23). Through imagination, Man makes complicated scholarship accessible to a lay audience.

While Man concentrates on the history and transformative power of the alphabet as a whole – the big picture, so to speak – Sacks, in his book *Letter Perfect*, highlights each letter (the book is an outgrowth of a series of essays he wrote over a period of twenty-six weeks for the *Ottawa Citizen* newspaper). Sacks thus analyzes his subject in minute detail but, at the same time, never loses sight of his audience, the general reader. “I proceeded,” he writes in his preface, “to dip into other aspects of the story . . . What I uncovered was a trove of wisdom and lore worth celebrating. And

worth sharing” (xii).

That word “story” is again no coincidence. Sacks personifies each letter in the alphabet, giving it a quirky personality, starting on page 44 with *A* as “First and Best” (“Associated with beginnings, fundamentals, and superiority, the letter *A* has traveled first class down through history.”) and ending, on page 358 with *Z* as “Exzotic” (“a consonant that can seem racy and elusive or just plain disadvantaged”). *Letter Perfect* excels particularly in tracing the evolution of the letters, as in his discussion of the ancient Roman *k*-sound trio, *C*, *K*, and *Q*: “*K* drew the short straw of the arrangement: it came to be almost entirely neglected by the Romans. By about 300 B.C. it was used for only a handful of Latin words” (206). In the city name *Karthago*, “the unusual *K* must have looked extra creepy to Roman eyes” (206). The wryness in Sacks’ narrative (a reviewer in the *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* referred to it as “perkiness”) aims to hold the readers’ attention as he guides them through complicated scholarly issues.

Both authors have distilled a tremendous amount of complex information into their respective books. How did they do it?

They started with good teachers. Both studied at Oxford University, writing weekly essays critiqued by tutors. Sacks graduated from Swarthmore College before receiving his M.A. in Classics from Oxford, where he studied with ancient historian Oswyn Murray, author of *Early Greece* (1986) and co-editor of *The Oxford History of the Classical World*. Man studied French and German at Oxford and then did graduate work in the history of science. Both are full-time writers who have also spent decades fine-tuning their style for popular audiences.

Sacks emphasizes the need to research, research, research – then condense with maximum clarity. “Here’s a good discipline,” he told me in a recent interview. “Take three years of your life to research, say, the history of Communism. Then boil that down to the best 500 words you can write.” Sacks also emphasizes that “You have to picture why this is important to the general reader – why he or she should care.”

Sacks’ comment brings us back to Man’s contention that story is all important in interpreting classical subjects for the general reader. “There is something fundamental about narrative to human beings,” he says. “All information benefits from connecting with emotion.”

This is a sentiment ordinary ancient Greeks would have understood from firsthand knowledge. For them, myths combined entertainment, history, even scholarship: myths were “at first the sole explicit form of intellectual activity,” according to Walter Burkert, a distinguished scholar of ancient religion and mythology (*Greek Religion*, trans. John Raffan, 1985, 8).

Scholars will differ concerning the evidence presented by John Man and David Sacks. The scholarly world is always refining and rethinking its answers within its own specialized milieu. But thanks to these two engaging authors and others like them, a busy, easily-distracted modern world receives a worthy message: the ancient world matters.

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OF BATTLES AND THE WRITING OF HISTORY: THE BATTLE OF THE TEUTOBURG FOREST

continued from page 2

attention to German customs or to the Germans' enormous sense of their own worth. Blind to warnings from some German leaders, he trusted Arminius at his peril. Persuaded by the German chieftain that a revolt was brewing somewhere northwest of the probable site of his summer camp, Varus agreed to a detour to quash the incident as he was moving his legions from the Weser River towards their winter quarters near Xanten on the Rhine. Halfway between these two locations, a large number of German tribesmen ambushed the Roman forces in an area of moors, bogs, and dense forests. Over a three-day period, almost all of the Roman legions and their camp followers were killed.

Early Roman sources are very sparse on detail; there is an assumption that the description of the battle was either too well known or too gruesome to bear repeating. The writers are far more interested in the aftermath. Suetonius tells us that Augustus was horrified: "Indeed, it is said that he took the disaster so deeply to heart that he left his hair and beard untrimmed for months; he would often beat his head on a door, shouting: 'Quintilius Varus, give me back my legions!' and always kept the anniversary as a day of deep mourning" (*Life of Augustus*, 23, trans. Robert Graves, Penguin, 1979). Velleius says only: "Hemmed in by forests and marshes and ambushes, it [Varus' army] was exterminated almost to a man . . ." (*Compendium*, CXIX, trans. F. W. Shipley, Loeb, 1924). Florus repeats this story and adds details of the German tribesmen torturing their captives (*Epitome* 2.30). Information about the battle is summarized by Tacitus as a preface to his description of Germanicus' campaign in A.D. 15 (*Annals* 1.61). Cassius Dio weaves all these layers together and gives a full account of the battle, repeating the main outline but adding details about the weather – it was raining and very windy – and a general description of the battlefield with its deep ravines and dense forests (*Roman History* LVI.20-1). To sum up the information succinctly, our historical sources agree that the disaster was a combination of German treachery and Roman stupidity: ". . . Varus, who was, it must be confessed, a man of character and of good intentions, lost his life and his magnificent army more through lack



Fig. 7. Nineteenth-century manor house that now serves as the headquarters of the archaeological team at Kalkriese. Photo credit: Madelyn Bergen Dick.

of judgement in the commander than of valour in his soldiers," wrote Velleius (*Compendium* CXX.5); and from the man who knew the participants, this is a devastating evaluation. What is missing from all the accounts is a good knowledge of where the event had taken place: quite soon, the *saltus Teutoburgensis* had ceased to be a real place and had become a state of mind, a wild forest of the imagination.

In the nineteenth century, after the defeat of Napoleon, patriotic Germans with solid classical educations and an interest in historical research began to study the origins of German history, and this battle became crucial to their investigations. Wells details this process in *The Battle That Stopped Rome* (30-36, 228); so does Simon Schama in his insightful book, *Landscape and Memory* (1995, 75-120). About 1875, a statue of Arminius, now called "Hermann der Cherusker," was erected near Detmold in what were believed to be the remnants of the Teutoburger Wald. The site, which I visited in 1981, resembles Cassius Dio's description of the battle even though there were no archaeologi-

cal finds in this area. Indeed, Theodor Mommsen, the leading nineteenth-century German historian of ancient Rome, disagreed profoundly with that choice and had already championed a location near Osnabrück. About a hundred years later, archaeologists proved him right.

It took a military engineer with a bent for excavating battle sites to locate the place. Beginning in 1987, Major Tony Clunn spent a decade reconnoitering a very large area north of Osnabrück where he was stationed with the British army. He found coins and investigated treasure hoards and coin collections that had been unearthed over the centuries. He also realized that the building of the Mittelland-Kanal in the nineteenth century had altered the landscape and lowered the water table of the region and thus dried up moors and marshes and made them more accessible. In the fascinating narrative of his book, *In Quest of the Lost Legions: The Varusschlacht, Discovering the Varus Battlefield* (1999; an expanded and revised edition is due for release shortly), excerpts from his diaries are interspersed with learned discussions of important archaeological insights. Those elements are made vivid through his (admittedly) fictionalized account of what must have happened to the soldiers – a chilling retelling of the total annihilation of almost 18,000 people.

I visited the battle site on a bright June day in 2003. The approach to the site is through a gateway and a modest building that leads to a small courtyard, a children's playground, and a rustic-style restaurant. Also at the site is a well-preserved manor house from the early nineteenth century that now serves as the headquarters of the archaeological team (see Fig. 7).

Throughout the Middle Ages and beyond, this site was a thriving agricultural community, ruled over by a local aristocratic family. Now the battle site has been allowed to regain its natural state of forest, marshy meadows, and moors, with few exceptions. Among these are a replica of a Roman frontier fort that serves as the museum, the remains of partially-rebuilt German palisades, which were the earliest finds of the archaeological excavations (see Fig. 8), and granite slabs marking the ordered advance of the Roman army into the moors and showing its disintegration during the ambush (see Fig. 1, page 1). If one stands at the top of the Roman fort, the sheer vastness of the site becomes instantly apparent: a rough estimate of the area considered for



Fig. 8. At the left, a reconstruction of the German palisades at Kalkriese; at the right and behind, a reconstruction of the Roman defenses. Photo credit: Madelyn Bergen Dick.

archaeological excavation is several miles in diameter (see Fig. 9). The guide at the site remarked that it could easily take twenty-five years before the entire area is thoroughly examined. The incredible number of finds, mostly Roman, shown at the museum give but a faint indication of what might still be in the ground. Among the exhibits are a spectacular mask (see Clunn, 103-104), both large and small items used by a Roman army, and human and animal bones of every description, most very small. Also on display are coins, both from the hoards collected over the centuries and those found by the archaeological team, among them several gold coins newly minted in the reign of Augustus.

But no amount of sunshine and children's laughter can quite obliterate the feeling of a brooding quietness: if your imagination is good enough – and mine is – the noise of the battle, the moans of the dying, and the shouts of the victors seem to echo over the site. Marching along the granite slabs that mark the advance of the Roman legions into chaos and death and walking slowly along grassy paths, I found myself speaking in hushed tones to my companions and making frequent stops to survey the landscape. Almost two-thousand years have passed since those three days of slaughter, but that does not lessen the importance of the events that occurred here nor the almost eerie effect upon the site.

In the study of history today, battles no longer loom as large as they once did. And yet historians cannot avoid the use of these defining historical markers. The battle of Actium in 31 B.C. was one such decisive battle in the history of Rome. It started the Roman Empire under Augustus. The battle of the Teutoburg Forest, which we know about mostly from the losers, was another.

This battle prevented the development of Germania as a Roman province. Archaeological evidence has substantiated the attempt of the Roman imperial government to create in north and northeastern Germany a province on the model of Gaul. This was probably a defensive action spurred on by the insecurity of the Roman government over its northern frontiers, which led to Roman armies marching across the area to the Elbe River. The Romans won most of the armed conflicts, but they seem never to have been able to beat the tribes into submission. Augustus spent much time in his early imperial career on the Rhine, and his appointment of Quintilius Varus, who had been a successful governor in North Africa as well as in Syria, seemed a shrewd move. The Roman government had every hope of success; Roman supply galleys came from Gaul into the Weser estuary and south on that river, deep into the German countryside. Varus' summer camp was located in Hessen, north of modern Frankfurt, and his winter quarters were on the Rhine near the modern Dutch border. Had the venture been handled more diplomatically and had the various German tribes in the area felt that it was to their advantage to cultivate the Roman connection, then the success of Arminius to mobilize his countrymen against the intruders might not have been quite so spectacular. Beyond that, the defeat of the Roman legions had a marked impact on the development of the German tribes. Roman occupation of Gaul and confrontation with German communities along the Rhine frontier had produced a more warlike society among the Germans, and archaeological evidence from grave deposits attest to this development (Wells, 213-20, 236). This process of militarization continued and would have profound consequences for the



Fig. 9. Battle site as seen from the reconstructed Roman fort. The granite blocks, bottom right, show the path of the Roman army. Photo credit: Madelyn Bergen Dick.

development of European history.

The battle also determined the limits of Roman domination in central Europe. The area east of the Rhine and north of the Danube remained outside Rome's political control, and the outposts built by Augustus became the main defense points on a long frontier. It also allowed for the development of language and customs in northern Germany that owed little to Rome. Without the German victory in the Teutoburg Forest, would there have been well-trained and well-armed Angles, Saxons, and Frisians ready to invade Roman Britain? Would there have been a Frisian dialect that came to be the basis of English, as ably demonstrated in Melvyn Bragg's *The Adventure of English: The Biography of a Language* (2004)? Would the German elements of law and government and, indeed, of life-style have flourished and become so dominant in the development of the European Middle Ages?

In short, the massacre in the *saltus Teutoburgiensis*, now known as the community of Kalkriese, proved a profound lesson in imperial vulnerability from which Augustus never recovered and which became deeply enshrined in the bedrock of imperial politics. The geographic expansion of the Roman Empire moved beyond the accomplishments of the first century A.D. in Britain and the Balkans, but the Romans did not go beyond the German frontier established early in the reign of Tiberius: "The result of this disaster was that the empire, which had not stopped on the shores of the Ocean, was checked on the banks of the Rhine" (Florus, *Epitome*, 2.30, trans. E. S. Foster, Loeb, 1929). For better or worse, the northern lowlands, with their rivers and moors, their isolated agricultural homesteads and small villages, continued over the centuries to create their versions of law, government, and language and, with these, the foundations of modern Europe.

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SHE'LL ALWAYS HAVE PARIS: HELEN IN WOLFGANG PETERSEN'S *TROY*

by Monica Silveira Cyrino

Readers of Homer's *Iliad* often note that the epic presents fewer female characters than the *Odyssey*. There are several complex female figures in the *Odyssey*, perhaps because many of the episodes according to prominence to women take place in domestic locations, such as the household of Penelope and Odysseus in Ithaca. Due to the *Iliad*'s martial theme and narrative, however, opportunities for mortal female characters to emerge as developed characters are limited: either they are family members of the Trojan heroes who stay safely within the walls of the besieged citadel, or they are *gerata*, "prizes," prisoners of war won by the Greek heroes and held in the tents of the invaders' encampment. Then there is Helen, the Spartan femme fatale whose actions started the war – she abandoned her husband, Menelaus, for the handsome Trojan prince Paris, and the Greeks then decided to seek retribution. In the film *Troy* (2004), Wolfgang Petersen, acclaimed German director of several films with largely if not exclusively male casts, such as *Das Boot* (1982), *In the Line of Fire* (1993), *Air Force One* (1997), and *The Perfect Storm* (2000), makes drastic revisions to the way in which Homer portrays the *Iliad*'s handful of female characters. Petersen attenuates some of these female characters (Andromache), amalgamates some of them with other characters (Briséis and Cassandra), and even eradicates them (Hecuba) in his cinematic version of the Trojan legend. So viewers rightly ask why the female characters have such a minimal presence onscreen and, in particular, why the central figure of Helen is noticeably marginalized in the film's narrative and represented as a bland and manifestly unconvincing image of her Homeric self.

In a film that reportedly cost more than \$200 million, industry watchers expected Petersen to cast a well-known actress of international stature as the ravishing Spartan queen Helen. Despite rumored interest from such Hollywood heavyweights as Nicole Kidman and Julia Roberts, Petersen instead cast a relatively unknown young German actress, Diane Kruger (see Fig. 10). Petersen said he wanted "fresh faces," and after paying \$17.5 million for American movie star Brad Pitt to play

Achilles, that is apparently all he could afford. Kruger, a placid blonde newcomer with just a few films to her credit, is a former ballet dancer and model-turned-actress who, at the age of twenty-seven, looks much younger. After an international search that launched a thousand head shots, in the fall of 2003, Petersen chose Kruger for the role, and Warner Brothers issued a press release where the director praised her "stunning beauty . . . charisma and artistry" (quoted by Fred Schruers in "Troy Story," *Premiere*, May 2004, 50).

Kruger is certainly beautiful, but



Fig. 10. Diane Kruger as Helen from *Troy* (Warner Brothers, 2004).

there are very few women working in the film industry today who are not images of perfection. In fact, all the actors in the movie *Troy*, male and female, are exceptionally good-looking, and the filmmaker's emphasis on physical beauty is entirely consistent with the heroic ideals of the *Iliad*. As Petersen said: "I think these epic stories need attractive people. So I decided I will go for a high standard of beauty" (quoted by Josh Tyrangiel, "Troy Story," *Time*, May 10, 2004, 69).

Nevertheless, whether or not Kruger is pretty enough for the role, many viewers feel that there is something insubstantial or insufficient about her, a diminutive or adolescent quality that fails to capture the sexual magnetism of this legendary beauty. As film critic Lisa Schwarzbaum observed: "Kruger . . . turns the beauty of yore into that of arm

candy whose smolder might just launch a scuffle between her date and any commodities trader who hits on her at a Manhattan cigar bar" ("Myth Behavin'," *Entertainment Weekly*, May 21, 2004, 55). This "downsizing" of Helen's charisma in the film requires an exploration of the choices that led to casting Kruger in the role and an examination of why the result might seem aesthetically and dramatically inadequate.

First, it would be enormously difficult to find an actress to portray Helen who would satisfy everyone or even some of the viewing audience. Many people have a picture of Helen in their minds, either perfectly clear or a little fuzzy, but indelible and wholly their own. Nancy Worman, one of the many classicists who have written about the iconic Helen of the literary tradition, has recently observed that Helen remains elusive, unattainable, hard to grasp, always mobile, and on the verge of disappearing ("The Body as Argument: Helen in Four Greek Texts," *Classical Antiquity* 16.1, April 1997, 151-203). Even when Helen stands still for a moment, as she does among the Trojan elders on the wall at Troy (*Iliad* 3.139-244), she is covered in shimmering veils that impede any knowledge of her: she is never readily visible, never easy to apprehend, clad in gleaming robes that stun the viewer's vision. The idea of Helen – goddess, queen, temptress, runaway wife, whore – exists in an ever-changing dynamic, to be molded to individual desires as needed.

Thus, any tangible face set upon this shiny, slippery canvas is bound to disappoint and frustrate the viewer. Just as Helen is imagined by people in different incarnations, perhaps she is imagined in culturally-specific ways. Petersen, the native German director, may have chosen his own countrywoman, Kruger, because she embodies a familiar image of Helen he has long held in his mind's eye. While he has not commented on his casting of a Teutonic-looking Helen, Petersen did discuss his choice of a specifically fair-haired and light-eyed appearance for his movie queen: "Helen of Troy had to be otherworldly, a blond aberration among the swarthy Greeks," noting that Kruger's "lambent blue-green eyes and aristocratic bearing" would set her apart from



Fig. 11. Diane Kruger as Helen and Orlando Bloom as Paris from *Troy* (Warner Brothers, 2004).

the rest of the cast (quoted by Schruers, “Troy Story,” 114).

Whether Petersen was referring to ancient or modern Greeks is unclear: the Homeric epics, however, depict certain heroes whose hair is *xanthos*, “golden” or “tawny” (Menelaus: *Iliad* 3.284 and often elsewhere; Achilles: *Iliad* 23.141; Odysseus: *Odyssey* 13.431), and many Greeks today, especially in Larissa and farther north, are quite blond. Yet the notion persists that the fair-haired Greek was (and is) an anomaly, as film critic Richard Corliss asks with deliberate irony: “Who knew Greece had so many blonds?” (“That’s What You Call a Homer,” *Time*, May 10, 2004, 72). Perhaps the director intended Kruger’s yellow hair to make a visual link between Helen’s distinctive appearance and the divinity of the demigod Achilles as played by Pitt, with his long, straw-colored locks. Petersen seems to suggest Helen’s fair appearance is an effect of the Greeks’ imagining her as not just better than but different from them, thereby associating her with the most elite class of heroes and reflecting her semi-divine status as the daughter of Zeus.

Whether Petersen’s idea is valid – that Helen’s exceptional quality should be visually indicated by some particular coloring – the fact remains that the epic literary tradition does not really specify what she looked like: her epithet *euko-*

mos, “with nice hair” (as at *Iliad* 3.329) is often misleadingly translated “fair-haired.” When Helen makes her public entrance in the *teichoskopia*, the “view from the wall” in *Iliad* 3, the Trojan elders remark: “She seems strikingly like the immortal goddesses in her look” (*Iliad* 3.158). Throughout the epic literary tradition, the most beautiful of the goddesses is Aphrodite, and the fact that the epithet “golden” is exclusively reserved for her has been much discussed by classicists (such as Paul Friedrich, *The Meaning of Aphrodite*, 1978); in the *Iliad* alone, the goddess is called *chrusee*, “golden,” several times (3.64, 5.427, 19.282, 22.470, 24.699). If Helen resembles the goddess Aphrodite, whose avatar she is often considered, Helen must be marked by goldenness in some way, whether by the actual color gold, or metaphorically by the value of gold, expressing the



Fig. 12. Rosanna Podestà as Helen and Jack Sernas as Paris from *Helen of Troy* (Warner Brothers, 1956).

superior nature of her beauty over that found in all other mortal women. According to sociologists, since brown hair is the norm in Mediterranean cultures, blond or red hair would be considered “deviant,” both unusual and, thus, remarkable hair colors (noted by Martha Barnette, “Fixed Signals,” *Allure*, October 2004, 280).

Even so, if the director wanted to portray a “golden” Helen, still he could have cast an extraordinary tawny-haired actress of international renown, such as Cate Blanchett, Gwyneth Paltrow, or Charlize Theron, who have earned several Golden Globes and Oscars among them. The burnished metallic veneer of their award statuettes would metaphorically reflect the radiance of Helen’s epic beauty, just as their fame and prestige suggest Helen’s own notoriety.

Kruger’s distinction as a character in the film is also marked, perhaps inadvertently, by her Teutonic accent. The other mostly British and Australian actors in the film intone their lines in the haute-English style called Received Pronunciation, attempting to render their differently accented English into one harmonious timbre. Kruger’s rounded German elocution, therefore, sets her apart from the Greek as well as the Trojan characters. In sounding so different from the other characters, Kruger recalls the Italian actress Rosanna Podestà who was cast as Helen in Robert Wise’s earlier epic film *Helen of Troy* (1956). Podestà spoke no English and had to learn her lines by rote. It is perhaps not surprising that Kruger also looks very much like Podestà (both are petite and blonde) since Petersen could have been influenced by this cinematic “tradition” (see Fig. 12).

Whatever her appearance, Helen should impress the eye and strike the heart with her powerful, astonishing presence. The most jarring visual quality displayed by Kruger as Helen is her miniaturization, a combination of her youth and slight build, which can perhaps be attributed to the “Orlando Factor.” One of the first actors cast by Petersen was Orlando Bloom, the slender teen idol who played Legolas in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Petersen gave him the role of Paris, the winsome but reckless young prince of Troy whose abduction of Helen provokes the invasion of Troy by the Greek forces. After casting Bloom, the director may have wanted an actress to play Helen who did not outclass her screen lover in terms of personality, maturity, and physical stature (see Fig. 11).

Yet several sources support the

continued on page 18

WHAT'S COOKING? NEW (AND OLD) IN ANCIENT FOOD STUDIES

by Christopher Grocock and Sally Grainger

The study of food in Greco-Roman antiquity has taken a huge leap forward in the last few years. Knowledge of how people in the ancient world produced, processed, and consumed their food, as well as how they regarded it and wrote about it, affords valuable new insights into Greek and Roman history.

We find descriptions of the food consumed by the ancients in many kinds of literature, such as agricultural manuals and natural histories. Since these sources present this information in a straightforward manner, it is relatively easy to interpret the content. But what about the frequent references to food that we find in ancient literary works, particularly in genres such as satire and comedy?

In recent scholarship on this topic, a division has arisen that we can best categorize by using terminology borrowed from the philosophy of language and theology as “cognitive” or “realist” on the one hand, “non-cognitive” and “anti-realist” on the other. For the “cognitive” or “realist” school – represented by Andrew Dalby, Phyllis Pray Bober, Patrick Faas, and the current authors – actual practices and substances lie behind (or correspond to) the surviving written evidence about food, its use, and its status. Scholars following the “non-cognitive” or “anti-realist” approach – represented by John Wilkins and Emily Gowers – prefer to see references to food, its use, and its status primarily (if not exclusively) in symbolic terms in a conceptual world created by authors, which may not necessarily have any link with actual ancient culinary practice.

The division between cognitive and non-cognitive approaches is in some respects, however, a false one; there are many layers of meaning in ancient literature, and adhering to one at the expense of the others is to fail to see the whole picture. A simple example may help to clarify the issue: in Horace’s striking philosophical *Satire* 2.4, we are told by the philosopher who holds forth that we ought to know about the “simple” and the “double” sauce (Horace, *Sat.* 2.4.63-9). The ingredients of the “simple sauce” are oil, fragrant pure wine, *muria* (a kind of *garum* elsewhere

described as popular with the lower classes), chopped herbs, and saffron from Parnassus. For Emily Gowers, the culinary meaning is superficial; the poet/cook is concocting mixed and messy *iura*, “laws,” rather than sauces that are tasty (*The Loaded Table*, 1993, 157). But are we to assume that a sauce such as this could actually have been made and consumed or that the ingredients have merely been chosen for their metaphorical meaning? Is it possible that these ingredients are intentionally wrong or unusual compared with “real” sauces? Does it matter that the recipe was not potentially good to eat? We would still assert that it must have been consumable at the level of real food as well as being consumable as metaphor: the power or “taste” of the latter is dependant on the reality of the former.

As it happens, this kind of sauce actually existed. Called an *oenogarum*, in many ways it resembles the basic sauce that we find described in *Apicius* (the recipe collection attributed to the gourmet Apicius that we can date, by the last recipes that were added to the collection, to the fourth-fifth centuries A.D.). *Apicius* has 459 recipes written and collected by slave cooks over many centuries, and its beginnings may be as early as the mid-first century A.D. One reason for identifying *Apicius*’ basic sauce with



Fig. 13. Christopher Grocock in his Roman persona with a portable cooking hob at the Roman site of Corbridge on Hadrian’s Wall, 1999. On the hob is a replica *testum* (“portable oven”) that is being heated by charcoal.

the sauce described in Horace is that *Apicius* sometimes refers to it as *simplex*. Furthermore, the *oenogarum* sauces in *Apicius* also contain pepper, spices, *liquamen* (somewhat different from *garum* and *muria*, but nonetheless a fish sauce), sweet wines, and occasionally oil. Significantly, *Apicius* states that these *oenogarum* sauces are often thickened with starch, which probably makes the “simple” sauce into a “double.” Gowers, though, interprets this latter concoction as symbolizing the “two-faced nature of contemporary law” (156).

Horace’s reference to the *ius simplex* raises other issues: is it relevant that the gourmet is using *muria* rather than *garum*, or do we have to rethink the idea that *muria* is an inferior fish sauce? Why is there no pepper? Other such sauces include it. Is this a more sophisticated and subtle idea of *oenogarum* in contrast to the less selective sauces in *Apicius*? What does this tell us about *Apicius*?

Yet, in spite of the difficulties of the cognitive versus non-cognitive division in ancient food studies, scholars are still governed largely by one or the other approaches. John Wilkins, in his non-cognitive approach, not only rejects the culinary information but also rejects much of the food that he finds described there: “. . . the predominant flavor we have found in ancient Greek food . . . is a rank, slightly rotting quality” (John Wilkins and Shaun Hill, *Archestratus: The Life of Luxury*, 1994, 23). Wilkins is specifically referring to Greek and Roman food and its use of fish sauce and other potent spices such as asafoetida (*silphium*). Such a damning critique of ancient cooking needs comment for it is surprising how commonplace an attitude it is. To suggest that the ancients chose to eat food that was rank and rotten is to misunderstand completely the nature of the ingredients and how they interact. Such misunderstandings play havoc with literary appreciation of the texts, too.

Wilkins goes even further in his study *The Boastful Chef* (2000) and rejects the idea that New Comedy’s depiction of the growing interest in gastronomy among Athenians need have any link with what they were actually eating. It is a literary study, not an exploration of culinary practice in

ancient Athens. (We might expect something more definitive as far as actual foodstuffs are concerned in his forthcoming *Food in the Ancient World* [with Shaun Hill, June 2005]). As noted above, Emily Gowers, who also follows a non-cognitive approach, considers culinary references in Roman Satire to be superficial, primarily fulfilling a metaphorical and symbolic function.

Scholars following a cognitive approach, on the other hand, argue that references to food in satirical literature correspond to some actual culinary facts. Andrew Dalby has written extensively on ancient cooking and society, largely with a Hellenistic slant, in the last few years. Dalby's first book, *Siren Feasts* (1996), traces the tradition of Greek cuisine from its earliest prehistoric origins to the late Byzantine period. Dalby assumes that when characters in fourth century B.C. comedy display an interest in gastronomy, they reflect the sentiments of actual people in Athens at that time: "Gastronomic opinions were something more than the whims of individual authors" (112).

Dalby's invaluable handbook *Food in the Ancient World from A to Z* (2003) has entries not only on the food and drink but also on the aromas of archaic and classical Greece, of the Hellenistic Greek states, and of the Roman Empire. His other books cover a wide range of culinary topics. *Dangerous Tastes: The Story of Spices* (2000) begins in the ancient world and traces the story of spices to the present day. *Flavours of Byzantium* (2003) is invaluable for its insights into the Eastern Roman Empire and the ways in which Roman food evolved, with the addition of Arab influences, into medieval food. *Empire of Pleasures: Luxury and Indulgence in the Roman World* (2000) concerns not just food but all aspects of manufacture and farming in the form of a gazetteer. It combines the pace and scope of a narrative with the versatility of a reference text, thanks to its place-by-place organization. *Empire of Pleasures* also goes beyond the Roman Empire and offers an equally well-documented account of food production in Africa, along the trade routes beyond Egypt, and even in China and India.

Also cognitive in its approach is Phyllis Pray Bober's *Art, Culture, and Cuisine: Ancient and Medieval Gastronomy* (1999), which is a vast survey of gastronomy that gives Greece and Rome due prominence. She produces a comprehensive account of Roman dining and eating using evidence from both archaeology and literature, with

continued on page 14

Book Review: *Gardener's Latin: A Lexicon*

by John M. McMahon

Bill Neal. *Gardener's Latin: A Lexicon*. Algonquin Books (<http://www.algonquin.com>), 1992. Pp. viii, 136. Numerous illustrations. Hardcover \$14.95. ISBN 0-945575-94-7.

Bill Neal's posthumously published *Gardener's Latin: A Lexicon* is a sprightly little book that will inform and delight a wide variety of readers. Organized around an alphabetically arranged listing of over two thousand Latin species designations, it takes the reader on a scientific, historical, and cultural journey through descriptive botanical terminology. The work's intended audience is first and foremost the amateur gardening community; but despite some limitations and oversights, it provides anyone interested in plants and their names a fertile source of information.

In the introduction (iii-viii), garden writer Barbara Damrosch effectively recounts the development of the Linnaean system of binomial nomenclature. She makes a solid case for using proper botanical Latin in modern horticultural applications. Her lucid but light-hearted explanations serve as a fitting prelude to Neal's listing of the individual species designations. That treatment, ranging from *abbreviatus* to *zonalis*, *zonatus*, is simple, direct, and eminently useful. Most of the species names are given in the adjectival nominative singular masculine form. Less often, entries exhibit alternatives to that pattern. Accents are added to each entry for help in basic pronunciation. The straightforward English translations are as literal and brief as accuracy permits.

Even for those with no knowledge of Latin, the book's simple alphabetical arrangement can lead to a ready awareness of the basic meaning of Latin words. Thus, under the letter *B*, thirteen names begin with the same combining form *brevi-* ("short"), including, for example, such terms as *brevicaulis* ("short-stemmed") and *brevirostris* ("short-beaked"). Likewise, recognizing how new species names are formed in combination with one another can help the reader understand the naming process itself. For instance, the terms *folius* ("leaved") and *florus* ("flowered") are frequently combined with another descriptive term, as in *brevi-folius* ("short-leaved"), to form

another species designation. In fact, simply by paging through the species listings randomly, the casual reader may easily learn, through repeated exposure, some basic Latin vocabulary.

Yet the work comprises more than botanical definitions. While the multitude of entries alone would make *Gardener's Latin* a handy reference tool, the basic listing of species names itself is enhanced and enriched on almost every page by an array of charming images. Moreover, a random glance at the page margins rewards the reader with an engaging potpourri of practical gardening information, curious folk belief, historical anecdotes, and quotes and anecdotes drawn from a variety of writers both ancient and modern.

The combination of these two features adds an expansive quality to the book. Consider the material accompanying the species designation *euphorbioides* ("resembling the spurges, *Euphorbia*"). Here the reader is treated to an attractive line drawing of a spurge plant, to the English herbalist Culpeper's instructions for using the plant to remove warts, to Neal's own comments on its medicinal qualities, and to a quote from Pliny the Elder explaining that the genus name honors Euphorbus, the physician to King Juba. In addition to other bits of classical information, among its pages can be found references to myth, history, science and medicine, and literature with quotes from Homer, Vergil, and Shakespeare, among others.

Despite this far-ranging richness, however, the attentive reader should be wary of a few weedy tangles that Neal has allowed to crop up here and there. Noteworthy among these is that an entire sidebar description (as in *euphorbioides* above) may be devoted to one botanical genus even though genus names are not properly part of the work's main listing. This tendency, though nicely sprucing up an otherwise unadorned list of technical terms, may at first seem slightly out of character for a work devoted primarily to a straightforward enumeration of species names.

There are also some surprising omissions. Several common Latin and Greek names for ordinary plants used as modern

continued on page 14

Book Review: *Gardener's Latin: A Lexicon*

continued from page 13

species designations are absent: *cepa* ("onion") as in *Allium cepa* and *faba* ("bean") as in *Vicia faba*, to mention just two. A lack of pronunciation guidelines beyond the simple accentuation included with each entry may leave some Latinless readers at a loss. Confusion may also arise for some because of an occasional lack of consistency in giving adjectival gender forms. As for additional references, one should add to Neal's helpful bibliography Robert Shosteck's *Flowers and Plants: An International Lexicon with Biographical Notes* (1974), a more comprehensive but similarly accessible treatment of both common and Linnaean plant names.

Lastly, it would be remiss not to mention one glaring factual error in the book that resonates in the larger realm of Roman history. The entry *capricornis* ("like a goat's horn; of or from or from below the Tropic of Capricorn") is accompanied by the patently false statement that "the constellation of Capricorn is visible only in the Southern Hemisphere." Having adopted the constellation as his own personal birth symbol, surely the emperor Augustus would have had some reservations about that claim.

Despite any shortcomings, though, *Gardener's Latin* deserves a place on the reference shelf within ready reach. Educators, in fact, might even consider its use as a vocabulary building tool for students in the biological sciences. Anyone else leafing through its pages is sure to reap a rich harvest from Neal's pleasant foray into the world of botanical nomenclature.

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WHAT'S COOKING? NEW (AND OLD) IN ANCIENT FOOD STUDIES

continued from page 13

a discussion of key recipes from *Apicius*, and also gives a sound defence of that book against the all-too-common charge of "over-seasoning."

Around the Roman Table (trans. Shaun Whiteside, 2003) by Patrick Faas is a comprehensive account of Roman food and dining from a very practical viewpoint, covering the history of gastronomy in Rome, dining etiquette, the meal and the menu, and serving dishes and kitchen equipment. He covers flavors and basic ingredients and also gives numerous redacted recipes based on originals.

Underpinning the cognitive approach that we prefer are studies in economics and archaeology. P. Garnsey's *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity* (1999) discusses food availability, using evidence from archaeology in Italy and a wider European context to good effect and focusing on bone and dental health as a guide to nutritional outcomes. The book's second half explores the social, religious, and cultural functions of food and its metaphorical use, depending more on symbolic and structuralist approaches. Joan P. Alcock's *Food in Roman Britain* (2001) draws on archaeology from Britain; her observations are corroborated by literary sources from Italy. *Food in Antiquity* (ed. J. Wilkins, D. Harvey, and M. Dobson [1995]) is a collection of essays that provide some remarkable and penetrating insights into food staples, their social and religious context, and a wider exploration of foodways in the Ancient Near East and Britain, as well as in the Greco-Roman world.

Two very important reference works merit mention as well. *The Cambridge World History of Food* (ed. K. F. Kiple and K. C. Ornelas, 2000) contains 2,153 pages and uses the work of a diverse range of historians, anthropologists, and scientists from the United States. This book, which began its life as a history of food and nutrition, is very well researched from a scientific perspective. *The Oxford Companion to Food* (ed. Alan Davidson, 1999; revised ed. by Tom Jaine, forthcoming) is another excellent reference work. Since the sections concerning classical food are written by Andrew Dalby, the researcher may use this volume with confidence.

No survey of Greco-Roman food studies, however, is complete without a discussion of *garum*. This is the name for a



Fig 14. Sally Grainger in her Roman persona at the Roman site of Corbridge on Hadrian's Wall, 2001, with some young visitors.

type of fish sauce. *Liquamen* and *muria* are also considered similar forms of fish sauce. These sauces were used, often in place of salt, as a seasoning in cooking in the kitchen as well as at table. Roman poets often talk of stinking *garum*: Horace describes *muria* with a powerful odor in *Sat.* 2.4.66, and Pliny the Elder actually describes *garum* as the liquor from putrefaction, though we must not take this too literally (Pliny, *HN* 31.93). *Garum* could be made from salt and the intestines of freshly-caught fish, but it could also be made from the flesh of fish and from smaller fish such as anchovy, with various amounts of added intestines to speed up the dissolving and fermenting process. When freshly made and well kept, these fish sauces were not necessarily rotten; however, if they were exposed to the air, then the mixture would oxidize and give a "stale or off" smell.

What went into Roman fish sauce is a complex issue (the most detailed account of *garum* and *liquamen* is Robert I. Curtis, *Garum and Salsamenta* [1991]). Suffice it to say, though, its salt content was sufficiently high and the fish so freshly caught that preservation rather than decay was the result. The sauce of choice in *Apicius* is not *garum* but *liquamen*, and we cannot assume that these sauces were the same at all times despite suggestions from ancient authors that they were. *Liquamen* seems to have been made largely from anchovy and corresponds to *nuc nam*, the Southeast Asian fish sauce; *nuc nam* has a complex flavor-enhancing quality that is particularly successful in redacted recipes using sweet and sour ingredients such as honey and sour wine and also with the complex spice mixtures that are typical

of Roman sauces.

But scholarly approaches aside, what is also of great interest to classicists and cooks alike is reproducing Roman recipes in the modern kitchen. There are a great number of modern recipe books containing redacted ancient recipes. We would obviously recommend *The Classical Cook Book* (1996) by Sally Grainger and Andrew Dalby: Sally Grainger has selected recipes that are easy to reproduce and reflect the diversity of foods and tastes available. *A Taste of the Ancient World* (1992) by Ilaria Giacomini also has excellent recipes corresponding closely to the originals. She is able to link the ancient recipes closely to her native Italian cuisine, which gives new insights into the originals. *Roman Cookery: Ancient Recipes for a Modern Kitchen* (1999) by Mark Grant gathers up practically every usable recipe from the ancient world not found in *Apicius*, covering nearly 1,000 years of developing culinary history and drawing on a vast array of literature. In themselves, these recipes are not distinctive or unified, but Grant argues that they share a “lower status” as everyday and ordinary food, as opposed to the recipes in *Apicius*, which many define as catering to “high status” eaters. His premise is false: both the recipes that are found in Cato, Columella, Galen, Pliny, Anthimus, and the vast array of foodstuffs described in New Comedy preserved in Athenaeus can hardly have unity or represent “vulgar” society in contrast to the food in *Apicius*. This conclusion has also led Grant erroneously to define *garum* and fish sauce generally as a high-status product not consumed by the general populace. Archaeological evidence alone points to widespread consumption of all the fish-sauce products. Quality is another matter, however: high-status *garum* was relatively expensive compared with the fish sauces made with unselected fish products.

We have applied our various skills (one of us is a Latinist specializing in the late and medieval periods, the other a former professional chef turned food historian) to an edition of *Apicius* (forthcoming, 2006). The work has taken many years of research and what can only be described as “field trials.” We have experimented with the recipes using replica equipment, making use of experimental archaeology in a controlled environment and also cooking for large audiences of tasters who have confirmed (or rejected!) our offerings (see Figs. 13 and 14). This iterative process has allowed us to understand

the techniques involved in Roman cooking generally, and in turn, this has informed our translation.

We fully acknowledge that to turn the recipes in *Apicius* into successful dishes is a tricky business. There are few quantities provided, and judging the amount of each ingredient required is a skill that takes time to acquire. Roman sauces have been condemned for their “contrasting and self-defeating” use of numerous spices and herbs in the same sauce (Bober, 156). But by actually comparing the average *Apician* sauce with any recipe from the Asian subcontinent, one finds that the cooks who wrote the recipes in *Apicius* are often rather sparing in their use of spices. In any complex blend of spices and liquids, a balance is necessary to ensure that the resulting sauce is not discordant: sour, sweet, bitter, and salt – all must be in harmony with the spices. The Latin term *temperare*, “to temper” or “balance the flavors,” is a frequent instruction in the *Apician* recipes, and it is the secret of any good sauce.

As an example of how these issues may be addressed, here is a translation of a recipe from *Apicius* for Ostian *ofellae*, taken from our forthcoming edition of the text, with an adaptation for modern use. *Ofellae* are highly seasoned marinated meat pieces, in this case belly pork, that may be served as a *gustum* (starter).

Translation of *Apicius* 7.4.1

Ostian *ofellae*: mark out the *ofellae* pieces on the skin, leaving the skin uncut. Pound pepper, lovage, dill seed, cumin, *silphium*, one bay berry; pour on *liquamen*, pound again. Pour into the roasting dish with the *ofellae*. When it has marinated for two to three days, lay it out and tie it up in a cross-shape and put it in the oven. When you have cooked it, separate the *ofellae* which you have marked out, and then pound pepper, lovage, pour on *liquamen* and a little *passum* so that it becomes sweet. When it is simmering, thicken the sauce with starch, smother the *ofellae* and serve.

Adaptation for Modern Use

2 lb belly pork (in strips or as a whole piece)
½ teaspoon peppercorns
½ teaspoon lovage seed
1 teaspoon dill seed
1 teaspoon cumin
1 good pinch asafoetida powder
1 laurel berry (from a bay leaf bush, not flowering laurel which is poisonous!)
2 tablespoons fish sauce (use *nuc nam* or *nam pla*)

Roast and grind all the spices to a fine powder. Cut the strips of belly pork into dice, or if you have the pork in one piece, cut through the meat while keeping the skin intact as above. Mix the spices with the fish sauce and rub it thoroughly into the pork meat. Refrigerate for 3 days. Tie up the whole joint as a parcel with the fat on the inside. Roast the meat well so that it is crisp. Cut or pull off the individual pieces of cooked meat and serve with the sauce below.

Grind 6 peppercorns with ¼ teaspoon roasted lovage seed. Add to ½ pint sweet wine (such as Muscat de Rivesaltes) and ¼ pint fish sauce. Bring to the boil and thicken with starch such as arrowroot or corn flour. Pour over the freshly roasted meat and serve.

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Book Review: *Climbing Olympus: What You Can Learn From Greek Myth and Wisdom*

by Thomas J. Sienkewicz

Stephen Bertman. *Climbing Olympus: What You Can Learn From Greek Myth and Wisdom*. Sourcebooks, Inc. (<http://www.sourcebooks.com>), 2003. Pp. 230. Paperback \$14.95. ISBN 1-57071-929-2.

Climbing *Olympus* is a self-help book founded upon the values of ancient Greece. Stephen Bertman, who holds a Ph.D. in Greek and Latin literature from Columbia University, uses life-forming principles culled from Greek history, philosophy, and mythology to show how the ancient Greeks can serve as a model for a full and satisfying life in the modern world. He challenges his readers to think of the ancient Greeks not as kindred souls but as aliens from another world who were guided in their living by principles radically different from those used today. Writing not so much for the classical scholar or Hellenophile as for the reader to whom the world of ancient Greece is a foreign experience, Bertman draws this reader into the climb toward Olympus by good storytelling accompanied by the promise of useful guides for everyday life. While many of Bertman's models, like Achilles and Ulysses, would be labeled as privileged males today, others, like Athena, Penelope, and Psyche, offer a more diverse perspective for the modern reader.

Bertman's *Olympus* stands on eight pillars of ancient Greek wisdom. The first of these is "Humanism," which Bertman explains by telling the stories of the choices of Achilles and of Ulysses (the Roman name that Bertman prefers to the Greek "Odysseus"). Achilles chose a short but famous life over a long life in obscurity. The vulnerable heel by which he died at Troy is, for Bertman, a symbol of the essential fragility of humanity. Similarly, Ulysses' decision to reject an immortal existence with the goddess Calypso to return to his beloved Penelope and inevitable death in Ithaca was an affirmation of humanity, despite its frailty and vulnerability.

The second pillar is "Pursuit of Excellence," which Bertman aptly presents in the context of the heroic code of Homeric war-

riors like Glaucus and Hector and the artistic ideal portrayed in the sculpture of the discus thrower by Myron. At the same time, the myths of Niobe, Arachne, and Agamemnon serve as warnings to humans about the dangers of arrogance, of pursuing excellence inappropriate to humanism.

"Practice of Moderation" is, therefore, the third pillar of Greek wisdom. The Greek emphasis on the golden mean, on moderation, Bertman suggests, can be seen in the very structure of the Greek language with its balanced periods marked by the particles *men* and *de* and with its fondness for symmetry and ring-composition. At the same time, he offers a series of admonitory myths in which humans are destroyed by immoderation: Icarus, who flew too close to the sun; Hippolytus, whose extreme chastity led to punishment at the hands of Aphrodite, goddess of love; and the excessive anger of Agamemnon and Achilles at the beginning of the *Iliad*.

In order to achieve the appropriate balance between excellence and moderation, a person needs "Self-Knowledge," Bertman's fourth pillar of wisdom. Here, of course, he focuses on Apollo's shrine at Delphi where the words "Know Yourself" were inscribed on the temple facade and where the Greek hero Oedipus failed to recognize the truth of the fatal oracle given to him by the god. Oedipus' downfall was his arrogant pride in his intellectual excellence, the intelligence by which he solved the riddle of the Sphinx. Yet this same riddle-solver failed to know himself, killed his own father, and married his mother. Bertman also cites Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" and the story of Ulysses in the cave of the Cyclops as examples of the human struggle in search of self-knowledge.

As the divine embodiment of "Rationalism," the fifth pillar of wisdom, Bertman appropriately chooses Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom. On the human level, Bertman seeks models of rationalism in the crafty weaving of Penelope, Ulysses' wife, and in the skilled workmanship of Daedalus, the builder of the Cretan labyrinth. For examples of irrationality, Bertman suggests the Centaurs fighting the Lapiths, the wrath

of Achilles in the *Iliad*, the obstinacy of both Antigone and Creon, the barbarous acts of Medea, and even the hubristic acts of Pericles and his fellow fifth-century Athenians.

With the aid of rationalism one can move to "Restless Curiosity," the sixth pillar of wisdom. As persistent seekers of such wisdom, Bertman suggests Ulysses determined to hear the beautiful but fatal song of the Sirens, Psyche desirous to know the identity of her mysterious husband, and the philosopher Socrates, whose relentless quest for knowledge eventually led to his execution in 399 B.C.

The seventh pillar is "Love of Freedom." Bertman offers the myth of Menelaus' struggle with Proteus as a metaphor for the human struggle to achieve freedom. He also sees this theme in the Greek war of resistance against Persian servitude, in the growth of Athenian democracy, and even in the release of Persephone from the Underworld. Freedom from death, however, is more problematic, as illustrated by the myths of both Alcestis and Orpheus and Eurydice.

The last pillar is "Individualism." Bertman sees the Greek celebration of the individual in the many hero cults of Greek mythology, which include stories such as Jason's quest for the Golden Fleece and the legends surrounding Alexander the Great. The story of the Lotus-Eaters in the *Odyssey* illustrates the disadvantages of lost individuality, while the myth of Narcissus is a warning against extreme individuality or self-absorption.

Bertman concludes his construction of the Greek temple of wisdom with a caution about obstacles that may inhibit the efforts of the modern reader. These include the lure of technology, affluence, and the speed of travel and communication, all of which, for Bertman, encourage a false sense of security, factual knowledge, and experience rather than true wisdom and self-knowledge. Bertman remains cautiously hopeful that, despite such impediments, future human beings may be able to recreate a Golden Age founded on these eight pillars of Greek wisdom.

In an addendum to this climb, Bertman also considers some of the wisdom offered by the ancient cultures of Rome, Israel,

continued on page 18

AN ADVENTURE ON MOUNT OLYMPOS

by Stephen G. Daitz

Many readers of *Amphora* will remember both the highly interesting account by Ourania Molyviati of her climb up Mount Olympos (*Amphora*, issue 2.1) and Janice Siegel's account of her own climb (*Amphora*, issue 2.2), which became the foundation of the large collection of Web pages on her site, *Dr. J's Illustrated Guide to the Classical World*. The following is a small sequel to those two Olympian tales.

I was driving north from Athens on a summer day in the 1960's on my way to the Vatopedi Monastery on Mount Athos. My intent was to investigate a medieval manuscript of Euripidean quotations (a *gnomologion*) in the Vatopedi library. I passed a road sign saying "Litokhoron" (in Greek) and remembered having read in the Guide Bleu of Greece that Litokhoron was the town from which climbs up Mount Olympos generally began. Since I did not have a specific appointment at the Vatopedi library and since, as I thought, I might not pass this way again, I decided to stop and see what the possibilities were of making the climb. As it happened, in Litokhoron, I came upon two young Americans who were about to start on their way up Olympos. They had hired a guide with a baggage mule to accompany them through the valley of Prioni up to the shelter of Spilios Agapitos. There they planned to spend the night and, the next morning, make the ascent to the top of Olympos with the official mountain guide. I asked if I could tag along with them, and they replied that they had no objection. And so we started.

We hiked our way in leisurely fashion from Litokhoron through the lovely valley of Prioni alongside a small stream. To avoid the mid-afternoon scorching heat, we took a long siesta in the welcome shade of some trees and then resumed our hike towards the end of the afternoon. By early evening, after an upward climb of several miles, we reached the Spilios Agapitos shelter, which had living quarters for the local guide Costas Zolotas and his wife and sleeping accommodations for sixty hikers. We had a hearty supper and then went early to bed in anticipation of tomorrow's more strenuous climb.

After an early breakfast, we started upwards. I remember the path being



Fig. 15. Mytikas, the highest of the eight peaks of Mount Olympos. Photo credit: Janice Siegel (<http://lilt.ilstu.edu/drjclassics/sites/olympos/mytikasBIG.htm>).

fairly steep and rigorous, but nothing dangerous. We reached the highest peak of Homer's "many-peaked Olympos," Mytikas (around 9,000 feet), around 10 a.m., after two hours of steady climbing (see Fig. 15). The view from the top was literally like that enjoyed by the gods. I could imagine Zeus standing on the highest summit of the then-known world, gazing not only at the other surrounding high peaks such as Stefani and Profitis Ilias but also peering out across the flashing blue of the Aegean and, on a clear day, all the way to Troy. The imagination runs wild. My only disappointment was in not finding any trace of the throne of Zeus.

Reluctantly, we started our descent from this awe-inspiring site with many a backward glance. Our plan was to stop briefly at the Spilios Agapitos shelter for a light lunch and then to make our way unguided back to Litokhoron, aiming to arrive before dark. Here is where I began to have problems. Several weeks earlier, I had taken a swim at Nauplion and had accidentally stepped on a sea urchin, a small creature with sharp spines protruding from its back, one of which pierced the sole of my right foot. I immediately pulled the spine out, and although there was some discomfort in the following days, I thought that this would stop as the puncture healed. I was wrong. As I later discovered, the tip of the spine was still lodged in the sole of my foot, and the constant pressure on my foot during the hike gradually turned mild discomfort into constant pain. As the descent continued, I found that I had to walk more and more slowly. At first I could keep the two Americans in sight. Then I could keep them

within hailing distance. But finally sight and sound disappeared. I continued on the path as quickly as the pain would allow, meeting no one. I tried to walk faster but soon realized that I would not make it back to Litokhoron before dark. Daylight disappeared, and I could no longer see or find the path. When I tried to advance, I would crash into trees and bushes. Ironically, I could see, far in the distance, the lights in Litokhoron, but to my frustration, I was unable to get from here to there. I wondered what was the best way for me to pass the increasingly cool night on the slopes of Olympos. (There was not even a wild olive bush for me to crawl under as Odysseus had done when he finally emerged on the shore of Scheria, land of the Phaiakians.)

As I stood there wondering, I heard a faint noise about ten yards away. Then silence. I cautiously advanced in the direction of the noise and then heard it again. I stopped; the noise stopped. Something strange was going on. After four or five repetitions of this cat-and-mouse game, I caught a glance of a creature ahead of me and saw that it was a mule. I looked at him, he looked at me, and apparently we both decided that neither of us was dangerous for the other. I now moved more hopefully in his direction while he advanced, keeping the same distance ahead of me. I suddenly realized that he was knowingly and confidently proceeding along the lost downward path toward Litokhoron! With suspended disbelief, I followed him for two long hours down this path until we reached the main road where the nearby lights of Litokhoron lighted my way to salvation. At this point the mule simply vanished. I am convinced that this mule was Hermes, god of wayfarers, in disguise. At Litokhoron, I made the appropriate libation.

Stephen G. Daitz is Professor Emeritus of Classics at the City University of New York. After the ascent of Olympos, he was inspired to do complete recordings of the Iliad and the Odyssey in the restored historical pronunciation of ancient Greek. His e-mail is sgdaitz@aol.com. (He does not have Hermes' e-mail address.)

SHE'LL ALWAYS HAVE PARIS: HELEN IN WOLFGANG PETERSEN'S *TROY*

continued from page 11

notion that the ancient Greeks prized height in both men and women and associated it with divinity. Both the goddesses Aphrodite and Demeter are described as tall in their respective *Homeric Hymns* since their heads hit the ceiling of the rooms they occupy (*Hymn to Aphrodite*, 173-74; *Hymn to Demeter*, 188-89). Centuries after Homer, the Greek historian Herodotus relates a tale about the tall peasant girl Phye, who was employed by Peisistratus to portray the goddess Athena as she rode in a chariot to proclaim the return of the tyrant from exile (*The Persian Wars* 1.60).

As for Helen's age, she herself says during her lament for the slain Hector at the end of the *Iliad*: "This is now the twentieth year since I went away and left my home" (*Iliad* 24.765-66). Even if one allows for exaggeration on Helen's part as well as for the narrative device of collapsing "mythological time" over the intervening years, if she had been around twenty when Paris came to Sparta, after ten years of war Helen would have to be at least thirty years old by the time the wooden horse rolled into Troy. There was also a tradition in archaic Greek poetry that Helen left a daughter behind in Sparta when she eloped with Paris (see Sappho, fragment 16). Since David Benioff's script starts the story with the couple's fateful meeting in Sparta and since the action extends over a few brief months, ending with the death of Achilles, Petersen seems to have telescoped Helen's age, focusing on the ideal mythic moment when she fell in love with Paris and escaped with him to Troy. In the film, Helen tells Paris that she was sixteen when her parents married her off to Menelaus. Petersen thus puts her in her late teens or early twenties by the time the Greeks arrived at Troy, which fits the very young-looking Kruger.

All the same, by deciding to match his girlish Helen to his adolescent heart-throb Paris, Petersen missed an opportunity to create a provocative story arc by pairing an older, wiser, more experienced Helen with a younger, hotheaded Paris. The epic Helen expresses both regrets and guilty self-awareness of her role as the *casus belli* when she is in Troy, telling Priam and the Trojan elders on the wall that she wished she had died before she left her home (*Iliad* 3.170); later, in their boudoir, Helen dis-

plays anger and disgust towards her wayward lover but cannot resist his overwhelming sexual allure (*Iliad* 3.421-47). When the cinematic Helen tells Paris during an early rendezvous in Sparta, "Last night was a mistake . . . I've made many mistakes this week," it is hard to reconcile this world-weary comment with the sexual avidity of a young woman just a few nights after Aphrodite brought her together with her new lover.

Wolfgang Petersen's *Troy* offers many visual and aural thrills, but the film's presentation of Helen falls short of satisfactory. It would perhaps be unfair to critique the film for its intense, and generally successful, focus on the martial theme of the *Iliad*, where the characters of the women are simply not as richly developed as those of the male warriors. Indeed, the movie *Troy* was produced in the context of a modern film industry that celebrates the exploits of macho male action heroes, where female characters (when they appear at all) tend to be less fully defined. Petersen's own body of work, moreover, suggests his directorial interest in the trials of masculinity. Above all, it would be impossible to cast Helen in such a way that satisfies most people, especially classicists. Still, it would have made more commercial and artistic sense to cast a high-wattage and easily-recognized celebrity in the role, just as Pitt was cast as Achilles, in order to evoke the superstar quality of Helen, her quasi-divinity, her authority as a symbol of beauty, and her ultimate inaccessibility.

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Book Review: *Climbing Olympus: What You Can Learn From Greek Myth and Wisdom*

continued from page 16

Egypt, and Mesopotamia.

The climb to Olympus that Bertman offers in this little book is well worth the effort for both the general reader and the professional classicist. The former will find an excellent introduction to the wisdom of ancient Greece. The latter will be reminded of the many reasons why the study of the classics is so attractive to and rewarding for serious scholars.

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- Oral Latin
- African-Americans and Classics
- Naming Children in Ancient Greece

CLASSICS AND THE 77TH ANNUAL SCRIPPS NATIONAL SPELLING BEE

continued from page 5

not always the winner of the contest; any student who has learned a great deal about English from preparing for a spelling bee has profited more from the process of preparation than he or she could have possibly profited from placing first. The diversity among the contestants rated notice too, as did the different types of parental, school, and community involvement that contribute to the success of the competition. It often takes the proverbial village to produce a spelling champion.

One benefit of the Bee, not articulated in these interviews, but obvious to classicists, is that by heightening awareness of Greek and Latin “word power” among middle school students, teachers, and parents, the Bee promotes the study of classical languages, particularly Latin. During the CAAS luncheon session at which Bailly spoke, another 1999 Bee finalist who appears in *Spellbound*, April DeGideo – now a student at New York University – delivered a tribute in Latin to Mimi Bender, with whom she began to study Latin at Mount St. Joseph Academy in Flourtown, Pennsylvania in the fall of 1999, after and because of her stellar performance in the Scripps National Spelling Bee (see Fig. 16). April’s parents, memorably interviewed in the film and strongly supportive of her four years of studying Latin, were also there to support her in her Latin speaking debut and to honor her teacher.

In his CAAS presentation, Bailly urged classicists to get involved as volunteers in the local qualifying competitions sponsored by Scripps newspaper chains and thereby offer further encouragement for Latin (and eventually Greek) language study to the participating spellers and their families. Classicists are particularly suited to such involvement because of their expertise in Latin, the “key” parent language of Bee vocabulary, as well as in Greek. So, too, their training requires familiarity with the modern languages that have exercised the greatest influence on contemporary English: French, German, Italian, and Spanish. Indeed, no other profession offers its practitioners the same “skill set,” one needed at many competitions. Classicists also know how to use a dictionary correctly, to interpret what its entries say and do not say, a special skill possessed by very few.



Fig. 16. Speller April DeGideo at the 72nd Annual Scripps National Spelling Bee in 1999, from the film *Spellbound* (ThinkFilm, 2002). Photo courtesy of David Fenkel.

A list of the eighty-five sponsoring newspapers – which serve English-speaking populations in the Bahamas, Europe, Jamaica, Saudi Arabia, and the U. S. (including Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U. S. Virgin Islands) – appears at the end of the 2004 *Bee Week Guide*. The *Guide*’s biographies of the 2004 finalist spellers sponsored by each newspaper would suggest that classicists are already having an impact on what these young people study, both in and out of school. They state that the *Des Moines Register*’s Matthias Gassman “has studied Latin and Greek and is a member of a classics honor society”; that Grant Remmen, from the *Fergus Falls (Minnesota) Daily Journal*, “earned perfect scores on the National Latin Exam and the National Mythology Exam”; and that Charlotte Blacklock, from the *Times Herald Record* in Middletown, New York, takes part in “a great books tutorial involving the reading, study and culture of ancient Greece.”

For the record, the *Bee Week Guide*, relying on the authority of *Webster’s Dictionary*, defines the “bee” in “spelling bee” as a collaborative rather than a competitive venture: “a community social gathering at which friends and neighbors join together in a single activity (sewing, quilting, barn raising, etc.), usually to help one person or family.” It also suggests that the word in this sense derives from Middle English *bene*, which means a “prayer” or “favor.” Cognate with “boon,” *bene* was used in pre-industrial England for “voluntary help given by neighbors toward the accomplishment of a particular task.” The *Guide* adds that recent scholars have rejected any connection between “bee” in this sense and the insect or the

“industrious, social nature of a beehive.”

The *Guide* does not suggest any Greek or Roman etymological parentage for “bee” in this sense, either. As a feminist classicist, aware of the associations made between bees and praiseworthy women by Phocylides, Semonides, and Xenophon, I was hoping to discover a classical link of this sort. The best connection that I could ascertain between this type of “bee” and industrious, communally-minded women is that forty-two of the seventy-nine champions (53%) since 1925 have been girls. And, with the exception of the three girls who won with “knack,” “schappe,” and “chihuahua” in 1932, 1957, and 1967 respectively, all of these female spelling champions owe their victories to words of classical derivation.

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Amphora

Amphora is named after the Greek and Roman storage vessel of the same name. Appealingly anthropomorphic in form, with its narrow neck, rounded belly, and tapered foot, this two-handled vessel served to transport and distribute a variety of useful and highly valued commodities all over the ancient world.

The symbol of the amphora captures the spirit of our publication. The two handles at the neck of the amphora symbolize the Greek and Roman worlds. The base symbolizes our world today. One needs a firm grip on both the top and bottom to release the contents. Just as an ancient amphora held many types of food – olive oil, wine, fruit, meat, and fish, for example – our publication offers a wide range of articles on classical antiquity, designed to nourish the mind in a variety of ways. People from all walks of life used amphoras. So, too, our publication is designed to be used by everyone with an interest in the classical past.

For articles on the amphora in the ancient world, see Mark Lawall, “The Amphora and Ancient Commerce,” *Amphora*, issue 1.1 (Spring 2002); and Elizabeth Lyding Will, “From Italy to India: Mediterranean Amphoras and Roman Economic History,” *Amphora*, issue 2.2 (Fall 2003). Electronic links to past issues of *Amphora* may be found on the APA Web site (www.apaclassics.org).



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