

THE GOOD HUMOR MAN: A CLASSICIST AT HALLMARK

by Wilfred E. Major

Enthusiasts of Greek and Roman antiquity frequently rejoice in the many signs that classical culture is alive and well in today's world, from movies and books to documentaries and monumental architecture. More fleeting, light-hearted bequests from ancient Greece and Rome – a comic strip featuring puns about pre-Socratic philosophy, a greeting card sporting Roman soldiers on the march or monks reading a manuscript – are especially likely to occasion delight. But do we ever consider who is responsible for these unexpected reminders of the ancient world? Certainly Classics is popular enough that cartoonists and card-writers are bound to employ classical references on occasion. Still, is it possible that sometimes a Classicist is lurking out there, tapping away on our funny bones in dactylic hexameter? Could there be a professionally educated Classicist who has not just an erudite wit but who is actually just plain funny?

Meet Scott Emmons. Even with a Ph.D. in Classical Studies, he can tell a joke. In fact, he creates jokes and tells them so well in both prose and poetry that he has been making a living from



Fig. 1. Emmons' work, *Myth-Demeanors: Twisted Tales of Ancient Greece*, illustrated by Chris Harding, combines his talent for writing humor and his passion for classical antiquity. Image source: <http://www.wordchowder.com> and © 2006 Hallmark Licensing, Inc.

them for more than a decade. As a member of the dedicated humor staff at Hallmark, he composes humorous verse for cards, books, and more (see Fig. 1). It is a job where his creativity, passion for humor, and classical education all blend together. Humor has been a passion and languages an interest all of Emmons' life. He studied Spanish and French early on, but it was an inspiring humanities teacher who set him on the path to

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Book Review: *Lavinia*

by Janey Bennett

Ursula LeGuin. *Lavinia*. New York: Harcourt, 2008. Pp. 280. Hardcover. \$24.00. ISBN 978-0151014248.

Suppose for a moment you are a novelist, a writer of imagination. Somebody hands you an outline for a story and says, "Flesh this out for me, please." It is an appealing idea. When that somebody is Vergil and you are an author of fantasy fiction of the caliber of Ursula LeGuin, the task will be fascinating, the result a delight.

Vergil introduced the character of Lavinia in Book 7 of the *Aeneid*. She is the daughter and only surviving child of King Latinus, the aged ruler of peaceful Latium, and of his queen, Amata, driven mad by the Fury Allecto (or, in LeGuin's version, just driven by fury). Lavinia's story is quickly sketched in the second half of the *Aeneid*: promised in marriage to Aeneas against her mother's wishes but with her father's approval in accordance with signs and divinations, she waits in silence as the volatile Turnus of Rutulia and Aeneas go to war for her hand. When Aeneas kills Turnus on the battlefield, his marriage to Lavinia secures the Trojans' right to settle in Italy and the eventual fusion of Trojan and Latin blood to form the Roman nation. And that's about it for Vergil's Lavinia.

What Vergil left undone in the *Aeneid*, Ursula LeGuin has taken upon herself to complete. LeGuin's Lavinia assesses Vergil succinctly: "He gave me a long life, but a small one" (4). Lavinia herself is intensely aware of Vergil's treatment of her. "The events I remember only come to exist as I write them, or as he wrote them. But he did not write them. He slighted my life, in his poem" (3). And so she tells us she must set down the details of her story, of her viewpoint of the events, her betrothal and the

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classics, by introducing him to ancient Greek achievements in literature, art, and philosophy. Emmons' curiosity about languages led him to study Greek, major in Classics at Northwestern University, and go on to graduate work at Indiana University. There he wrote a dissertation on how the historian Herodotus uses experimental methods pioneered by the pre-Socratic philosophers. And to this day, reports Emmons, he continues to enjoy reading Latin and Greek.

After completing his Ph.D. in 1990, a traditional academic career seemed to be Dr. Emmons' destiny, but his abiding love of writing humor still needed a place in his life. Besides, the financial benefits proved too compelling to resist. "If I remember correctly, I got two dollars," he recalls now of the windfall from his first humor publication, "but it was a start," he adds, and indeed it was. Picking up jobs such as writing jokes for Bob Thaves' *Frank & Ernest* comic strip and one-liners for radio DJs, in 1993 he joined Hallmark full time and has been working for them ever since.

In addition to a career that is personally fulfilling, his training in classics has brought distinct benefits. He describes it this way: "A classical education not only teaches you a lot about language, it also gives you great mental discipline. Both have helped me a lot in my career. Writing humor can be very hard, and it helps to have the patience and self-critical impulse that I developed when working on a Ph.D. in Classics. Early in my Hallmark career I discovered (somewhat to my surprise) that one of my greatest strengths was humorous verse. My classical education fed right into that. I came to it with an understanding of meter that most humor writers don't have, at least not at the beginning. On a more general level, my classical background is so much a part of me that I can't imagine living without it. Language is obviously important to me as a writer, and my knowledge of Greek and Latin etymologies and syntax informs my whole experience of language. The more you know about the Greco-Roman world, the more you understand how much our culture owes to it."

Dr. Emmons' work for Hallmark reflects his multi-faceted talents as a humor writer. In addition to composing verse for greeting cards behind the scenes over the years, he has published

Fig. 2. Emmons' Pandora releases a combination of ancient and modern plagues. *Myth-Demeanors: Twisted Tales of Ancient Greece* is illustrated by Chris Harding. Image source: <http://www.wordchowder.com> and © 2006 Hallmark Licensing, Inc.



two Hallmark gift books of funny poetry, *Christmas Unwrapped* and *Get Your Gray On*. More recently, his background in academe and classics came to the fore again. Through a sabbatical program at Hallmark, he spent a month in Greece, visiting and contemplating how to translate the glory that is Greece into funny rhymes. The result is *Myth-Demeanors: Twisted Tales of Ancient Greece* (samples can be read online at <http://www.wordchowder.com>). Dr. Emmons' unique talent and experience mean that this is not just another retelling of popular Greek myths. "While other authors aim to preserve the myths for yet another generation, my objective is to see just how much punishment they can take. Through tortured metaphors, forced rhymes, and overblown rhetoric, I have attempted to do to the Greek myths what Apollo did to Marsyas," he says. As the climactic reference to Apollo's flaying of the poor satyr Marsyas indicates, Emmons' writing veers between the breezy contemporary and pointed references to classical antiquity. His introduction to the god Poseidon toys with these two extremes:

Poseidon, the glorious lord of the ocean,
Is known by his trident and his swimmer's physique,
As well as his epithet, "totally gnarly,"
Which sounds more impressive when spoken in Greek.

In his narrative of Pandora ("Pandora, or, Who Let the Plagues Out?"), Emmons knows that in the original Greek she opened a jar rather than a box (see Fig. 2), but the horrors she sets loose on the world will resonate with suffering twenty-first century readers:

Out flew every foul affliction:
War and famine, drug addiction,
Not to mention static cling
And weak domestic beers,
Paper cuts and pigeon droppings,
'Fun and different' pizza toppings,
Ragweed pollen, freezer burn,
And songs by Britney Spears.
Finger quotes and diet soda,
Yappy dogs that look like Yoda,
Poison ivy, hanging chads,
And insufficient RAM,
Morning people, rising taxes,
Men who get bikini waxes,
Paparazzi, shedding cats,
And either kind of SPAM!

Many of the most famous Greek myths, not to mention tragedies, are not only twisted but grim and dominated by accounts of suffering and pain. "For whatever reason, the Greeks seem to have known an astonishing amount about pain. If we bear in mind that the Greeks also invented geometry, it becomes clear that much of this pain was self-inflicted," Emmons points out as explanation. But what is a humor writer to do when trying to make light of a tale as grim as that of Oedipus and when he knows that the riddle of the Sphinx is not quite "What walks on four legs in the morning, two legs in the afternoon, and three legs in the evening?" as it is often quoted? In "The Tragedy of Oedipus or Confessions of a Drama King," Emmons renders Oedipus' glory days this way:

For Oedipus came to the throne of the Thebans
By using his noodle and saving their skins.
An ill-mannered Sphinx had been roaming the country
And butchering locals for giggles and

grins.
 She'd toy with her victims by posing a riddle:
 "What creature has four legs, then two, and then three?"
 The Thebans, admittedly not too quick-witted,
 When stumped, would be spitted and served with her tea.
 But Oedipus laughed till he ached in his middle.
 "Your lame little riddle's no match for my brain!
 A baby's a crawler, then grows a bit taller
 And walks on two legs, till it's time for a cane!"
 The creature then fell from the heights of the city
 While uttering curses both loud and obscene.
 And that's how our hero came into his kingdom
 And married Jocasta, his middle-aged queen.

The poem continues, now tracing the events of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, and Emmons allows the reader the guilty pleasure of acknowledging that some choruses in Greek tragedy are beyond the redemptive power of humor:

The plot has now thickened, and pulses are quickened.
 The audience trembles with pity and fear.
 But just then the chorus begins a new number,
 And so we discreetly slip out for a beer.

If any or all of this causes you to groan, or perhaps hear peals of distant groans across the centuries and millennia, Emmons is again unapologetic: "While others may seek to breathe new life into the ancient Greek authors, I'll be content if I can get them spinning in their graves." A creative engagement with the classical world harnessed to scholarly discipline is a rare gift, and Emmons allows us both to gain insight and have some well-earned giggles along the way.

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"The mind is most swift because it races through everything."
 – Thales (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 1.35)

Book Review: *A Book of Hours: Music, Literature, Life, A Memoir*

by Byron Stayskal

M. Owen Lee. *A Book of Hours: Music, Literature, Life, A Memoir*. Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006. Pp. 284. Paperback. \$19.95. ISBN 978-0826418746.

M Owen Lee, a Catholic priest of the order of Saint Basil, is emeritus professor of Classics at the University of Toronto and has written on Vergil and Horace (see Fig. 3). For many, however, he is best known as a participant on "Opera Quiz," the intermission program during Saturday radio broadcasts from the Metropolitan Opera. His was a voice of warmth, wit, and remarkable erudition. Lee has also written on opera, especially the operas of Wagner. One of his books, *Wagner, The Terrible Man and His Truthful Music*, explores how a deeply flawed individual could produce beautiful and even healing art. Another book, *Wagner's Ring*, both summarizes the cycle and explains how musical motifs appear, recur, and gain increasing psychological resonance as the operas progress.

Curiously, I had just read these studies of Wagner's life and work when I was asked to review *A Book of Hours: Music, Literature, Life, A Memoir*. The book is Lee's account of the year he spent teaching Classics in Rome, crisscrossing Europe, and immersing himself in opera. A deeply religious and intensely personal work, it brims with vivid conversations, fascinating characters, and loving descriptions of literature, art, and especially music.

Although the form of the book seems straightforward – the narrative is clear, lively, and chronological – in many ways it resembles the Wagnerian music-dramas that Lee explains so well. Motifs emerge, develop, coalesce, and in the end create something more than a memoir. The high trumpet in Wagner's *Parsifal*, for example, announces the Grail and brings to mind Aeneas' fallen trumpeter and the golden bough, Aeneas' own grail. Characters from music and literature merge. Hector bids farewell to wife and son; Aeneas with helmet on kisses Ascanius and leaves to suffer and sacrifice for his son and his son's sons; Meistersinger Hans Sachs sacrifices the chance to be a father so that he can act as father to young Walter who needs him and young



Fig. 3. Fr. Owen Lee (ca. 1960) earned the first Ph.D. in Classics conferred at the University of British Columbia. Image source: <http://www.cnrs.ubc.ca/index.php?id=3548>.

Eva who trusts him. Hector, Aeneas, Hans Sachs resonate with Lee's own life and experience, his priestly vows, his own longing for a son.

Unforgettable characters populate the narrative of this remarkable work: Father Costello, the friendly, big-hearted president of the school; Maria Parenti, its omniscient registrar; Lee's officemate, Father Zelinski, poet and theologian, a zany, pessimistic, lovable, impossible man; Manfred Schöne, a brilliant but tormented art-history instructor; Lee's counselor, the gentle and humble Father Johnny Hallagan.

Students arrive, classes begin. Lee teaches Greek and Latin authors, classical literature in translation, seminars, and tutorials. A meeting of the seminar on lyric poetry, co-taught with Father Zelinski, takes up a poem of Sappho. Everything goes right. Students build on one another's comments, grasp the poem, and make it their own. A shy student brought out of herself by Sappho's poetry distills for the whole class what is "loveliest on the dark earth."

Throughout the book, Lee is often catching a train for a weekend of opera. He's a seasoned and genial traveler, enjoying conversation with fellow voyagers as well as the solitude of long journeys. Whether traveling through sun-drenched Tuscany or the Alps in a snowstorm, Lee appreciates both journey and destination. And what destinations! Christmas Eve in Saint Peter's, New Year's Eve at the Vienna State Opera.

Lee's memoir is a treasury of conversations. The exchange with Zelinski, as Lee struggles to English some of his poems, is delightful, absurd, and hilarious. Lee talks fashion with an American girl near Florence, art with two Russian soldiers in Dresden, Catholic doctrine with a gay couple on a train to Rome. In one of the most moving conversations in the book, Lee meets his colleague Manfred Schöne in Venice after

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PLAYING WITH KNIVES: ON TRANSLATING MARTIAL'S EPIGRAMS

by Susan McLean

In 2000, I started translating Catullus' poems into English, using rhyme and meter to enhance the humor of the poems while calling attention to their carefully crafted quality. In 2003, I started doing the same with Martial's epigrams and quickly discovered that rhyme, which was controversial in translations of Catullus, was essential to any attempt to convey the wit of Martial in English. Though Catullus certainly wrote epigrams and poems that ended with a humorous twist that could gain impact from rhyme, his poetry is not known primarily for its humor. Some readers familiar with Latin objected to the anachronistic use of rhyme in translating poems that did not originally employ it. Yet I have never encountered the same objection to the use of rhyme in translating Martial.

There are several reasons that Martial's epigrams lend themselves to the use of rhyme. In English there is a long tradition of using rhyme in poetic epigrams, so it feels natural to readers. Rhyme, like wit, brings together two dissimilar things in surprising ways. That element of surprise is part of the ambush of the epigram. If the reader sees the joke coming, it is not as funny. The punch line has to be both unforeseen and perfectly aimed, like a thrust to the heart in fencing. There is an element of aggression in most humor, and especially in the satiric humor of Martial, which is based on attacking people's foibles. Though Martial's epigrams can be translated into free verse, they then tend to sound more like jokes than like poems.

Meter, too, is a crucial element in Martial's epigrams. The contrast between the subversiveness of the humor and the suavity of the meter adds impact to both. However, I cannot simply reproduce Martial's meters in English. Latin meter is based on patterns of alternating long and short vowels. The difference between long and short vowels is not obvious in English, and translating those patterns into English ones of stressed and unstressed syllables leads to rhythms that tend to feel jerky and unnatural. Since iambic meter (in which a poetic foot consists of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable) sounds most colloquial in English and is used in the vast

majority of English poems, I have used that meter for most of my translations. I have usually tried to approximate the length of Martial's lines, with no line being longer than heptameter (a seven-foot line) or shorter than trimeter (a three-foot line), and most falling into iambic pentameter (a line of five iambic feet). The hexameter, or six-foot line, common in Latin, tends to drag in English, so I usually either shorten it to pentameter or lengthen it to heptameter (familiar to English readers from hymns, Emily Dickinson's poems, etc.), which tends to be heard as alternating lines of tetrameter (a four-foot line) and trimeter. The heptameter lines better accommodate polysyllabic Latin names and tend to sound urbane, but the pentameter lines have more punch, so I use the latter wherever I can.

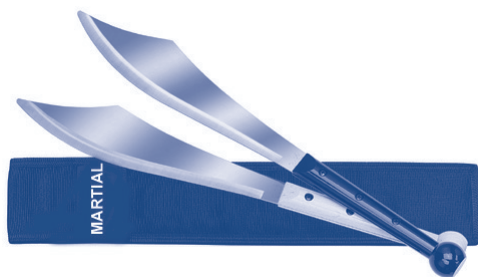


Fig 4. Martial's poetry can cut as well as amuse. Image source: <http://www.dube.com/knife/>. © 2008 Brian Dubé, Inc.

I aim my translations at readers who do not know Latin or who know a little Latin, but not enough to read it easily. People who can read Martial in Latin have no need of a translation. Those who know Latin well are also likely to know information about Roman society that helps them understand the poem's context and what makes the joke funny. For a more general audience, I choose epigrams that are easily accessible or can be made clear by adding a few explanatory details within the poem, but not those that would not make sense without footnotes, which are the death of a joke. I have not set out to translate all of Martial's epigrams; good literal translations of them already exist for readers who want a wider selection of his verse. Instead, I have sought to translate a range of his poems that are most accessible to contemporary readers, that have jokes that still are funny,

and that can be conveyed accurately and aptly in English metrical verse.

The key to translating Martial's epigrams effectively, especially the short ones, lies in selling the joke. In order to do that, the translator first has to understand why it is funny. That can be a challenge. Humor is culture-specific and does not always translate well. Some aspects of Roman society that were well known to Martial's original audience are no longer current, such as the client-patron relationship, in which poor men would call upon rich men and follow them around, enhancing the patron's prestige, in return for small sums of money or invitations to dinner. Martial himself spent much time courting rich patrons, flattering them to win favor or deriding their inadequate generosity. Some of his epigrams concern situations similar enough to modern forms of patronage to need no explanation; in others, a few changes in wording can clarify the situation, but if the circumstances would require a footnote to explain them, I do not translate the epigram.

Cultural differences in attitude toward certain subjects can also kill the joke. Romans were fond of making fun of odd physical traits and of disabilities; they took pederasty (with slaves) for granted; they accepted bisexual behavior in men, yet tended to ridicule those who took the passive role in sex. Furthermore, many of Martial's epigrams are obscene, and that obscenity is often part of the humor. Though some of Martial's poems push the boundaries of good taste, humor has always received much of its impact from challenging taboos, and no two readers are likely to agree on how far is too far to go for a joke. To tone down Martial's obscenity or use euphemisms seems false to the spirit of the original, so when I translate an obscene poem, I try to use language as shocking as the original's. Translations of Martial's obscene epigrams often run into obstacles to publication in journals, but are more likely to appear in book-length collections, in which they help to expand readers' awareness of the range of Martial's satire and the tastes and values of Roman society.

My first challenge as a translator of Martial is to find poems whose humor can be conveyed without footnotes. The

second is to find rhymes that reinforce the humor of the punch line. The last is to boil the lines down as far as they will go without losing any crucial part of their content and without adding anything that was not in the original. The shorter the lines, the more punch the joke generally has. Some translators like to retell Martial's jokes in a contemporary setting or add jokes of their own to replace untranslatable puns. Though there is a place for both approaches, I would call those "imitations" (Dryden's term for a loose adaptation) rather than translations. I prefer to keep the joke's setting in Roman culture and add only information that Martial's original audience would have known and that is essential for the joke to work. On the other hand, I avoid word-for-word translating, preferring to translate Latin idioms into English ones, so that the wording can sound as colloquial as Martial's would have sounded to his audience.

In a two-line epigram, both lines need to rhyme, so I look for rhyme words that are central to the joke:

2.25

Das numquam, semper promittis,
Galla, roganti.
si semper fallis, iam rogo, Galla,
nega.

Galla, you say you will, then break
your vow.

So, if you always lie, refuse me now.

Here the main point is of the broken promises being turned around, so the "vow/now" pair emphasizes the key ideas. The original is an elegiac couplet (one line of dactylic hexameter followed by a line of dactylic pentameter), but I use two iambic pentameter lines. Dactylic meter, based on a poetic foot that, in Latin, has a long vowel followed by two short vowels, is one of Martial's most commonly used meters, but in English poetry, dactylic meter (whose poetic foot has a stressed syllable followed by two unstressed syllables) is the least used meter and the one that sounds least natural. Because Latin words tend to have more syllables than English words, there are fewer words per line in the Latin couplet, though the English lines contain fewer syllables. I have avoided unnecessarily repeating Galla's name, but have retained the name (which I assume will appear feminine even to English readers) to suggest the sexual nature of the situation. The present tense of the first line can imply a repeated action (even without the "always" and "never" in the Latin

version), an impression that is then confirmed by the "always" of the second line. It is far more important, I think, to preserve the idea of the original than the literal meaning of each word.

In a poem over two lines long, I try to avoid using rhymed couplets (except at the end, sometimes, to give a stronger sense of closure). Rhyming every other line allows more flexibility in fitting in the content.

2.65

Cur tristiore cernimus Saleianum?
'an causa levis est?' inquis, 'extuli
uxorem.'
o grande fati crimen! o gravem casum!
illa, illa dives mortua est Secundilla,
centena decies quae tibi dedit dotis?
nollem accidisset hoc tibi, Saleiane.

Why is Saleianus looking sadder?
"For no small cause," you say, "I've
lost my wife."
O monstrous crime of fate! What
rotten luck!
Has *she*, rich Secundilla, lost her life,
who brought you such a massive
dowry, too?
I'm sorry things turned out like that
for you.

The joke in this poem is twofold: satirizing the hypocrisy of the grieving husband and playing on the double meaning of the last line, which sounds as though it is consoling the husband on his loss when it is actually expressing regret at his good fortune. Although I normally try to find a more contemporary way of translating vocatives, the deliberately melodramatic overstatement in line three seemed to call for retaining at least one.

Not all of Martial's poems are satirical. For the more serious ones, a less emphatic sense of closure often works better than the brisk ending of a couplet.

1.13

Casta suo gladium cum traderet Arria
Paeto,
quem de visceribus strinxerit ipsa
suis,
'si qua fides, vulnus quod feci non
dolet,' inquit,
'sed tu quod facies, hoc mihi, Paete,
dolet.'

When faithful Arria gave her spouse
the sword
with which she'd stabbed herself,
she said, "Believe me,
Paetus, the wound I made gives me
no pain;
it's that which you will give *yourself*
that grieves me."

As in the previous translations, I have tried to maintain the same number of lines, with their length approximately the same as the original's. In keeping with the somber dignity of the poem's tone, I have used alliteration ("Paetus" and "pain" in line three) and assonance ("faithful," and "gave" in line one) in an effort to make the lines more melodic. Ending with a feminine rhyme (a two-syllable rhyme, stressed on the first syllable: "believe me"/"grieves me") adds a dying fall to the conclusion that seemed suited to the content of the poem.

Translation is the art of compromise. Some things must always be sacrificed in transferring a poem from one language to another. The faithful translation is often unbeautiful; the beautiful one, unfaithful. I try to capture the tone of the original, playing up the humor, polish, or edge of Martial's epigrams, so that they snap shut with the precision of a mousetrap, or, in William Butler Yeats' words, with "a sound like the click of a lid on a perfectly made box." The history of translation is a chronicle of replacement. No translation can capture all of the beauties of the original, so translators have to accept that even their most successful translations will be displaced, sooner or later, by others. Because translators can choose their subjects (and the authors, if long dead, cannot say no), translation allows anyone to grapple with the greatest writers in history. Of course the translator is bound to lose such a contest. But, humbling as the encounter is, what a thrill even to be in the ring!

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WHY READ SENECA THE YOUNGER?

by M. D. Usher

Lucius Annaeus Seneca (ca. 4 B.C. – A.D. 65): Stoic philosopher, statesman, playwright.

Major works: Ten philosophical essays; a collection of 120 letters on philosophical/ethical topics addressed to Lucilius; eight tragedies.

Suppose a man is working on Democritus. The question always on the tip of my tongue is why precisely Democritus? Why not Heraclitus, or Philo, or Bacon, or Descartes? And, then, why not a poet, or an orator? And why especially a Greek? Why not an Englishman, or a Turk?

—Friedrich Nietzsche
On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life (§5)

Say you have completed a course in basic Latin grammar and syntax. What author should you read for your first unadulterated Latin? Or, if you do not know Latin, say you are just interested in reading a Roman author in translation, to learn more about the ancient world from someone who lived in it. For both sets of interests there are a number of excellent choices one could make – Cicero, for example, or Sallust, or Livy among the prose authors, and, among the poets, Catullus, Vergil, or Ovid. But there are other deserving authors who aren't so obvious or traditional a choice for readers, whether the readers be students, teachers, or other interested members of the general public. (I refer here to the many professional adults I often meet who are dusting off their college Latin or learning it afresh as an antidote to mid-life ennui.) Seneca falls into this category, and I would like to suggest a few of the many good reasons for reading him.

One of the most enticing reasons to read Seneca, even in translation, is that he has the scandalous reputation of being classical antiquity's supreme hypocrite. In this day and age, who is not intrigued by scandal and charges of hypocrisy? How is it, one continually asks oneself while reading Seneca in the context of his life and times, that a moralizing, ascetic philosopher of Stoic persuasion also happened to be one of the wealthiest men in Rome? How was he able to reconcile his philosophical convictions with his position as tutor, then public relations officer for the emperor Nero, one of the most debauched, sociopathic rulers the Western world has ever seen? Inquiring minds want to know.

And yet, while the controversies of Seneca's life and the excesses of his

times may loom large on the reader's horizon, they pale in comparison to the brilliance of Seneca's prose, which is by far the best reason to read his works.

Seneca was famous in antiquity and throughout the early modern period for his "sententious" or "pointed" style. "Sententious" and "pointed" are terms that describe an author's choice and positioning of words and his use of various acoustic effects in order to "point" out or underscore his meaning. Essentially it is a style characterized by the strategic use of cleverly worded one-liners. The rhetorical styles of John F. Kennedy ("Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country") or Winston Churchill ("Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few") provide classic examples. But it is not merely a style affected by august politicians. It is also the style of modern advertising ("Eat fat, get slim") and pop lyrics: Consider the title and refrain of Elvis Costello's song "Home Is Anywhere You Hang Your Head" (from his 1986 Columbia Records album *Blood and Chocolate*) – "head," that is, as opposed to the proverbial "hat."

Nor is it a style only for men. Consider, for example, this vigorous paragraph from literary/cultural critic (and rogue classicist) Camille Paglia:

Woman does not dream of transcendental or historical escape from natural cycle, since she is that cycle. Her sexual maturity means marriage to the moon, waxing and waning in lunar phases. Moon, month, menses: same word, same world. The ancients knew that woman is bound to nature's calendar, an appointment she cannot refuse. The Greek pattern of free will to hybris to tragedy is a male drama, since woman has never been deluded (until recently) by the mirage of free will. She knows there is no free will, since she is not free. She has no choice but acceptance. Whether she desires motherhood or not, nature yokes her into the brute inflexible rhythm of procreative law. Menstrual cycle is an alarming clock that cannot be stopped until nature wills it. (*Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson*. [New York: Vintage Books, 1991], 10)

Not only is the sentiment of this passage shot through with Stoic ideas (for example, the emphasis, directly expressed or implied, on Fate, accepting one's circumstances, living according to Nature), the style is completely Senecan.

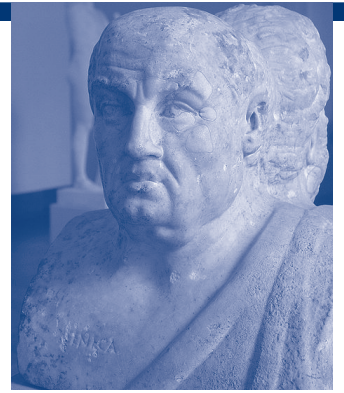


Fig. 5. Lucius Annaeus Seneca appears here on one side of a double-herm (Socrates is on the other side) in the Antikensammlung Berlin (The Collection of Classical Antiquities). Image used through GNU Free Documentation License: <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/9b/Seneca-berlinantikensammlung-1.jpg>.

One is immediately struck by the sound effects of Paglia's tirade, especially her second sentence, with its repetition of *x*, *m*, *o*, *n*, *s*, and *w* sounds: "Her sexual maturity means marriage to the moon, waxing and waning in lunar phases. Moon, month, menses: same word, same world." Compare the staccato rhythm and alliteration of Seneca's declaration in Letter 5 – *Multa bona nostra nobis nocent* – where he assures us paradoxically that "many of the good things in our lives do us harm" when our attitudes toward them are not in line with philosophic thinking. Or take this snappy, alliterative jingle from Letter 28, so compressed in its phrasing that it is almost untranslatable in English – *Magis quis veneris quam quo interest*, where Seneca insists that on life's journey "the person you are is more important than your destination."

Note also how Paglia's third sentence does not so much expand the thought of the second as illustrate it with a clever etymological play on the Latin word *menses* ("month"), to which both "menstrual" and "moon" are related. Note, too, the effect of Paglia's pun "word . . . world," which, reinforced by the repetition of the word "same," serves to universalize the particular, even to the point of exaggeration. Seneca's thought typically unfolds with similar pleonasm and repetitions, which serve more to underscore a point than truly develop it (a stylistic phenomenon the Romans called *copia*). Letter 5 again provides a good example. Here Seneca declares "Great is the man who uses earthenware in the same way he uses silver" (*Magnus ille est qui fictilibus sic utitur quemadmodum argento*), adding as the converse to that idea this sentence of identical structure: "Nor is that man lesser who uses

continued on page 23

Book Review: *Gods Behaving Badly*

by Mary Jane Cuyler

Marie Phillips. *Gods Behaving Badly*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2007. Pp. 304. Hardcover. \$23.99. ISBN 978-0316067621.

The classical pantheon has long been a rich source of humor, tragedy, and creative reinvention for poets, playwrights, and novelists. In her debut novel, *Gods Behaving Badly*, Marie Phillips adds to this tradition by telling yet another story of the famous Olympian twelve, and even strikes out into new territory: *these* gods live in the twenty-first century. They are alive but slowly aging, nearly devoid of power, living in a dilapidated London townhouse which they purchased for practically nothing during the plague of 1665. For scholars and enthusiasts of classical mythology, getting to know the weakened Olympians in our modern world will be simultaneously horrifying and wickedly satisfying, something akin to watching former superstars make pathetic bids for popularity on reality television.

Readers' *Schadenfreude* directs itself especially at Apollo – ever the impossibly gorgeous, vain sex-addict. His overweening vanity and sexually aggressive pick-up lines make him about as successful with the modern woman as he was with Daphne, with the result that he resorts to sex with any of his brothers, sisters, aunts or uncles willing to have him. Here I should enter a note of caution: when it comes to her descriptions of sex, Phillips does not bother with Homeric subtlety. These gods *do* behave badly, just as they always have, and Phillips is blunt in describing the quotidian acts of incest that occur in the bathroom. These stark descriptions of divine behavior place the gods under an interrogator's lamp, and we are given a good place in the dark to observe all.

The household of gods is impoverished, of course, as there is no one in the world left to worship them. In fact, none of the mortals encountered in this book has any knowledge of the classical gods or their functions. Acquisition of food is not necessary since gods don't eat – although Aphrodite absolutely loves the smell of food, and walks around sniffing things like bacon sandwiches. Other expenses,

however, require that some of the gods earn money, and they all continue to perform some of their basic divine functions. Apollo does a short and unsuccessful stint as a television psychic, and Aphrodite is a phone-sex operator. She works from home, wandering through the house wearing nothing but a Bluetooth headset. Her son Eros is a khaki-wearing, church-going Jesus fanatic who continues to be a bit too much of a mama's boy to keep himself from getting involved in her petty acts of vengeance. Demeter tends the gardens; Ares is still involved in warfare; and Hermes busies himself with all the jobs the other gods consider to be beneath them, like shuffling the dead off to the Underworld. Dionysus is an alcoholic DJ who owns a hip, exclusive bar on the sleazy side of town, where he features his own homemade wine and elaborate sex shows.

Artemis is the focal point for much of the narrative. She is an independent woman with no need for men and a healthy appreciation for exercise and canines. A dog-walker by profession, she is constantly at odds with her family, who view her as prudish and uptight because she shudders at the F-word (a favorite curse among the gods) and refuses to give up her virginity. Being a god, she is as self-absorbed as the rest of her family, but she is undoubtedly the most endearing in a rather reprehensible shack of deities.

They live in a spiral of repetition; the licentious, self-serving, destructive behavior and petty in-fighting of the Late Bronze Age seem even more absurd when acted out by an obnoxious Greek family trying to survive in the Information Age. They are unable to regain their old power and seem to lack the creativity and drive required to adapt to the modern world in any useful way. Only Athena attempts to orchestrate a comeback. Armed with handouts, unnecessary spectacles (they add to her air of intellectualism), and a borrowed overhead projector, she gives a presentation on "the implementation of organized religion-based solutions within the crowded global multi-faith context" (121). The other gods are not receptive: despite their advanced age, most of them seem to lack both intelligence and an attention span.

Only a disaster and two unlikely heroes can save this family. Enter Alice, an unassuming thirty-something cleaning professional with a degree in linguistics and a passion for Scrabble. Neil is Alice's would-be boyfriend (he's simply too shy to make a move), a structural engineer whose living room is crammed with alphabetized comic books and VHS recordings of television shows, arranged chronologically. When Zeus makes his first appearance in twenty years, a chain of disasters begins to unfold which brings about the imminent destruction of the earth. Here ironically the gods must rely upon the examples of Aeneas, Odysseus, Heracles, and Orpheus – not to mention their own craft and cunning – to trick death and bring power back to the gods.

Gods Behaving Badly falls in a curious space between the scholarly and general audience. For those even moderately well-versed in the mythological traditions, the constant reminders of each god's function may be repetitious, but the numerous more subtle or clever references will delight. Phillips brilliantly reinvents the Underworld, bringing together sly changes in tradition (Charon transports the dead on a Tube train – a task, Artemis notes, of "Sisyphean monotony"), old stand-bys (Cerberus, Styx, pomegranates, Lethe), and total imagination (the entire structure of the Underworld is held together in the minds of the dead who inhabit it). The general audience, for whom this book is surely intended, will likely find the gods' antics a good deal more disturbing, naughty, and exciting than those of us who are accustomed to gods behaving badly. In the end, however, Phillips' novel has a clear message, one that will resonate with all readers: the existence of the gods has always relied upon human invention, imagination and belief. Phillips breathes new life into that ancient pantheon with this modern myth.

Mary Jane Cuyler (mjcuyl@mail.utexas.edu), having spent the summer of 2008 studying Roman pottery at the American Academy of Rome, is currently finishing her Ph.D. in Classical Archaeology at the University of Texas, Austin. She will be at Pylos in 2009, working on excavation pottery at a Bronze Age site for the Iklaína Regional Archaeological Project.

ALEXANDER'S MERMAID: PLUMBING THE MURKY DEPTHS OF A MYTH

by Brad L. Cook


Sailors the world over have always told stories of mermaids. These watery beings frequently pose dangers, as do the seas on which the sailors sail. Safe passage, whether away from, or occasionally because of these fishy creatures, becomes the sailors' constant concern during those long nights on the high seas.

Greeks, who have been sailing for millennia, have, at least since late antiquity, embodied this concern in the form of a mermaid who has a peculiar connection to the greatest figure of Greek history and legend, Alexander the Great. Familiarity with this mermaid is so widespread in Greece that you can ask anyone, sailor or not, "Does King Alexander live?" and be told: "He lives and reigns and rules the world!" This is the question that Alexander's mermaid asks seafarers (see Fig. 6). Provide this answer and you will sail smoothly on your way. Answer instead that Alexander is dead and gone, and she will sink your ship.

From where does this mermaid come? Is she a uniquely Greek creation? Why is she so eager to keep alive the memory of Alexander that she lets the sailors who preserve that memory live rather than killing them as a "normal" mermaid would? The answer lies buried in the immense mass of legends about Alexander, legends that spread and developed during his lifetime and continued to do so down through the ages.

In his 1899 collection, *Words from the Prow: Sea Stories (Λόγια τῆς πλώρης. Θαλάσσινα Δηγήματα)*, the Greek novelist Andreas Karkavitsas provides an example of the tale of Alexander's mermaid from modern times. In his short story "The Gorgóna" – yes, *gorgóna* can be used in modern Greek of a mermaid – Karkavitsas describes her as a very beautiful maiden who "wore a diamond-encrusted crown on her head and luxurious blue hair spread down her back to the waves. Her broad brow, her almond-shaped eyes, her coral lips cast forth an aura of immortality and a sort of regal pride. From her crystal necklace there flowed down, encasing her body, a golden cuirass made of scales, and she carried on her left arm a shield and sported in her right a Macedonian sarisa." As she calls out to our seafaring narrator, her voice, the narrator stresses,

was "sweet, mild, and gentle," and she asks the famous question, "Does King Alexander live (*Ζῇ ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἀλέξανδρος*)?" When the sailor answers in the negative, the beautiful, sweet sea-maiden suddenly turns into a terrifying monster, and the sailor now realizes that she is "the sister of Alexander who stole the immortal water (*νερό*) and became deathless and all-powerful." The narrator then reasons, in the grip of terror, that Alexander's fame was deathless and eternal so "surely," he concludes, "she was not asking about his mortal self but about his memory." The mermaid, in a rage, is about to vent her frustration on



*This Greek mermaid
exists to preserve the
memory of
Alexander the Great.*

his ship, when the sailor cries out, "No, my lady, lies!" She again asks her question, "Sailor, dear sailor, does King Alexander live?" To this the sailor now replies, "He lives and reigns. He lives and reigns and rules the world (*Ζῇ καὶ βασιλεύει. Ζῇ καὶ βασιλεύει καὶ τὸν κόσμον κυριεύει*)." Instantly she changes: "as if my voice had poured immortal water (*νερό*) into her veins, immediately the monster changed, and again there was the incredibly beautiful maiden." She lets go of the ship and smiles. A military tune is heard, as if the Macedonian army is returning "from the lands of the Ganges and the Euphrates." Bright lights form an enormous wreath, a crown of victory for the eternal memory of Alexander. The image dissipates into the sky as the mermaid-*gorgóna* dives into the depths of the sea.

Varying versions of this story can still be heard all over Greece, and scholarly travelers and ethnographers have written down a few of them in more recent centuries. But how far back in time does Alexander's mermaid go? Is there a clear line of mythic descent connecting the

earliest account and the modern versions, such as that found in Karkavitsas' tale? We can go back all the way to the early Byzantine period, between the sixth and seventh centuries A.D. to a text that provides a fuller account of the immortal water that Karkavitsas had said Alexander's sister "stole and became deathless and all-powerful," though the thief in the Byzantine text will turn out to be Alexander's daughter rather than his sister.

The story goes that Alexander is marching through the midst of the Dark Land when his army nears a spring whose water flashed like lightning. They pause to rest and Alexander asks his cook, Andreas, to prepare him something to eat. Andreas begins preparing some dried fish, but when he attempts to soak it in the water of the spring, the fish comes to life and swims away. Frightened, he says not a word to Alexander of this strange event, though he does drink some of the water himself and puts some in a silver vessel. Only later, after they have left the area, does Andreas tell Alexander about the fish, but not about his own drinking of the magical water nor about his secret supply. After Alexander punishes him harshly, Andreas finds Alexander's daughter named Kalē – her name means "Beauty," in good fairy tale tradition – and he offers her the immortal water, which she takes and drinks. Alexander, outraged, curses his daughter. "'Depart from my presence,' he says, 'you have become an immortal being. You were named Kalē, so I shall call you Kalē of the Mountains, because there you shall dwell for the rest of time, but you shall be known as *Neraida* because from the water (*neró/νερό*) you obtained the eternal (*aidialōtēdia*), that is immortality.' And she, weeping and lamenting, departed from my presence and she went to live with the spirit beings (*daimones*) in the deserted places." As for Andreas, he gets a millstone hung around his neck, is thrown into the sea, becomes a spirit being (*daimon*), and goes off to live in a part of the sea that "is called even by his name 'Andreas,'" by which the author means the Adriatic – which is *Ἀδρίας* in ancient Greek. (This whole episode is available in English in Richard Stoneman's *The Greek Alexander Romance* [1991], 121-2.)

This early Byzantine text answers one of the two questions raised by Karkavitsas' version: How does a human become a mermaid? The answer is that the Byzantine author created a newfangled Nereid by taking a word that was new in his day and inventing an etymological myth from it. The new word is *neró(n)*, the modern Greek word for "water," which had only acquired this meaning within a century or so of the creating of this version of the Alexander Romance. (Previously *hudōr*, ὕδωρ, had been the standard Greek word for water; the rest of her name, *-aída*, derives from the patronymic suffix, *-id-*, meaning "the child or descendant of," and does not in fact derive from the ancient *aíd-* root meaning "eternal.")

This author liked to invent etymological myths, like his ancient predecessor in mythmaking, Hesiod. For example, the cook's name, "Andreas," appears nowhere else in the Alexander tradition. Four other strands of the Alexander Romance mention a cook but do not give him a name. The dried fish appears in those four versions but no daughter, sister, *neraída*, or any other creature whatsoever. But the most important detail that points to the invention of the *neraída* and her intrusion into the tradition in the sixth or seventh century is that the word used throughout the text for water is "*hudōr*" and only in the etymology of "*neraída*" do we find the word "*neró*." Through this new word, an immortal-water maiden appears in the author's mind to give him yet another creative opportunity to expand and improve the version of the Alexander Romance that he is revising. The best part of his invention, he realizes, is that he can show off his great learning by putting in Alexander's mouth his learned etymological invention not just of the daughter's new name but also the influence of the cook's name on the naming of a sea.

Here, then, is the birth of Alexander's mermaid, in this sixth or seventh century Byzantine version of the Alexander Romance. How, though – and that is the second question raised by Karkavitsas' version – does she become a preserver of Alexander's name and, by extension, of those sailors who are quick enough to "preserve" Alexander's name as well? This question is particularly important since "normal" mermaids live to kill sailors and such men that they can get their hands on, whether those mercreatures are descended from ancient sirens, harpies, gorgons, or any similar "monster" in Greece or anywhere else in the world.

Another strand of the tradition offers some help. There is a story that says nothing about a cook and daughter but speaks rather of Alexander's sister, his historical, half-sister, Thessalonikē, who accidentally drank the eternal water, which Alexander had stored away in a bottle, and who later threw herself into the sea in grief at the news of Alexander's death. When Thessalonikē finds that she is still alive, transformed into a mercreature, she goes off in search of Alexander. The key motive here, grief at Alexander's death, and the subsequent search to find him, in spite of the news, can be safely appended to the story of her mermaidification in our early Byzantine text. Why? Because there his daughter leaves Alexander's presence "weeping and lamenting." That manifestation of emotional distress could be explained variously, but it would not take a creative storyteller more than a second to realize that this clue is a sufficient foundation from which to develop plausibly a motive for Alexander's mermaid to become such an unusual mercreature, one who uses her typically terrifying reputation and power for a good cause, to keep the name of Alexander alive and to make it immortal.

I would like to offer an additional explanation that complicates the Byzantine etymology and interweaves the emotional power of mourning at the death of a loved one, with the result that her seemingly unexpected behavior may reside, like her immortality, in her name, *neraída*. For even though the Byzantine myth-maker invented her connection to magical water, *neró*, and created an immortal-water maiden, there must, I suggest, remain a connection to the ancient name "Nereid" and to the most famous Nereid, namely Thetis, the loving and mourning mother. If the new *neraída* lives to immortalize Alexander's name, for what is Alexander most famous? Is it not for dying so great and yet so young? In both respects he is like his great mythic model, Achilles. And like Achilles, Alexander must die to become so famous. He cannot have immortality. He cannot drink the eternal water. Give him, then, someone to



Fig 6. George Xenoulis' sculpture of the Mermaid of Poros graces the city's port, perhaps questioning the returning sailors about Alexander. Photo used with permission. © 2006 Richard Edkins, Dalbeattie Internet. <http://www.dalbeattie.com/poros2006/dayone.html>.

protect his fame and make that someone immortal. Achilles had his mother, Thetis, the most famous of the Nereids. Why not give Alexander an immortal sister or daughter who is, like Thetis, always worried about the well-being of her dearest? To create such a divine protectress you simply need a magical process – mythmaking by etymology. Water is eternal, forever young. Intertwine, then, the water, *neró*, with an ancient mythic being, the Nereid Thetis, the loving mother, sister, or daughter, through a new-fangled etymology to give birth to a divine protectress of Alexander's glory.

Alexander's mermaid is a mythic Greek creature, born of a blending of ancient myth and a creative Byzantine etymology. She lives eternally to make Alexander, the most famous figure of all Greek history, as immortal as she possibly can, by keeping his name alive on those watery routes that Greeks have been travelling for millennia.

(For further reading see the list of published texts and translations in the new survey of this immense tradition by Richard Stoneman, *Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend* [2008], 230-45.)

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WHAT IS HOMER DOING IN “THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS”?

By August A. Imholtz, Jr.

Clement Clarke Moore’s famous Christmas poem entitled “An Account of a Visit from Saint Nicholas,” but often cited simply by its first line, “’Twas the night before Christmas” or even “The Night before Christmas,” has contributed much to the popular vision of the American Santa Claus over the past 185 years (see Fig. 7). And yet Moore’s lyrics, first published December 23, 1823, contain an echo from the works of Homer, the ancient Greek poet whom some scholars have considered almost as mythical as Santa himself. The echo is not so much a direct borrowing of lines from the texts of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, but rather a kind of poetic device, a simile, of the sort used extensively by Homer.

After Saint Nick dispatches Dasher, Dancer, and company to the top of the porch, there is a break in the narrative as the poet reflects on the flight of the reindeer with these beautiful lines:

As dry leaves that before the wild
hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle,
mount to the sky.... (25-6)

This simile, which compares the reindeer’s mounting flight to dry leaves encountering a wind, is just like the kind of simile Homer uses over and over again, especially in the midst of battle scenes, but also elsewhere to interrupt the narrative. For example we find in Book 21 of the *Iliad* the lines:

As locusts fly to a river before the blast
of a grass fire,
The flame comes on and on till at
last it overtakes them. (12-3)

The “dry leaves” simile is called a forward-looking one, which simply means it looks forward to another clause to establish its relevance to the narrative, to bring it to a conclusion as it were. Moore, like Homer, immediately brings the action back to the story:

So up to the house-top the coursers
they flew
With the sleigh full of toys, and
St. Nicholas too. (27-8)

In Homer, there are many other similes with hurricanes and many with leaves. This one from Book 17 of the *Iliad* moves its action in the opposite direction of Santa’s reindeer:

As one who has grown a fine olive tree
And though the winds beat upon it
from every quarter, it puts forth
Its white blossoms until the blasts of
some fierce hurricane
Sweep down upon it and level it to
the ground. (52-5)

And the most famous simile in the *Iliad* itself revolves around leaves in these lines from Book 6:

As is the generation of leaves, so is
that of humanity.
The wind scatters the leaves on the
ground, but the live timber
Burgeons with leaves again in the
season of spring returning,
So one generation of men will grow
while another
Dies. (146-9)

Toward the end of Moore’s poem there is another Homeric simile, this one to describe in concrete detail how St. Nick’s coursers bear him up and away:

He sprang to his sleigh, to his team
gave a whistle,
And away they all flew like the down
of a thistle. (53-4)

Although Homer’s thistle (*akanthos*) simile is a bit less compact than Moore’s, the flight idea is similar:

As when in autumn the North Wind
bears the thistle-tufts over the plain,
and close they cling to one another, so
did the winds bear the raft this way
and that over the sea. Now the South
Wind would fling it to the North Wind
to be driven on, and now again the
East Wind would yield it to the West
Wind to drive. (*Odyssey* 5. 328-32)

But how does a Homeric rhetorical figure come to be smack dab in the middle of our favorite secular Christmas poem? Clement Clarke Moore, who was Professor of Oriental (Hebrew) and Greek Literature first at Columbia College (now Columbia University), then at the General Theological Seminary in New York (1821-1850), had certainly read his Homer in the original Greek and would



Fig. 7. *The Night Before Christmas*, published in this edition by Porter & Coates in 1883, was written by Clement C. Moore. Image source: <http://www.santaclaus.com/christmas-stories/twas-the-night-before-christmas/night-before-christmas-antique.php>. © <http://www.santaclaus.com>.

readily turn, consciously or unconsciously, to a turn of phrase, a figure so common in the epic poems of ancient Greece. One therefore surely can presume that the thistle figure from Book 5 of the *Odyssey* would also have been known to Moore from Homer.

Just as Homer’s authorship of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* has been disputed, so Clement Moore’s claim to have written “The Night Before Christmas” has come under attack in recent years by that curious marriage of text criticism and conspiracy theory. What cannot be disputed, however, is the influence of Homeric images on this most beloved of American Christmas poems.

(*Iliad* translation by Samuel Butler, 1898; *Odyssey* translation by Richmond Lattimore, 1951.)

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Did You Know...

Joe Paterno, coach of the Penn State Nittany Lions Football Team, became an honorary member of the Zeta Theta Chapter of Eta Sigma Phi, the National Classics Honor Society, in 1991. Coach Paterno studied Latin and Greek in high school and has a particular fondness for Vergil's *Aeneid*.

On **Robert Fitzgerald Kennedy's** memorial in Arlington National Cemetery is inscribed part of the speech that he delivered after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. "Aeschylus wrote 'In our sleep, pain that cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart and in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God.' What we need in the United States is not division; what we need in the United States is not hatred; what we need in the United States is not violence or lawlessness; but love and wisdom, and compassion toward one another, and a feeling of justice toward those who still suffer within our country, whether they be white or they be black." (*Agamemnon* 179-83, based on Edith Hamilton's translation in *The Greek Way*.)

"To Anacreon in Heaven," the theme song composed for the Anacreontic Society (a men's drinking group honoring the ancient Greek poet Anacreon), is the basis for "The Star-Spangled Banner." In the 1760s, John Stafford Smith wrote the music. The Society's President, Ralph Tomlinson, added the lyrics, and the song was published in 1778 in London (Longman and Broderip). To hear a recording from the Smithsonian Institution, go to http://www.americanhistory.si.edu/ssb/6_thestory/gfx/song.anac.dsl.ra.

The Achilles Corporation, founded in 1947, headquartered in Tokyo, Japan, and focused on the production of plastics, makes tents. In addition to specialized storage tents, they have recently begun marketing an isolation tent for people suffering from severe acute respiratory syndrome. No news yet about isolation tents dedicated to those suffering from acute sulking syndrome.

Antigone Rising, the powerful women's folk rock band of the 1990s, was the first group signed in Starbuck Coffee's "Hear Music Debut" series.

The APA Committee on Ancient and Modern Performance (CAMP) presents the first classical comedy in English:

THERSITES

said by some to be by Nicholas Udall (1537),
a brief interlude which doth declare that the greatest boasters
are not the greatest doers,

to be prefaced with a short yet edifying dialogue between
Vulcan and Jupiter
adapted from Lucian by Thomas Heywood (1637).

Thersites, a boaster Susanna Morton Braund
Mulciber, a smith John H. Starks, Jr.
Mater, a mother Alison Futrell
Miles, a soldier George Kovacs
Telemachus, a child Timothy Wutrich
Ulysses, a voice Tony Podlecki
Snail, a gastropod Emily Jusino

* * *

Jupiter Brett M. Rogers
Vulcan John H. Starks, Jr.
Athena Emily Jusino

* * *

With the interpretative assistance of Amy R. Cohen and
Elizabeth Scharffenberger

* * *

Director C. W. Marshall

The director comments: "Thersites was ugly; that much we know. He was a braggart who was chastised by Odysseus. But how many of us have taken the time to consider his feelings? In this play we see Thersites, the braggart warrior, deftly avoiding conflict while insulting everyone else on stage, including his own mother. He hides, he scurries, he whines, he pleads. This comedy sets out to give Thersites his proper due. It turns out the tradition was right after all. This year's performance promises to bring this short forgotten classic to life. More's the pity."

Join us Friday, January 9, 2009, 7 P.M.
in the Marriott Hotel Grand Ballroom Salon H
for an unforgettable performance!

Fig. 8. The cast of *Thersites* includes a snail (played by Emily Jusino). Clip art licensed from the Clip Art Gallery on DiscoverySchool.com. Image source: <http://school.discoveryeducation.com/clipart/clip/snail.html>.



FROM AORISTS AND ANAPESTS TO GOSPEL GLORY: CLASSICAL DRAMA IN PHILADELPHIA

By Lee T. Percy

For one evening during the American Philological Association's annual meeting in Philadelphia on January 8-11, 2009, classics professors and graduate students will put scholarly panels, committee meetings, and job interviews aside and become actors, chorus, and audience in a staged reading of *Thersites*, a Renaissance comedy that takes a farcical view of Greek mythology and the Trojan War (see p. 11). Performances of classical and classicizing drama sponsored by the APA's Committee on Ancient and Modern Performance have become one of the most popular events at a meeting otherwise dominated by technical scholarship and the necessary business of academe.

Classical drama, however, is not news in Philadelphia. Theater has been a part of the city's cultural life since colonial times, and even today Philadelphia's many amateur and professional theater companies continue the tradition with productions of classical repertoire and new plays. From *Ion* in 1836 at the Walnut Street Theater to David Greenspan's *Old Comedy*, an adaptation of Aristophanes' *Frogs*, at the 2008 Philadelphia Fringe Festival, Philadelphia productions have kept Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes alive in the city where the United States began. Two productions a century apart whose reputation extended beyond Philadelphia illuminate the use and re-use of classical antiquity in American life.

Acharnians, 1886

On the evening of May 14, 1886, carriages full of eager theater-goers blocked the intersection of Broad and Locust Streets near the Academy of Music in Philadelphia. Nearly 3,000 people streamed toward the gaslit Academy that spring evening, including President Daniel Coit Gilman and Professor Basil Lanneau Gildersleeve of The Johns Hopkins University, Professors Charles Eliot Norton, William Watson Goodwin, John Williams White, and Louis Dyer of Harvard, and scores of other distinguished academicians and their students from Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Cornell universities and from Haverford and Bryn Mawr Colleges. A large crowd of students from The University of Pennsylvania mingled easily with the social

elite of Philadelphia. Although the curtain had been scheduled to rise at 8 P.M., the performance could not begin until half an hour later, after the eager throng had finally taken its seats.

This glittering, learned audience had gathered to see and hear Aristophanes' *Acharnians* performed in its original Greek by students from The University of Pennsylvania. The *Acharnians* ended its run of two performances in Philadelphia with a matinee at the Academy of Music the next afternoon. On November 19, 1886, it was reprised in New York City at the Academy of Music on Irving Place. That performance too was attended by luminaries of society, affairs, and academe; as one newspaper reported, "The dread array of scholarship in presence was too tremendous for detail, but every man of the audience who in his youth ever groaned over a Latin or Greek grammar looked upon the faces of Professors Goodwin (*Elementary Greek Grammar*) and Harkness (*A Latin Grammar for Schools and Colleges*) and was awed."

The Philadelphia *Acharnians* was a sensation in both highbrow and popular press. Gildersleeve heralded the experiment in *The Nation*, and *Harper's Weekly* praised the New York performance for "bringing the spectator . . . right into the life of antiquity." Not all notices were high-minded, however. According to *Taggart's Sunday Times* for May 16, 1886:

The Greek play . . . by the University boys, created quite a flutter in high-toned circles last week. The aesthetic young ladies wildly cheered the stalwart students, who appeared in scant Grecian costumes, with real bare legs, hosiery being ignored as inconsistent with a real Greek play. The display beat the ordinary ballet "all hollow." Enthusiastic young ladies declared that the handsome young gentlemen on the stage, representing Grecian characters with unpronounceable names, were "just lovely."

Years later, after a successful career at the bar and in the United States Senate, one of those lovely young men, George Wharton Pepper, would look back on his role as Dicaeopolis in the *Acharnians* as "the most interesting experience of our college life" (George Wharton Pepper, *Philadelphia Lawyer* [Philadelphia and

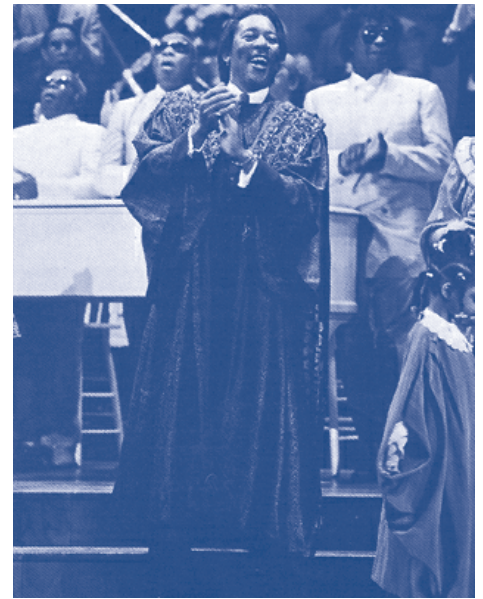


Fig. 9. Morgan Freeman as "The Preacher" leads the chorus in Lee Breuer and Bob Telson's *The Gospel at Colonus*. Image from *The Gospel at Colonus*, an adaptation by Lee Breuer. New York: Theater Communications Group, Inc., 1989; © Martha Swope, 1988.

New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1944], 39).

The *Acharnians* may at first seem an unlikely choice for a production that would become so celebrated and remembered. Even a favorable review could say that it "has none of the features of comedy proper . . . scarcely a thread of human interest . . . and none of that dramatic quality which makes 'Antigone' or any other of Sophocles' tragedies, a perennially inspiring or absorbing play" (*The New York Tribune*, quoted in *The Philadelphia Press*, November 20, 1886). Aristophanes' play, named after its chorus of charcoal-burners from the Athenian rural district Acharnae, tells the story of Dicaeopolis, an Athenian farmer who decides in the depths of the long Peloponnesian War with Sparta and her allies to make his own peace with the enemy and to open a market that will bring him the food, drink, and luxuries that the Spartan blockade was denying him and his fellow-citizens. Aristophanes uses the situation to satirize corrupt politicians, arrogant generals, and a sleazy modern poet called Euripides. In 1886, with the Civil War only two decades in the past, it was easy for an American audience to find

contemporary relevance; as the classicist Basil Gildersleeve wrote in *The Nation* on May 6, "If our civil war had left us much heart for joking while it was going on, we, too, might have had our 'Acharnians,' in which some Federal or Confederate borderer might have made a separate peace with the enemy and have regaled himself with tobacco or coffee, while his languishing countrymen had to put up with cabbage leaves or rye" (379).

Gospel at Colonus, 1985

Almost a century later, Philadelphia was again the site of a presentation of classic Greek drama whose reputation and impact extended beyond the performance itself. On November 8, 1985, Lee Breuer's *Gospel at Colonus* was broadcast from Philadelphia's American Music Theater Festival as part of PBS' "Great Performances" series. Although *Gospel* had its first incarnation in New York as a workshop performance in 1981 and was fully staged at the Brooklyn Academy of Music's Next Wave festival in 1983, the Philadelphia broadcast brought it national attention. It went to Broadway in 1988, toured widely in America and Europe, and earned an Obie Award as outstanding musical, a Los Angeles Drama Circle Critics Award, and awards from the National Institute for Music Theater and the United Gospel Association. Original cast recordings have been issued by Warner Brothers and Nonesuch Records. Twenty years after its run on Broadway, audiences continue to shout, clap, and cry at amateur and professional performances throughout the country, and *Gospel* forms part of the curriculum at more than 200 college and university theater departments.

The spoken text of *Gospel at Colonus* is, as Lee Breuer said in declining a Tony nomination for best script, "ninety-five percent Robert Fitzgerald['s]' translation of Sophocles' Theban plays, principally *Oedipus at Colonus*. In Sophocles' play, the aged Oedipus, after years of wandering in exile following his expulsion from Thebes, comes to Colonus, a suburban district of Athens. The chorus, inhabitants of Colonus, beg him to leave because they do not want a man who has killed his father and married his mother to pollute their home as he had polluted Thebes. Oedipus, however, realizes that he is fated to die in the grove of the Furies at Colonus. The drama hinges on tension between the attempts of Creon, regent of Thebes, to seize the dying Oedipus and bury him in Theban territory, and the asylum granted him by Theseus, king of Athens. Oedipus' family also tugs at him. His sons, Eteocles and

The 2009 Outreach Panel: "Podcasting and the Classics"

Saturday, January 10, 2009, 11:30 A.M.-1:15 P.M.
Session 33 in the Fifth Paper Session, Grand Ballroom Salon L

In the field of classical humanities, professors and K-12 teachers alike are witnessing the democratizing power of the "podcast" word: audio players have proven a particularly powerful tool to restore the oral and aural experience in our practice and scholarship.

This panel will explore the various kinds of podcasts in the field of classics and classical archaeology, to illustrate how we can foster productive collaborations between academia and the public with this technology.

Lars Brownworth, who will speak about his podcast "Twelve Byzantine Rulers," describes the genesis and completion of a twelve-part podcast on the history of late antiquity, a podcast that has gained impressive reviews with the iTunes public, and attention in the print and broadcast media.

Patrick Hunt, with his iTunesU series "Hannibal," addresses an earlier period in Roman history. He discusses not only Hannibal's story but material culture and geophysical analysis as used in classical archaeology.

Henry Bender will demonstrate one method of teaching Vergil in secondary schools in his talk, "To Pod or Not to Pod." Bender uses podcasts for explanation, analysis, and commentary on the Advanced Placement Vergil syllabus.

Bret Mulligan stresses the usefulness of this technology when applied to teaching Catullus; in his paper, "Using the Ear to Train the Eye," he will demonstrate how video and audio work together in the active learning of the Latin language.

The respondent, **Jennifer Sheridan Moss**, whose podcasting experience is in the teaching of classical mythology, will frame some of the successes and problems facing the scholar as podcaster. In "Present, Imperfect, ... perhaps Future Perfect?" she will address the kinds of decisions about time and cost that are involved when making a podcast.

In addition to the "Podcasting and the Classics" panel, the Outreach Committee is working to podcast this very session itself, as well as make select classical podcasts available throughout the APA/AIA meeting with a Listening Lounge in the Book Exhibition.

Polynices, are fighting over the kingship of Thebes, and Polynices wants Oedipus to choose to support him over Eteocles; instead, Oedipus renews the curse he has put on his sons. His daughter, Antigone, struggles with conflicting loyalties to father and brother. Finally, Oedipus goes to join the gods at Colonus in a miraculous, and perhaps ambiguous, sequence of events reported by messenger.

Lee Breuer and his musical collaborator, Bob Telson, translated this enigmatic drama of pollution, estrangement, reconciliation, and transfiguration into the setting and idiom of African-American Pentecostal churches. The Preacher announces "The Book of Oedipus," which becomes the text for an oratorio in the form of a church service. Greek chorus becomes gospel choir, and Oedipus, who in many productions is played by multiple actors (in the Philadelphia "Great Performances" version the role is played by Clarence Fountain and the Five Blind Boys of Alabama and briefly by Morgan Freeman, the Preacher; see Fig. 9), himself becomes a visiting preacher and singer. Audiences find themselves swept up by the combination of preaching and powerful music in

the Pentecostal tradition. Writing about the Philadelphia "Great Performances" production in *Black American Literature Forum* (Vol. 25.1 [1991], 110), Mimi Gisolfi D'Aponte described the effect of the play's ending this way:

When the Soul Stirrers and Clarence Fountain perform the jubilee "Never Drive You Away," when Fountain and the Five Blind Boys intone "Lift Me Up," when the Soul Stirrers and soloist Carolyn Johnson White exhort "Lift Him Up," and the Institutional Radio Choir and everyone else on stage command "Now Let the Weeping Cease," it is as if sixty-four performers have laid musical hands upon their audience, and we, together with Oedipus, are healed.

As one critic remarks, "If that is not catharsis, what is?" (Kevin Wetmore, in *Black Dionysos* [Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2003], 109).

Authenticity or Engagement?

Although Basil Gildersleeve and other reviewers evoked the Civil War, political

Ask A Classicist

Q Why does Horace compare himself to a bee from Mount Matinus? Is it because the bees and the honey of this place are special?

A Mount Matinus is located on the northern coast of the region known as Apulia (modern Puglia). Since Horace himself was born in this region (his home town is Venusia in the middle of Apulia), by comparing his manner of writing poetry to the “fashion of the Matine bee as it gathers thyme” (*ego apis Matinae more modoque grata carpentis thyma*, *Odes* 4.2.27-29), the poet identifies himself specifically with an insect that lives on the dry rosemary- and thyme-laced terrain of his family’s homeland (see Fig. 10). The little brown flying thing, low to the ground and intent on the work it carries out with its great sisterhood of bees, goes about its business amidst the shrubs of Matinus. And the focus of all that busy-ness is the intensely sweet honey gathered from wild thyme blossoms.

Whether Matinus’ honey was particularly appreciated by antiquity’s honey-connoisseurs we cannot say. However, we are told quite specifically, by a host of ancient authors, about the places that were generally recognized as producing the sweetest thyme-honey of all: Mount Hybla in Sicily, the Aegean island of Calymna, and – source of the best of the best – Mount Hymettos in Attica, very near Athens (Pliny *Naturalis Historia* 11.21, Ovid *Tristia* 5.13.21, Columella *De re rustica* 9.14.19, Cicero *De finibus* 2.112, for example). So attractive were these Attic bees that Trimalchio even had some exported to improve the quality of the honey on his own estates (Petronius *Satyricon* 38.3). The modern city of Athens extends its suburbs around and about the foot of the low mountain. The main campus of the University of Athens lies along Hymettos’ western slopes, while radio and television programs are broadcast from transmission towers on its summit. And despite devastation by forest fires that struck the area in 2007, thyme, rosemary, and oregano still grow wild among Hymettos’ pines and low shrubby trees. Whether watched over by the modern residents of Zographou and Ilissia, by the monks of



Fig 10. Mount Matinus lies near the coast of the upper part of Apulia.

Kaisariani Monastery on Hymettos’ north slopes, or the ancient beekeepers of the Attic countryside, the bees of Hymettos have ceased neither their industry nor their production of excellent honey.

Skilled as these ancient beekeepers were in fostering honey production, people in antiquity weren’t quite sure how the bees actually produced it. Consensus held that the honey was left on the foliage and petals of plants like dew, either dropped from the air (Vergil’s *aeris mellis caelestia dona*, “heavenly gifts of honey air,” *Georgics* 4.1) or sweated out by the plants and trees themselves. That the bees themselves generated the honey from their bodies by metabolizing the nectar of flowers was not generally accepted; Seneca, however, does note the possibility that the little insects make rather more intrinsic contributions to the process of honey-production when he says, “It isn’t clear whether they gather the honey directly from flowers or add the honey-flavor by mixing in something of their own distinctive breath” (*spiritus*; *Epistles* 84.4; see Fig. 11).

Wherever it came from, the honey that resulted from the insects’ industry was put to a variety of purposes in the classical world. Besides using it to sweeten their food – honey is still a defining ingredient of the cuisines of the Aegean area – the ancients brewed a variety of meads with honey, added it to their medicines and cosmetics, offered it to the gods in a plethora of rites and ceremonies, and sometimes used it to preserve the dead. Honey must have been nearly as omnipresent in ancient life as it is in the modern life of the bee-keeping

Boatwright sisters in Sue Monk Kidd’s novel *The Secret Life of Bees*:

We lived for honey. We swallowed a spoonful in the morning to wake us up and one at night to put us to sleep. We took it with every meal to calm the mind, give us stamina, and prevent fatal disease. We swabbed ourselves in it to disinfect cuts or heal chapped lips. It went in our baths, our skin cream, our raspberry tea and biscuits. Nothing was safe from honey. (84)

Nor is anything safe from the sweetening, preserving, and enhancing power of poetry, Horace’s metaphor suggests. Dropped into our daily life from some celestial or natural origin, industriously gathered by little winged things drawing direction from some nonhuman source, honey – μέλι (Greek), *mel* (Latin) – is song (μέλος).



Fig 11. Honeybees collect pollen from favored flowers like thyme to create honey. Image source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Bees_Collecting_Pollen_2004-08-14.jpg.

Readers interested in the ancient life of bees and beekeepers will enjoy H. Malcolm Fraser’s *Beekeeping in Antiquity* (University of London Press, 1931) and Hilda M Ransome’s *The Sacred Bee* (Houghton Mifflin, 1937).

Coming In Future Issues

Euripides on the Modern Stage

Demeter and Persephone, Fiction-writing and Myth in Margaret Drabble’s *Peppered Moth*

Superheroes and Greek Tragedy

FROM AORISTS AND ANAPESTS TO GOSPEL GLORY: CLASSICAL DRAMA IN PHILADELPHIA

continued from page 13

relevance was not why audiences in 1886 cheered the University of Pennsylvania's *Acharnians* in Philadelphia and New York. The 1880s marked a high point in America's engagement with the Greek and Roman world. Neoclassicism dominated public architecture, academic art, and popular entertainment; its manifestations ranged from Thomas Eakins' *Arcadia* reliefs and classically posed photographic experiments to the Kiralfy brothers' *Nero, or the Destruction of Rome*, a "gigantic, historical, biblical, dramatic and musical spectacle" produced on Staten Island to popular acclaim (Margaret Malamud, "The Imperial Metropolis: Ancient Rome in Turn-of-the-Century New York," *Arion* 3rd series 7.3 [Winter, 2000], 63-108). Newly scientific archaeology and the founding of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens in 1881 fueled interest in the ancient world and led to a demand for authentic evocations of the Greek and Roman past. The reviewer for *Harper's Weekly* analyzed the reasons for the appeal of the *Acharnians*. Audiences, the writer suggested, hoped for an authentic reproduction of Greek art and for insights into the realities of life in ancient Greece:

A generation has come up to which art is as real a thing at least as literature, history, or language. We know, indeed, as little of Greek history as of any, and Greek literature is to most people only a name, and with the language they have by no means a speaking acquaintance, knowing it only to bow to, so to say. But Greek art is something tangible, and its supremacy is so transcendent that we gladly welcome any new chance better to understand the civilization from which it sprang. . . the real interest of the performance lies in its bringing the spectator, as has been said, right into the life of antiquity. One seems for the moment transported back to a time before time was, when all modern history and most of ancient history was still an unopened book.

The past is forever unreachable from the present, but by reaching for it in every detail, from the language of performance to costumes and stage set, the 1886 *Acharnians* earned a place in the cultural life of Gilded Age America. A self-confident, resurgent America, recovered from the Civil War and discovering its new power on the world stage, could look to Greek antiquity as a remote, unchanging

pattern of cultural supremacy, "a time before time was." Highbrow audiences, or at least the men in them, could come to *Acharnians* remembering their school and college days and the required Greek which still dominated elite curricula.



Gospel at Colonus intertwines Greek tragedy and American culture.

Things were different in 1985, and not just because Greek had nearly disappeared from American education. America's most recent war had left no good stories behind, no tales of Northern virtue and Southern gallantry with Lee and Grant shaking hands at the end, but only images of the final, ignominious withdrawal from the embassy in Saigon, My Lai and the agonies of the Boat People. The Berlin Wall still stood. Deep divisions over America's unfinished business of race and civil rights remained. America needed something stronger than handshakes, it seemed; it needed healing and purification.

In this moment of history the creators of *Gospel at Colonus* turned to Greek tragedy. Catharsis, the purification of emotion that Aristotle saw at the heart of tragedy, was very much on Lee Breuer's mind as *Gospel* evolved. In an online interview he stated, "Greek audiences were supposed to be purified by going through pity and terror into bliss. There is no other way to look at catharsis but as what Pentecostals call 'getting happy.' You are blessed with the truth, you are blessed with revelation, and revelation gets you off" (<http://www.beloit.edu/classics/main/courses/fyi98/gospel.html>, accessed August 28, 2008). As the play took shape, Breuer recognized more and more parallels between Greek tragedy as he understood it and Pentecostal Christian church services: "The Greek chorus became a choir. The first actor in Greek tragedy was obviously a preacher-style narrator. Little by little the whole concept came," he told his interviewer.

"The odes come where the choir pieces would come; the messenger speech at the end comes where the sermon should come; there is a dramatic, kind of orgiastic height at some particular point that comes where the climax should come. You can really feel that it's a service."

Gospel's theme of reconciliation, especially its implicit promise of racial reconciliation, struck mainstream reviewers at once. The play, Jack Kroll wrote in *Newsweek* (April 4, 1988, 75), "is a triumph of reconciliation, bringing together black and white, pagan and Christian, ancient and modern in a sunburst of joy that seems to touch the secret heart of civilization itself." *The Village Voice* (November 22, 1983, 109) declared, "With *Gospel at Colonus* Breuer finally comes, like Oedipus, to the revelation of his secret: he has all along been not a deconstructionist, but a reconstructionist, trying to fit all the pieces back together."

Classical Greek drama has never presented a uniform face to American audiences. In 1886, *Acharnians* could appear as a sort of animated museum exhibit, a culturally prestigious object for audiences who came prepared to admire it as an example and authentic representation of a classical Greek culture whose remote, eternal importance they were glad to acknowledge. *Gospel at Colonus* a century later made no pretense of being a production or reproduction of Sophocles. It was an American play which transformed Greek drama so that it could speak to audiences late in the twentieth century. Rather than presenting a fixed and definite idea of what Greek drama was, *Gospel* grew and evolved in practice from workshop to Broadway. As America moves into the twenty-first century, it seems more likely to use the classics and create their meaning through practice than to put them on a shelf and admire them.

(Note: Portions of this article appeared as "Aristophanes in Philadelphia: The *Acharnians* of 1886," *Classical World* 96.3 [2003], 299-313. I am grateful to the Editor of *Classical World* for permission to reprint.)

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"BARBARIANS, ALIENS, FRONTIERS"

THE FIFTH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF LATIN AND GREEK (NANTES, FRANCE, MARCH 26-29, 2009)

By Elizabeth Antébi

Where can you hear tales like *Little Red Riding Hood* or songs like *My Way* translated into Latin? Where can you participate in a workshop on mosaics or listen to explanations about the making of Roman glass? Where can you enjoy the works of the Greek poetess Sappho sung by the Mediterranean lyric singer Oum Hani Chkounda (who also sings Soufi melodies and the mystic medieval poetry of Hildegard of Bingen) and Philippe Brunet, teacher at the University of Rouen, translator of Homer and founder of Demodocos Cy, a performance troupe which takes its inspiration from the work on the sound of Greek by Professor Stephen G. Daitz (City University of New York)?

Where can you watch the *Birds* of Aristophanes in Greek and French and hear Juvenal's Satire 3, performed by students from of the College of Luxembourg? Where can you participate in discussions on the *limes* (borders) of the Roman Empire, on "Barbarians in the Movies," on "Slaves as Foreigners," on "Latin authors born in Africa"? Where can you hear choirs singing Saint Augustine or share a journey in the virtual universe, "*Meeting the Gods on 'Second Life'*" with Robin Delisle, of the Académie de Versailles, or visit the ruins of Athens' Acropolis or of a suburb of Rome? And where can you take, with a virtual teacher, your first course on an ancient language in a virtual academy? The answer: The International Festival of Latin and Greek, which celebrates its fifth anniversary in 2009 (see Fig. 12).

The Origin and Purpose of The International Festival of Latin and Greek

The First International Festival of Latin and Greek (IFLG) took place March 4-6, 2005 in Becherel, a little village in France called "the city of books." With 14 bookstores for just 700 inhabitants, Becherel suddenly filled with classics enthusiasts: music, poetry, drama and recitals added to the lively verbal discussions. The goals of IFLG were and are to celebrate the many ways the classics continue to influence modern life; to help participants better understand themselves and their world; and to explore those roots of Western and American civilization that provide the foundation for

shared aspects of identity and heritage. In some cases, the events of the festival can enrich our understanding of the modern world. For example, Thucydides and Aeschylus have much to teach us about Persia (Iran). Egypt can be better understood by reading Herodotus. Cicero helps with concepts of the law. Modern issues as varied as human rights, feminism, technology, advertising, ecology and even citizenship were concerns in classical times as well.

Each year the IFLG chooses a theme supported by international participants:

2005: "Thrillers, Songs and Comics of Ancient Inspiration."

From Germany, Graf von Rothenburg came to explain his Latin translation of the *Asterix* comic books.

2006: "Love, Music, and Dance."

In partnership with the Karolyi Foundation (Hungary), the pupils of a Hungarian high school performed Plautus' *Mostellaria*; Finland sent Dr. Jukka Ammond who sang Elvis Presley songs in Latin; the Greek actress Anastassia Politi interpreted Sappho's poetry.

2007: "Women, Children, Games."

A troupe from Coimbra University of Portugal performed the *Parliament of Women* by Aristophanes; Belgium sent an archaeologist who exhibited ancient games from Egypt, Greece and Rome which he allowed participants to play.

2008: "The Exploration of the Universe: Tourism, War, and Science."

The German band ISTA came to sing hip hop in Latin; two professors who teach in the "Tourism, Leisure, and Heritage" program from Coimbra's University made presentations.

After each festival, IFLG works with the international participants to bring an event or performance to their country. In 2006 IFLG was invited to participate in the *Festivale del Mondo Antico* in Rimini, Italy. IFLG also sent Parisian high school students to the archaeological site of Gorsium in Hungary to present the *Trial of Helen*, a performance based on texts by authors such as Homer and Ovid. After the 2008 Festival, IFLG sent a troupe to perform at Coimbra University in Portugal; in addition, the School of Tourism and Hotel Management in Angers, France, has begun an exchange of ideas with the tourism faculty at Coimbra University.



Fig. 12. IFLG will hold its Fifth Annual Festival on March 26-29, 2009 in Nantes, France. Poster image used with permission of Elizabeth Antébi.

A Focus on Careers

In addition to the performances, interactive games, lectures, and discussion, the IFLG includes a "jobs corner." For the 2009 Festival, IFLG will partner with the association METIS (an ancient Greek term meaning "brightness or intelligence," in French 'metis' means "mixed-race" and "cross-cultured"), founded by a diverse group of students from Lycée Jean Vilar in Meaux, a suburb of Paris, on the theme "Careers and Communication." One hundred and thirty former students from this suburban school have pursued careers in many fields and return each year to speak to different classes about how the study of Greek and Latin can contribute to one's self-awareness and help one find a good job. The IFLG wants to promote the idea that ancient languages can be an advantage when seeking employment in industry, media, culture (as they were for Ted Turner or J.K. Rowling) or even in politics, according to Boris Johnson, the new mayor of London and a fan of Demosthenes. According to Johnson's father, "He's a great classicist. He knows his Greek and he knows his Latin and if you can do Greek and Latin you can do anything at all!" (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/blog/2008/may/02/waiting-forthemayoralelect>). This aspect of the Festival has garnered special attention from the news media. As the *Sunday Herald* (April 5, 2008) wrote: "Among the new features of this year's festival is a careers stand, aimed at communicating the message that studying Latin and

Greek can open doors for job-seekers.... Other sectors where knowledge of classical civilization is an advantage include tourism, advertising, pharmacy, video games, and the film industry – where a spate of Hollywood hits, such as *Troy* and *300*, have created a market for classical specialists.” And *The Times* (April 5, 2008): “Organisers of the European Festival of Latin and Greek are trying to show that ancient languages are a gateway to understanding and wealth.[...] ‘I’m fed up,’ said Antébi, founder of the IFLG, ‘with hearing that this is all elitist and does not lead to a job.’”

The 2009 Festival

The Fifth Annual International Festival of Latin and Greek, March 26-29, 2009 in Nantes, France, will focus on the theme “Barbarians, Aliens, Frontiers” in an effort to understand the definition and creation of “the other” both in terms of people and also places. A full schedule of events and featured speakers is available at <http://www.festival-latin-grec.eu/en/iflg-2009-programme/>.

Who Will Enjoy and Benefit from the Festival?

The Festival will appeal to young people, aged thirteen and above, who are interested in learning serious subjects in an entertaining way; teachers and professionals of all disciplines – humanities, literature, history, languages, geography, history of art, information technology, biology, physics, medicine, botany (Latin is their universal language), law, astronomy, psychology, advertising (with the myths), music, film producers, the tourist industry; and anyone who is interested in the classical subjects.

Participants need not be familiar with Greek and Latin, just happy to meet interesting people for the fun of exploring a common classical psyche! To learn more about IFLG, see <http://www.festival-latin-grec.eu/en/>.

Elizabeth Antébi (Eliza@antebiel.com and tel: 00 33 6 24 58 78 64) earned a B.A. in *Humanities*, a B.A. in *the History of Art*, and Ph.D. in *History of Religions (Ottoman Palestine)* from the Sorbonne. She has published ten books, from *Ave Lucifer to The Jewish Pasha* and collaborated on *Jerusalem 1913* (Viking, 2007) with Amy Dockser Marcus (Winner of the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for Beat Reporting for the Wall Street Journal). She has also written two popular books on sciences and technology: *The Electronic Epoch* (Van Nostrand Reinhold) and *Biotechnologies: Engineering of Life*, MIT Press).

Book Review: *Lavinia*

continued from page 1

political maneuvers and battles of Aeneas in Latium on his way to establishing the territorial foothold that will become Rome.

The greatest gift of this book to novice students of the *Aeneid* is its palpable sense of location, social structure, and patterns of domestic life and battles. LeGuin has done an amazing job of painting the scene for Lavinia’s story. In a graceful “Afterword” she details her efforts to supplement the *Aeneid*’s own hazy topography from other sources, clearly to localize Albunea, Laurentium, Alba Longa, all the important but unfixed locations in the Aeneas legend. “I tried to give a glimpse of the countryside as it probably was then,” she explains, “a vast forest of oak and pine cut by steep river gullies running down to swampy grasslands and dune marshes near the coast” (278).

But this novel offers more than a detailed, reworked story for students. It is a fascinating study of characters, especially of Lavinia’s mother, Amata, fleshed out from Vergil’s quick sketch. In the *Aeneid*, Lavinia’s mother is an unsympathetic character, a bossy and unpleasant woman victimized by Juno, who orders her to be attacked and driven mad by Allecto. I suspect that this characterization of Amata was one of the primary reasons LeGuin was drawn to this project. LeGuin gives Amata a psychological reason for her rage: she has lost her sons to a fever and the only child remaining is a daughter who may not assume the throne. She emotionally distances herself from her daughter until the time when she determines it is politically necessary that Lavinia be wed to Turnus, Amata’s nephew, to strengthen her family’s position.

LeGuin’s Lavinia tries to warn her father of her mother’s mad behavior, but he is deaf to his wife’s treachery. The character of the queen is fascinating: she is evil, yet she has reasons for being so. And though madness (like the Fury in the original) invades her and she is a dark force in Lavinia’s life, yet her husband (who is sane) will not hear anything said against her. There is also something unsavory in Amata’s feeling for her nephew Turnus, even in Vergil’s version, and LeGuin does

not shy away from developing this. A troubled character, Amata captures our interest with her complexity. On some level she is a threat and a grief at the same time.

Particularly intriguing is the relationship between Lavinia and Vergil, who appears as a spectral presence in the novel. At a sacred site in the forest of Albunea, where Lavinia and her father make regular sacrifices to the gods, Lavinia encounters the spirit of Vergil. He has not yet been born at the time she meets him, yet his death is imminent; in fact he has been detached from his physical body by the fever that will end his life. And he is obsessed with the status of his great epic. Vergil’s death will leave Lavinia’s life incomplete. There’s nothing to be done about it, except this effort of her own, writing her life as she relives it. Lavinia’s story feels as if it were being told near a smoky fire on a dark evening, and the reader is invited into the tale’s intricate enchantment.

Lavinia is a child entering womanhood in a difficult family; she is an aged dowager queen losing touch with her faculties and reality; but she is also our storyteller, ageless, having lived until our own time. Her observations both participate in and comment on the story as it happens. And yet the book is not a brain-twister. The reader is safely carried along on this amorphous telling, and the world in which Lavinia lives is palpable. The empty, roomy Italian countryside is real. The river, the ships, the messengers, Janus’ gates of war are all convincing. Only the people feel like shadows, as mythic characters should be.

Janey Bennett (www.janeybennett.com), a California native who divides her time between Bellingham, Washington and British Columbia’s Vancouver Island, is a national-award-winning novelist. Her passion for the Mediterranean world comes center-stage in her latest book, *The Pale Surface of Things* (Hopeace Press), set on Crete with its myriad layers of cultures and histories and telling a tale that moves intriguingly among Minoan remains, Byzantine churches, and Nazi aggression.

“Life is short; art is long-lasting.”

– Hippocrates *Aphorisms* 1.1

POETRY

by Theodora Guliadis



Fig. 13.

Golden Girls Rerun

He sits idly
By the window glancing outside
At the rosy-fingered sky. No snow yet,
Just winds hissing warnings.
Telemachus used to love this time of year,
Running and jumping and leaping
Into November, endless
Laughs crashing upon his hands,
Like waves upon black rocks.

The door slams open and a nurse scurries
in pulling
him away from cold panes.

Did colds actually matter now, many wars
later?
A wooden horse he assembled, throats
Of Sirens he clogged. One eyed beasts
Fooled by his bag of tricks. Vessel shattered,
he clung to a lone plank, and descended
into Hades. It spat him right out
his soul too darkened for the underworld.
Yet this is what it's come down to:
Five gold medallions scattered on his night
stand
Beta blockers, porridge, a daily intake of
prunes.
Diomedes dead. Laertes dead. Penelope gone.

Ithaca no longer his.
Now, it's all about these blank walls, these
brand new sails
Unravished by salt air.

The nurse clucks and hands him a glass
Half empty. He sighs. Another winter day,
another Odysseus
Popping pills at quarter past six.

Theodora Guliadis (tguliadis@mail.colgate.edu) is a first generation Greek American and a recent college graduate. She attended Colgate University from 2004 until 2008, and completed a double major in Classics and English Creative Writing. She is currently applying to various MFA programs.

Fig. 13 (above). Image used by Creative Commons License. Image source: <http://flickr.com/photos/dey/95130996/>.

FIEC, THE WORLDWIDE CLASSICS ORGANIZATION, IS SIXTY

By Kurt A. Raaflaub

In the summer of 2004 I flew to Sao Paulo in Brazil, changed to a smaller plane to a smaller city inland, and drove two hours in a bus to a small town named Ouro Preto, which means something like "Black Gold." For centuries, people had been mining for gold and precious stones there, and jewelry stores lined the streets; their owners and sales persons turned out to be among the few people in town who spoke English. Ouro Preto proved a beautiful place. What I remember most are the steep cobble-stone streets that lead to remarkably large churches with rich frescoes attesting to a flourishing early colonial baroque culture.

Yet I had not gone to Ouro Preto to buy gems and jewelry (although in the end I succumbed to the temptation) nor to study colonial Brazilian baroque art (although I thoroughly enjoyed it). What brought me there was the Twelfth International FIEC Congress, to which our Brazilian colleagues had invited classicists from all over the world.

You will ask: what on earth is FIEC? Right! Even many professionals don't know. FIEC stands for *Fédération Internationale des Etudes Classiques*, the International Association of Classical Studies. In fact the organization's full name is the International Federation of the Societies of Classical Studies, because it serves as an umbrella organization that unites over eighty member associations from some forty-five nations on all continents. In other words, FIEC brings together the professional organizations of classical scholars in every country on earth where Latin, Greek, literature, history, archaeology, philosophy, linguistics, and whatever else that has to do with ancient Greek and Roman civilization are taught and studied. This includes not only Europe and North America but also many countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Australia, and New Zealand. Most of these are general Classics associations (like our APA); others are regional associations within a nation (such as CAMWS, the Classical Association of the Middle West and South in the U.S.) or associations of specialists in a given field (such as the International Association of Papyrologists

FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DES ASSOCIATIONS D'ÉTUDES CLASSIQUES



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE SOCIETIES OF CLASSICAL STUDIES

Fig. 14. FIEC, the *Fédération Internationale des Etudes Classiques*, meets to address a variety of issues facing all those whose work focuses on the ancient world. Image source: <http://www.fiecnet.org/>.

or the International Association of Byzantine Studies) or even research organizations such as the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (the organization, based at the University of California Irvine, that has put together and is still expanding a huge database of all extant Greek texts).

FIEC was founded sixty years ago, on September 28-29, 1948. At the time, Europe was still suffering from the vast disaster caused by World War II. Cities had been destroyed, public and university libraries (and uncountable private research libraries) bombed, and museums burned. Many leading scholars and innumerable young and aspiring scholars and teachers had died; careers had been interrupted and ended; work in progress had been lost. The dense pre-war network of international connections among classicists was shattered. Hence the main purpose the founders of FIEC had in mind was to re-establish these connections and to re-start international collaboration in our field. Not accidentally, the founding assembly took place in Paris, the seat of UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, the cultural branch of the then newly-founded United Nations) which offered its patronage. Paris was also the seat of *L'Année philologique* (our discipline's bibliographical journal, which is now largely supported by an APA-funded American office at the University of Cincinnati). Its long-term director, the venerable Juliette Ernst, was one of the few persons who during the war had maintained close relations with scholars all over the world.

At the founding assembly, fifteen classical organizations were represented, from France (6), Britain (4), the Netherlands, Poland, Denmark (2), and Sweden. The founding assembly adopted a simple set of statutes, elected a President and a

Board, and planned an international congress that took place in Paris in 1950. Annual contributions of institutional members were set at \$5, reflecting the value of the U.S. dollar and the poverty of the organizations involved. Without a generous subsidy by UNESCO, the young organization could not have operated.

From these small beginnings, FIEC has grown to be the large world organization it now is. If you are interested in the Association's history, you can find it on its website (<http://www.fiecnet.org>). Its organization is simple: a President, a Secretary General, a Board, and a General Assembly, composed of delegates of all member associations, that meets during congresses and once in between. FIEC has held international congresses in five-year intervals in cities around the world (mostly in Europe but also in the US, Canada, and Brazil). These meetings are organized and funded by member associations in close collaboration with the FIEC General Assembly and Board. I am currently serving both as the APA's delegate to FIEC and on the organizing committee of the next congress that will take place in late August 2009 in Berlin, Germany (<http://www.fiec2009.org>).

Of all this I knew very little when I arrived in Ouro Preto. I found it exciting to meet colleagues from all over the world – and frustrating that conversations were hampered by my own inability to speak Spanish and Portuguese and many other participants' difficulties or diffidence in speaking English. Even so, I learned much about the work and working conditions of classicists in other parts of the world (outside of Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand, which I know well), about their lack of good libraries, their isolation, their constant fights with oppressive bureaucracies or uninterested academic leaders – but also about their pride in their work and in their students, their aspirations, and their victories. I also realized how incredibly privileged we are as classicists in the United States, despite the many struggles and frustrations that we too encounter all the time.

When I received and accepted the invitation to offer a paper at the FIEC Congress in Ouro Preto, I had asked myself (as you probably do): what is the purpose of such an organization? What do we need it for? Don't we already have enough organizations – and congresses? Now I know. The purpose of FIEC is to facilitate connections, discussions, and collaboration as well as the exchange of knowledge among classicists from all over the world. As was determined sixty

Book Review: *A Book of Hours: Music, Literature, Life, A Memoir*

continued from page 3

an opera; Schöne, the tortured comfortless soul, helps and comforts Lee.

Religious experience is not so much discussed in Father Lee's book as it is inherent to it. His first morning in Rome, he dresses to say Mass. The day he and a favorite student explore the Sybil's cave, they begin with three Masses for the dead. Lee recalls his investiture and vows. He grapples with his love for and promises to God and the late but terrible longing for a son of his own. Few could manage such openness and unflinching honesty.

In a book so generous, I hesitate to point out flaws; yet there are some. Most are minor: tiny page margins, no table of contents, and no index. (In a motif-driven

years ago, FIEC creates these connections mostly through its international congresses. My impression is that this purpose is achieved to a remarkable extent: I for one still correspond and exchange publications and course materials with a number of Latin American colleagues I met in Ouro Preto, and my experience there prompted me to attend the First Mexican International Congress for Classical Studies in Mexico City in September 2005; one of the papers I gave there is now published in Portuguese in a Brazilian classical journal. Of course, this noble purpose faces substantial obstacles, both linguistic (as I just pointed out) and financial (expenses of travel and accommodation that are prohibitive to many), and it is by no means certain that member associations in the future will be able to raise the funding and find the volunteers needed to organize these large congresses. We might also ask ourselves whether there might be other ways to serve the same purpose. (In fact, at the next congress participants will be asked what their most urgent needs are and how best they think FIEC could serve these.) Still, when I left Ouro Preto I was convinced that FIEC's activities enrich and sustain our field in important ways and are meaningful to many classicists all over the world. I look forward to attending the next congress in Berlin in less than a year.

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work, an index is not a luxury.) One flaw, however, is major. In describing the fire-bombing of Dresden during World War II, Lee unfortunately follows and specifically mentions David Irving's vitiated account. In numerous writings, Irving established a pattern of Holocaust denial and anti-Semitism. When criticized as anti-Semitic by historian Deborah Lipstadt, Irving responded with a libel suit. Lipstadt won, and the case demonstrated that Irving systematically distorted, omitted, and falsified historical records (Dresden among them). The case is described in Lipstadt's *My Day in Court with David Irving* and Richard Evans' *Lying about Hitler: History, Holocaust, and the David Irving Trial*. Lee's no anti-Semite, but Irving's distortions, however innocently repeated, can still make mischief.

A more enjoyable controversy – and a more fitting conclusion – comes from a visit to Munich's Glyptothek. Lee views the remarkable collection of ancient sculpture and compares archaic *kouroi* (statues of male youths) with the famous Barberini Faun. Lee describes the *kouroi* as alive, alert, energetic, ready to spring forward. The Hellenistic faun, however, lolls back, pained, debauched, about to expire. Lee's evocation is a delight, but quite wrong, I think. The faun is very much alive. Even unconscious, he still radiates a power and sensual energy that should make viewers walk quietly, lest he wake up.

A "right" answer, however, is not the point. One sees the statues more clearly, appreciates them more deeply, because of Father Lee's insight. That, in microcosm, is the virtue of his book. In this deeply affecting memoir, readers are invited to journey with the author, and those who do are richer for it.

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Book Review: *Ad Infinitum: A Biography of Latin*

by Russell Hugo

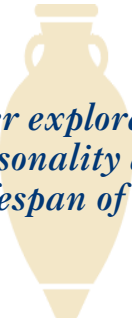
Nicholas Ostler. *Ad Infinitum: A Biography of Latin*. New York: Walker and Company, 2007. Pp. 382. Hardcover. \$27.95. ISBN 978-0802715159.

Nicholas Ostler is a scholar difficult to categorize by modern academic standards. An Oxford graduate in the classical languages, he took a Ph.D. in Linguistics and Sanskrit at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, has carried on research in a great variety of linguistic areas, among them the indigenous languages of Latin America, and currently directs the Foundation for Endangered Languages (FEL) (see Fig. 15). This not-for-profit organization, based in the United Kingdom, identifies in its mission statement its commitment “to support, enable, and assist the documentation, protection and promotion of endangered languages.” FEL provides small monetary grants for projects related to the study and preservation of minority languages, publishes a newsletter advertising its activities (*Ogmios*), and hosts conferences around the world.

So is Ostler a philologist or a descriptive linguist? Clearly he is both. His very successful previous volume, *Empires of the Word: A Language History of the World* (Harper-Collins 2005) describes five centuries of human history in terms of language interaction, explaining *sine studio et ira* (without favoritism and hostility) the reasons why some languages became over time politically dominant and of immense cultural importance, while others fell to the wayside. And fortunately for us he has chosen in *Ad Infinitum* once again to address a broad audience, distilling considerable linguistic data into terms that will allow the interested reader easily to follow his discussion.

Ostler has identified his study as a biography, not a history, for Latin throughout these pages takes on a kind of persona, becomes someone affected by and affecting family and neighbors, friends and enemies. Indeed, in his *Praefatio* the author insists that his aim is “to show what the career of Latin amounted to” (xvi) and why, ultimately, it became a vehicle no longer relevant to the culture in which it had been maintained.

After a brief introductory chapter, Ostler launches into a description of Latin’s “kin” in the second chapter (i.e. the Italic languages and their cultures), followed by an analysis of the “Etruscan stepmother” in the third. Latin acquires “winning ways” as it enters the period classicists call the Middle Republic, soon adopting an attitude of



Ostler explores the personality and the lifespan of Latin.

“looking up to Greek” as the Late Republic nears its end, when Latin enters a “partnership of paragons” with Greek language and culture. With this material – and the beginning of Imperial Rome – the sixth chapter concludes the first part of the volume, that devoted to “A Latin World.” The seventh through the tenth chapters form a

second thematic unit in Ostler’s discussion, one examining Latin within the context of the Christian Church. The third section (chapters 11-14: “Worlds built on Latin”) contains discussions of a variety of topics related to the relationship of Latin with the Romance languages as they begin to emerge after the collapse of the Western Empire: general phonetic and syntactic fault lines that will soon fracture into new tongues; the motivation behind vernacular literacy; the reflections of Latin literature in the emerging vernacular poetics. Finally, in his fourth and last section (and one that classicists would be well advised to read), the career of Latin in the modern world, dominated by vernacular tongues, is traced. Chapter 15 deals with Latin as the language of Humanist culture; then the effects of printing are considered in Chapter 16. Chapter 17, entitled “*Novus Orbis*,” really does open up a new world of information for those of us who spend most of our time in the Old, by exploring how Latin served as a medium of instruction in sixteenth-century Latin America. The last three chapters of Ostler’s text describe in a sober but objective manner the end not only of Latin’s cultural dominance but of its right to be taken seriously. The author’s position may not be accepted by all of us – there are certainly among my acquaintances those who refuse to apply the “D Word”

Capital Campaign News

The APA’s Gatekeeper to Gateway Campaign will establish an Endowment for Classics Research and Teaching and obtain the gifts necessary to receive \$650,000 offered in an NEH Challenge Grant. The Association is undertaking this Campaign to ensure that its members will have the scholarly and pedagogical resources they need to do their work for decades to come. The Campaign also shares with a wider public the excitement and commitment that APA members have for their subjects.

In September 2008 the Trustees of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation made a grant of \$325,000 to the campaign in support of the American editorial office of *L’Année philologique*, the major bibliography in the field of Classics. The Foundation’s grant represents the largest single gift received by the campaign to date. The total amount raised is now nearly \$1.4 million.

Like all campaign gifts, the Foundation’s grant qualifies for NEH matching funds. To claim the entire amount being offered by the NEH, the APA must obtain \$2.6 million in outside contributions by December 2010. The Mellon grant has thus allowed the APA to go past the halfway point in its fund-raising goal over two years before the challenge grant deadline.

We are very grateful to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for this expression of confidence in both this campaign and the APA. Further information about the campaign is available at the Association’s web site: <http://www.apaclassics.org/campaign/campaign.html>.



Fig. 15. Nicholas Ostler directs the Foundation for Endangered Languages (<http://www.ogmios.org/home.htm>), an organization committed to preserving and studying languages around the world. Image used with permission.

to a language that is enjoying increased pedagogic attention these days – but it is one based upon the sound views of a practicing linguist all too experienced in languages which have dwindled to a moribund state.

But has it really expired? Although he uses the past tense to describe it, Ostler doesn't completely commit with the vehemence of, say, Françoise Waquet in her study *Latin, or the Empire of a Sign* (Verso, 2001). For the past eight centuries Latin has been "an artificially sustained language of religion and culture" with a "dependence on transmission through education alone" (316). Yet it is still in some strange sense very much alive, as Ostler's own usage demonstrates. An intellectual cornerstone, a vehicle of imperialism and subjugation, Latin cannot help but strike us, through Ostler's study, as both terrible and wonderful, utterly impractical and yet indispensable, all at the same time.

One delightful quality of this text is its format: although arranged chronologically, the chapters represent a collection of short essays, each able to be enjoyed in itself and suitable for supplementary reading in a classroom setting. The general reader, whether inclining toward history, philosophy, political theory, sociology, art, or linguistics, will find useful and entertaining matter here. The linguist too will be well served. My own work is in the field of multilingualism policy and English education. In the first hundred pages of *Ad Infinitum* I found a wealth of material applicable to this area.

Illustrative Latin quotations are included in the text when they contribute to the discussion; otherwise the Latin is relegated to endnotes and its English translation placed in the main text. For those with no knowledge of Latin, translations of the Latin tags accompanying the chapter titles are provided and commented upon in an appendix. More daunting materials, such as a chart of sound changes and a list of Etruscan words borrowed by Latin, are located in appendices. Diagrams are abundant, especially

in the early chapters when Ostler is dealing with Latin's development into its classical form. The maps, line drawings and illustrative photographs are occasionally a little too small for my eyes; however, they are adequate, and given the low price of this text, justifiable. I was particularly pleased with the materials quoted in Greek script: accents and breathing marks are all in place. The non-English material, in other words, has been treated with care and the academic reader shown respect. Finally, the book comes equipped with responsible endnotes, a bibliography, and a very thorough index.

Russell Hugo (rlhugo@u.washington.edu) is currently in the graduate program of the Department of Linguistics at the University of Washington. In addition to studying Latin as an undergraduate, he has published original Latin fiction in the creative-writing journal *The World's Muse*.

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Philological Association (APA). The APA, founded in 1869 by "professors, friends, and patrons of linguistic science," is now the principal learned society in North America for the study of ancient Greek and Roman languages, literatures, and civilizations. While the majority of its members are university and college classics teachers, members also include scholars in other disciplines, primary and secondary school teachers, and interested lay people. The APA produces several series of scholarly books and texts and the journal *Transactions of the American Philological Association*. It holds an annual meeting each January in conjunction with the Archaeological Institute of America.

All of the APA's programs are grounded in the rigor and high standards of traditional philology, with the study of ancient Greek and Latin at their core. However, the APA also aims to present a broad view of classical culture and the ancient Mediterranean world to a wide audience. In short, the APA seeks to preserve and transmit the wisdom and values of classical culture and to find new meanings appropriate to the complex and uncertain world of the twenty-first century.

The APA's activities serve one or more of these overarching goals:

- To ensure an adequate number of well-trained, inspirational classics teachers at all levels, kindergarten through graduate school;
- To give classics scholars and teachers the tools they need to preserve and extend their knowledge of classical civilization and to communicate that knowledge as widely as possible;
- To develop the necessary infrastructure to achieve these goals and to make the APA a model for other societies confronting similar challenges.

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Review: *Latinum: The Online Latin Learning Audiocourse* from London (<http://latinum.mypodcast.com/>)

by Eduardo M. Engelsing

“Latin is a language of the ear,” says Evan Millner, the designer of *Latinum: The Online Latin Learning Audiocourse from London*, a website created in 2007 that has become a hit on the internet. With over two million audio files downloaded from *Latinum* since its inception, Millner is clearly providing a spoken Latin podcast for very many ears. What is it, and why has it become so popular?

According to Millner, *Latinum* is an audio method for learning Latin. As he states in his introductory episode (available on the opening page of the website) he wants his listeners “to immerse” themselves in Latin. Through his podcasts distributed free-of-charge on the website or through iTunes, Millner gives voice to the ancient language and offers the Latin-learner with basic podcast-managing skills access to the sonorous ancient tongue without the necessity of consulting a book. There you are, listening to Virgil’s idiom in Millner’s pleasant British voice while burning up 300 calories as you work out at the gym, or being taught the whole pluperfect subjunctive conjugation while washing dishes. Listen, listen and listen is the motto of the enterprise, whose goal is to create a “virtual Latin environment” through the use of MP3 players and computers and “to provide a wide and varied spoken language” resource. In an interview linked to his site, Millner confidently states that “The Latin sort of just sinks in by osmosis....Latin isn’t difficult at all if it is learned in this way.” Here too he states that “the emphasis is on speaking Latin, on conversational Latin, and not on the grammar.”

The *Latinum* podcasts consist fundamentally of Millner’s *alta voce* readings of George J. Adler’s *A Practical Grammar of the Latin language* (1858). This Latin primer is available for free download from Google Books and Millner advises his listeners to access this text and consult it as needed while using the podcasts. Adler promoted what he called the “Natural Method.” In following Adler, *Latinum* has therefore not yet taken advantage of the extensive research in applied linguistics (which focuses on both

high-frequency vocabulary and grammatical structures, and also on authentic, i.e. context-determined, usage) that has so helped the teaching of modern languages.

Millner reads into his podcasts most of Adler’s content, along with footnotes and observations, in their original sequence. When you go to the *Latinum* website, you’ll find each chapter of the book divided into files: *Pensum A*, grammatical information, through rules and charts of verbal and nominal forms; *Pensum B*, patterned sentences in the form of exercises to illustrate recently covered grammar, both these sections in Latin and English (sometimes in French and German as well); and *Pensum C*, repetition of both grammar and exercises, only in Latin. Millner feels that by coordinating podcasts with sections of Adler’s text, *Latinum* offers the most comprehensive Latin course available electronically, one through which “all Latin grammar” will be taught over a four-year period.

While mainstream pedagogy for the teaching of Latin and Greek has its focus almost exclusively on reading and translation skills, *Latinum* offers a clear departure from that: Millner very much wants his Latin to be heard and, ultimately, to be spoken. But what exactly does his method of streaming Latin sentences offer that differs essentially from other “book based” Latin courses? In raising this question we are confronted with one of the most important questions in language pedagogy today: Can listening or repeating aloud sentences from the target language change the way we perceive and learn classical languages?

Perhaps because of its medium, in its various methodological hints, Millner appeals to such notions (commonly accepted in the learning of modern idioms) as “immerse yourself in the language” and “learn through exposure.” These remarks seem to indicate that *Latinum* strives to take a different approach towards teaching Latin. But a quick inspection of the site’s content and of the kind of interaction it elicits shows the almost exclusive focus on

formal aspects of grammar and pronunciation that characterizes the traditional methods of teaching the classical languages. Despite Millner’s assertion that “most Latin courses ‘overteach’ grammar,” his website uses a nineteenth century textbook that arguably also overteaches grammar. On the other hand, while exhorting the listener to get his “head out of the book,” what *Latinum* does is to put the entire book into his head.

The learner who comes to these podcasts and expects an audio course similar to that of modern languages is in for a shock. In the very first class the learner meets the complete first declension of the noun, in all its cases and rarities and exceptions.

In the website’s reading, Millner uses the restored classical pronunciation. Paradoxical as it seems, due perhaps to excessive care of pronunciation, the listener often finds mistakes in accentuation or curious exaggerations. (It should be noted, however, that Millner is very ready to make corrections; a



Fig. 16. *Latinum* (<http://latinum.mypodcast.com/>) offers an online audio Latin course. Image used with permission.

friend who is a regular listener of the reading tells me that Millner continually updates earlier podcasts and corrects errors. One hopes that in the near future he will also construct a general index for the whole site, which, overburdened with downloads, seems somewhat disorganized and is a little difficult for the new user to maneuver.)

In addition to the material drawn from Adler’s grammar book, Millner offers a very wide and interesting variety of other readings. There is a section called *Fabulae Faciles* that consists of simple Latin stories that Millner reads aloud; in the section called *Schola*, users can write letters to each other in Latin; in *Imaginum Vocabularium Latinum* learners can visit an archive of pictures with their Latin names. Among other valuable offerings, he has a series of podcasts featuring Neo-Latin texts composed for beginners by the educators Corderius (ca.1480-1564) and Comenius (1592-1670); a wide variety of simple Latin stories read with charm, humor and

sentiment; links to other classicists' readings of Latin poets such as Horace, Catullus, and Ovid; and a great number of other pleasant items. The reader is encouraged to visit the site and to browse through the texts that Millner has loaded or to which he has provided links. He also encourages users to communicate with him. My impression, after reviewing the site and its materials, is that Millner is absolutely fascinated with Latin, enjoys the process of helping others, and is thrilled to be able to share his passion with users of the site. His eagerness to learn and his generosity in sharing what he has found useful for his own studies are in themselves inspiring and delightful.

In methodological terms, however, *Lat-inum* teaches us an important lesson: to speak words aloud or even to speak Latin doesn't necessarily lead to a different approach to learning the language. If you are looking for Latin grammar exercises with repetitious drills to help review and consolidate your skills, you'll find these podcasts very useful. If, however, you are looking for a new approach to language learning, one in which the social dimensions of communication and human interaction are put into play, it won't take long to see that *Lat-inum* is not quite at this stage. It may be that no podcast can lead the language learner to this goal. Recently, however, the site has added a new feature: a means of locating groups of Latin speakers within one's community. In taking this step, Millner has truly moved beyond the grammar-bound sentences of Adler and approached the possibility of offering real living contact with active Latin. All those interested in the promotion of spoken Latin will certainly appreciate Millner's accomplishment and can have high hopes for what *Lat-inum* podcast will become.

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WHY READ SENECA THE YOUNGER?

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silver in the same way he uses earthenware" (*Nec ille minor est qui sic argento utitur quemadmodum fictilibus*). Seneca's point is that we should be indifferent to the material trappings of status and wealth (or any lack thereof), and the identical structure of the two sentences drives that point home. Seneca then finishes the thought with a brilliantly paradoxical *sententia* in the very next sentence: "It is the mark of a weak mind not to be able to cope with riches" (*Infirmi animi est pati non posse divitias*).

As for puns, Seneca is keen on them, too. A wicked jab in Letter 47 comes to mind. There Seneca makes the inspired argument that slaves are human persons and deserve humane treatment; it is we who are slaves in our unthinking addiction to pleasure and power: "Who is not a slave?" Seneca asks, with reference to sexual infatuations. "I will show you a man of consular rank enslaved to a little old woman (*amiculae*); I will show you a rich man enslaved to a young slave girl (*ancillulae*)."

Rhetorical features like these add muscle, tone, color, and humor to what might otherwise have been a bald run of declarative sentences. To be sure, in some respects this kind of writing goes over the top. Indeed, the grammarian Quintilian thought that Seneca went over the top too often and considered his style "exceedingly dangerous" (*perniciossissima*), which is doubtless also why "he alone was in the hands of all the young men back then," much to Quintilian's chagrin (cf. *Institutio Oratoria* 10.1.125-131). But I would suggest that a sententious author's striving after rhetorical effect is not just a style of writing, but a style of *thought* that revels in hyperbole, paradox, and ambiguity. In Seneca's case, this derives in part from his commitment to Stoicism, where paradoxes and linguistic ambiguity were central concerns. But it also reflects his interest in poetry: it is no accident that Seneca the philosopher was also an accomplished poet, author of at least eight tragedies. In fact, in his philosophical works Seneca is something of a prose counterpart to the Latin poet Lucretius, who once compared his presentation of Epicurean philosophy through poetry to the age-old trick of spreading honey around the rim of a cup of bitter medicine so that children will drink it (*De rerum natura* 1.936-50). Seldom has the bitter pill of philosophy had such attractive packaging as it does in Seneca's prose.

Another delight in reading Seneca is that his works are full of arguments, commonplaces, and metaphors that are

already vaguely familiar to modern readers from other contexts. Take, for example, the central argument in Letter 5 that happiness and peace of mind come only from living fully in the present, not in the past or future (*Nemo tantum praesentibus miser est*). In Letter 84, one of my personal favorites (on how to read and why), Seneca anticipates an amusing quip ascribed to Einstein when he declares that the secret to intellectual creativity lies in hiding one's sources: "Let our mind do this: everything by which it has been improved, let it conceal; let it only reveal that which it has produced" (*Hoc faciat animus noster: omnia, quibus est adiutus, abscondat; ipsum tantum ostendat, quod effecit*).

What is more, because Seneca writes primarily about the philosophic way of life, his works – by design – are universal in scope and psychological in orientation, making the appreciation of them somewhat less dependent on a reader's knowledge of the historical context in which they were composed, even if some knowledge of that context is also part of the thrill of reading him. (Seneca's spectacular death in the bathtub by forced suicide – an episode immortalized by the historian Tacitus [*Annals* 15.62-64] – is a case in point.)

In sum, I think Seneca readily appeals to the aesthetic sensibility of today's readers and satisfies their linguistic needs and expectations as well. In fact, one of my undergraduate students (with no knowledge of the function of sententiousness in Silver Latin) once dubbed him "The Master of Segue," suggesting that Seneca may yet take his rightful place in this beguiling era of electronic entertainment, conspicuous consumption, and other psychological distractions. It bodes well for that end that Seneca is featured prominently in Alain de Botton's self-help bestseller *The Consolations of Philosophy* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), where his thought is presented as a remedy not only for petty annoyances – "we cannot find the remote control or the keys, the road is blocked, the restaurant is full" (82) – but also for the kinds of emotional devastation caused by natural disasters and the loss of loved ones. In such lives and times as these, we could do far worse than to read Seneca.

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