2019

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FACULTY OF CLASSICS

NEWSLETTER

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

THE GODDESS AND THE HERDSMAN, FROM SUMER TO ROME

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

As I am writing this letter, Trinity Term is drawing to a close, and examining is under way. As always, the tourists are appreciative that so many young people in full academic dress can be spotted around the town centre.

Last year I wrote to you about our bridging course, which enables 25 state-educated offer holders to have a head start to their course, by arriving at Oxford in week -1 of Michaelmas Term and getting into the Greek or Latin before the distracting events of Freshers' week. The University has now announced 'Opportunity Oxford', which will be a university-wide bridging programme, specifically for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Classics will be participating, as well as continuing with its own bridging course (which has broader entry criteria).

Relatedly, the faculty has embraced the expansion of the UNIQ summer schools which was announced by the University last year (www.uniq.ox.ac.uk). Instead of two we are running three summer schools this year, one with an emphasis on classical archaeology and ancient history, one on Latin, and one on Greek. In the past, UNIQ has worked very effectively for the faculty and has translated into numerous applications, offers, and eventually places taken up. We will also be able to continue OxLAT, thanks to the generous support of the Stonehouse Foundation; this scheme enables pupils at state schools in Oxfordshire and surrounding counties to gain a GCSE in Latin. Instruction takes places in the Ioannou Centre for Classical and Byzantine Studies on Saturdays.

We have also been busy with the preparation for REF 2021 (Research Excellence Framework), a UK-wide exercise in which all universities participate roughly every five years. Faculties and departments prove their productivity by entering research published in the census period and having it evaluated. Evaluations are linked to funding. We are also asked to demonstrate our impact, not on other classicists, but on the world at large. Demonstrating impact in that sense can be a challenge. Research which wins the highest admiration from fellow classicists often scores poorly against the impact criterion. We are not complaining, though, since colleagues in the basic sciences face the same problem.

Book publications by faculty members just in the last few months include Wolfgang de Melo's monumental edition of Varro's *De Lingua Latina* (OUP); Stephen Heyworth's edition of Ovid's *Fasti* Book 3 (CUP); Aneurin Ellis-Evans' monograph *The Kingdom of Priam: Lesbos and the Troad between Anatolia and the Aegean* (OUP); Rosalind Thomas' monograph *Polis Histories, Collective Memories, and the Greek World* (CUP); Luuk Huitink and Tim Rood's edition of Xenophon, *Anabasis* Book 3 (CUP); Armand D'Angour's *Socrates in Love: the Making of a Philosopher* (Bloomsbury); Ine Jacobs' *Asia Minor in the Long Sixth Century* (co-edited with Hugh Elton); Stephen Harrison's *Babel: Adventures in Translation* (co-edited with Dennis Duncan, Kathrin Kohl, and Matthew Reynolds); Alison Rosenblitt's *Rome after Sulla* (Bloomsbury); Susan Treggiari's *Servilia and her Family* (OUP); and Stephen Harrison's *Roman Receptions of Sappho* (co-edited with Thea Thorsen). We have introduced a new feature on our still newish website, where we will highlight major publications as they appear.

Brexit continues to be a concern, not only because it is difficult to plan for. Oxford has been very successful in obtaining research grants from EU programmes, and while there is a government undertaking that lost funding will be replaced, the exact shape of the funding and the opportunities for collaboration across borders will be the detail in which the devil resides. Having to charge graduate students from the EU overseas fees, as we are currently not required to do, will undoubtedly alter the composition of our graduate community. Partly in response to Brexit, the University has forged an alliance with Berlin, home to three universities and numerous research institutes. In this area, too, the faculty is among the first adopters: we have agreed an exchange of doctoral students with the Berlin Graduate School of Ancient Studies, and several colleagues are engaged in collaborative projects with scholars in Berlin. Dr Beate Dignas reports on one of them in this newsletter.

New members of the faculty include two experts in Greek history, Dr Nikolaos Papazarkadas, Associate Professor and Tutorial Fellow at Corpus Christi College, and Professor Nino Luraghi, who has succeeded Robert Parker as Wykeham Professor of Ancient History; and Dr Dominik Maschek, who is Associate Professor of Roman Art and Archaeology. Professor Luraghi and Dr Maschek each have a profile in this issue.

In May the faculty received the good news that the Stavros Niarchos Foundation had made a major gift to Byzantine Studies at Oxford, which included the endowment of the Associate Professorship in Byzantine Archaeology and Visual Culture currently held by Dr Ine Jacobs, a joint post shared by the Faculty of History, the School of Archaeology, and the Faculty of Classics.

Finally, the editor, Dr Matthew Robinson, has tried to respond to feedback on earlier newsletters, which suggested that pieces on current research are especially welcome.

Prof Tobias Reinhardt
Chair of the Faculty Board

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COVER IMAGE: WILLIAM BLAKE RICHMOND: VENUS AND ANCHISES

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CLASSICS **FOR ALL**

INVIGORATING CLASSICS FOR PUPILS IN STATE SCHOOLS

Jules Mann, Executive Director, Classics for All

Classics for All, a registered charity, was founded in 2009 to reverse the decline of classics teaching in state primary and secondary schools. We aim to enrich the lives and raise the aspirations and achievements of young people across the UK through learning about the classical world, especially in areas of economic and social deprivation.

> IT'S BEEN SO WONDERFUL TO GIVE OUR CHILDREN ACCESS TO WHAT HAS PREVIOUSLY BEEN SEEN AS AN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL CURRICULUM. THE CHILDREN DESERVE TO HAVE ACCESS TO THIS CULTURALLY RICH MATERIAL AND IT IS A JOY TO SHARE IT WITH THEM.
>
> *Secondary school teacher in Leicester*

Since our inception, we have supported over 800 schools, offering 45,000 children aged between 7 and 18 opportunities to learn about the ancient world. This is achieved in two ways. Firstly, we offer teachers, often non-specialists, training and resources so that they can teach classics sustainably either on the curriculum or as an enrichment activity. Secondly, we work with a network of mostly university partners across England, Wales and Scotland – with Northern Ireland in the pipeline – to mentor participating schools and increase take-up in new areas. These partners provide generous financial assistance through donations and in-kind support.

One success story is our network based at the University of Leicester. In 2014, classics was only taught at two independent schools and two sixth form colleges in the region. Since then, with the help of Associate Professor of Archaeology Dr Sarah Scott and Network Co-ordinator Jane Ainslie, around 8,000 primary and secondary children have experienced the joy of classics. In total, 27 schools have introduced classics on and off the curriculum with pupils aged between 7 and 18, some of whom are now studying for a GCSE in Latin or classical civilisation.

This could not happen without the support of our donors. On average, it costs £3,000 to introduce classics in a school. Once initial teacher training is complete, we provide ongoing support so that teachers feel well equipped to continue teaching the subject. We often find that teachers, inspired by the experience, return with further requests to develop a second or third classical subject.

Find out more about Classics for All and how you can get involved:

Visit: classicsforall.org.uk

Email: contact@classicsforall.org.uk

Telephone: 0207 848 4741

Image above: Classics students at Lionheart Academies Trust.

Below: Burntwood, a Wandsworth, London school which took up Greek after it established Latin in the school.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Book online: classicsforall.org.uk/events

Email: events@classicsforall.org.uk

Tel: 0207 848 4741

THE GRAND CLASSICS QUIZ

28 September, 9.30am, King's College London: Latin and Ancient Greek teacher and classicist Isabel Raphael will host an entertaining and informal classics-themed quiz at King's College London. Come alone or with friends to test your Greek and Roman knowledge and meet other scholars and enthusiasts. Tickets £15 each, including light refreshments.

WHAT WAS ROMAN MARRIAGE LIKE?

2 October, 6.30pm, King's College London: This year's Friends of Classics memorial lecture will be delivered by Gregory Hutchinson, Regius Professor of Greek at Christ Church, Oxford. Professor Hutchinson has written books on various authors, periods, and subjects in Greek and Latin literature; he is just finishing a book on motion in ancient literature. He will give us a lively and intriguing insight into this ancient tradition, followed by a Q&A session. Tickets £16 each, including light refreshments.

DINING WITH THE ROMANS

28 November, 7pm, Stationers' Hall, London: Classics for All's annual fundraising talk features a distinguished panel discussing food in the ancient world. Dr Paul Roberts*, Prue Leith CBE and Sally Grainger will discuss this fascinating topic, facilitated by Peter Jones MBE. The audience will be invited to participate in a brief Q&A before repairing to the reception room for some wine and Roman canapés in the stunning Stationers' Hall. Tickets £40–100 each, including reception.

**This evening coincides with the Ashmolean Museum's 'Last Supper in Pompeii' exhibition, running from 25 July 2019 to 12 January 2020, curated by Dr Roberts.*

A GALLERY OF ANCESTORS

ANCIENT HISTORY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Prof Nino Luraghi, Wykeham Professor of Ancient (Greek) History

The inevitable implication of becoming the new Wykeham Professor of Ancient (Greek) History is that at the same time you become somebody's successor. That has practical advantages: when asked in College who I am, the answer that is most likely to satisfy my interlocutor is 'Robert Parker's successor'. My immediate predecessor, Professor Robert Parker, is by any standard one of the kindest and most helpful colleagues around, and it seems to assuage fellows' sense of cosmic order to know that somebody has been hired to fill his place – irrational as this might sound, since of course there is no guarantee that the new incumbent will show even a fraction of the qualities that generated so much goodwill around the predecessor, as I repeat to myself with some anxiety. On the other hand, when I feel like feeding my sense of personal inadequacy – an exercise for which my current job leaves me little time, luckily – I can think of myself as 'the second successor of George Forrest' or 'the third successor of Antony Andrewes'. To say nothing of Theodore Wade-Gery, of course – remember The Athenian Tribute Lists? Recently, this somewhat daunting line of succession was brought home to me as I commemorated the first incumbent of the Wykeham Chair, John Myres, who held it from its institution in 1910 to 1939, or from before WWI to the dawn of WWII – a man who excelled equally in anthropology, Bronze Age archaeology, Greek historiography and privateering. You cannot beat that. To compound the syndrome, I am a rather unlikely candidate for my role: I believe I am the only one of the current statutory professors of Classics, Ancient History and Classical Archaeology not to hold an Oxford degree. But then again, a colleague assures me that I am the first Wykeham Professor who was not previously a New College student. How can I ever be worthy of my predecessors?

> NOT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE, I FIND MYSELF IN A NEW PLACE, WONDERING WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO.

But then again, why do I even bother? Why should I? I have my own intellectual ancestry, partly invented by myself, as all genealogies are after all. It was Oswyn Murray who taught me to look at Greek culture as a historical phenomenon, with its specific features and its development over time. Hans-Joachim Gehrke convinced me of the need to see, behind that fascinating cultural world, a reality of social relations and social practice which followed logics we can investigate and to some extent understand, given an adequate toolkit – without Weber, Vernant only takes you so far. Behind them, stand the putative ancestors I never knew, Arnaldo Momigliano and Moses Finley. Whenever I feel tempted to compliment myself on figuring out a possible meaning of a portion of an ancient text, on stone or paper, I turn to their writings to be reminded that every minute piece of the mosaic we try to piece together means nothing if it cannot be put in relation with innumerable more, becoming part of an always incomplete and tentative pattern, what we call the history of the ancient world.

Ancient historians of the 21st century, we are stewards of an immense legacy, faced with the task of increasing it and making it speak to women and men who are so much younger and different from us, to say nothing of our ancestors. How to make sure that the giants on whose shoulders we stand will not paralyse us? How can we build on their immense intellectual energies in order to go beyond the horizons they opened up for us? How can we learn from their mistakes, as we work to make our own, which will be revealed as such by our own students? Not for the first time in my life, I find myself in a new place, wondering what am I supposed to do. Scholarship is a sermon that is best preached by example, of course, but there is something to be said for taking a break every so often and reflecting on what it is that we do and why, as we labour under the stern gazes of our ancestors, old and new, real and imaginary, staring at us from our bookshelves or from the ever-changing repertoire of our memories.

Clockwise from left: Sir John Linton Myres; Oswyn Murray on his 80th birthday; Arnaldo Momigliano; Hans-Joachim Gehrke; Raimondo Luraghi; Moses Finley; Nino Luraghi; George Forrest; Robert Parker.

FROM THE DANUBE TO THE THAMES:

ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE CORE AND ON THE PERIPHERIES OF THE ROMAN WORLD

Dr Dominik Maschek, Associate Professor of Roman Archaeology and Art

I am a Classical Archaeologist with a special focus on Roman architecture, architectural decoration, art, urbanism, funerary archaeology, and the Roman provinces. After obtaining my PhD from the University of Vienna, I was Assistant Professor at the University of Darmstadt (Germany). In 2015, I moved to the UK where I took up a lectureship in Classical Archaeology at the University of Birmingham. In 2018, I joined the Faculty of Classics as Associate Professor of Roman Archaeology and Art, at the same time becoming a Fellow of Wolfson College. Since my years as an undergraduate in Vienna, I have worked on archaeological excavations and field projects in Austria, Greece and Syria. My research interests cover all aspects of ancient material culture, and in my work I always try to combine written sources and archaeology. Most recently, I published a book on the social and cultural impact of violence and civil war towards the end of the Roman republic.

In a current field project, supported by the John Fell Fund and conducted in co-operation with the archaeological museum of Ceprano and the British School at Rome, I focus on one particularly notorious but ill-documented episode of this time period: the siege of the allied Latin town of Fregellae by a Roman army in 125 BCE. Fregellae is located in the Liri valley close to modern Ceprano. Its radical destruction fuelled a series of crises which ultimately led to the Social War of 91 BCE. By using airborne laser scanning techniques (LiDAR) and topographical survey we will try to identify the archaeological traces of this cataclysmic siege as well as those of other clashes from the Napoleonic wars to World War II. The results of these surveys shall serve as the essential proof of concept for a major future project that will lead to the first multidisciplinary and diachronic project of battlefield archaeology in Italy.

In July 2019, I will lead a team of Oxford students on a three-week field excavation at the Roman site of Carnuntum (Austria). The project is run in collaboration with the Archaeological Park Carnuntum and the archaeology division of the Federal State of Lower Austria. I have been involved in the Carnuntum excavations since my time as an undergraduate in Vienna, starting my first campaign of fieldwork there in 2001. From 2005 to 2010, I conducted several extended research excavations at the site. I returned to Carnuntum in 2016 as the director of an annual archaeological field school (first conducted by the University of Birmingham, now organised for undergraduates and graduates from Oxford). The area of Roman Carnuntum is one of the most important archaeological landscapes in central Europe, in particular as it has not been covered by any substantial settlement in the post-Roman period. The excavations in July will focus on a huge urban villa in the so-called civilian town (pictured below). This complex was first built in the Severan period (early 3rd century CE), with substantial enlargement and subsequent building phases throughout the 3rd and 4th centuries. The whole complex was destroyed by a devastating earthquake in the mid-4th century CE, but Roman settlement activity continued into the first decades of the 5th century. The aim of the 2019 campaign will be to excavate and record both the post-earthquake layers and the earlier structures in the south eastern part of the villa.

Last but not least, I am currently also working on a new socio-political history of Roman art from the early Republic to the Imperial period. Based upon the key role of the Roman extended family (the gens), I will analyse art and architecture not only as media of self-representation but also as crucial factors in the negotiation of status and power relations amongst the Roman elite and their dependents.

Ongoing excavation of the Roman urban villa, Archaeological Park Carnuntum (Austria), 2018.

THROUGH THE GATES OF HORN: **DREAMS IN THE ANCIENT WORLD**

Dr Peter Thonemann, Associate Professor in Ancient History; Forrest-Derow Fellow and Tutor in Ancient History, Wadham College

© JULIA BANFIELD

In 1972, Brian Masters wrote an absorbing little book called *Dreams about H.M. The Queen*. On the basis of several hundred interviews, Masters came to the striking conclusion that 'up to one third of the country has dreamt about the Royal Family'. What is more, 'nearly fifty per cent of the dreams gathered for this book involve having tea with one or other member of the Family'. This is from one Kate Hutchison, of Wrington, Somerset:

> The Royal Family came to tea. It seemed I had nothing for them to eat, so having dyed an old blanket dark blue, I cut this up and made sandwiches with it, hoping they wouldn't notice it was a blanket.

One wonders what the future social historian of 1970s Britain will make of this. All those nocturnal cups of tea must mean something. But what? Countless thousands of individual tea-related childhood traumas? Half-remembered newsreel of the Queen Mother having tea in bombed-out East End terraces? Or even a vague notion that tea with the Queen is the kind of thing one is supposed to dream about? (And are Royal tea-dreams still normal in 2019? Do you dream about trips to Starbucks with Meghan Markle?)

One wonders if millions of inhabitants of the Roman empire suffered from awful anxiety-dreams about eating stuffed dormice with Nero. Sadly, this tends not to be the kind of thing that Tacitus tells us. I have spent the last couple of years working on the most important ancient work on dreams and dreaming, the *Oneirocritica* ('The Interpretation of Dreams') of Artemidorus of Daldis. This extraordinary book, written around AD 200, is a vast compendium of the things about which an ordinary Greek in the eastern Roman empire might be expected to dream: teeth, flying, gladiators, shellfish, backgammon, dung-heaps, necrophilia, and so forth.

Artemidorus assumes that dream-interpretation is a worthwhile business because dreams – at least some dreams – predict the future. The interpretation of dreams is a form of divination, not fundamentally different in kind from the examination of sacrificial entrails or the flight of birds. The *Oneirocritica* is intended to serve as a practical handbook for the professional dream-interpreter who might be called upon to explain what it means to dream of urinating on one's friends at the local working men's club, having sex with Ares, or growing a beard on your right cheek.

Whether we are persuaded by Artemidorus' approach to dreams does not really matter all that much. Today, the chief interest of the *Oneirocritica* lies not in its scientific value as a guide to the future, but in the remarkably vivid picture that it presents of the Roman social order and the world-view of ordinary people in the eastern Roman empire. We may doubt whether dreaming of giving birth to an eagle ever really foretold that a poor woman's child would become senior centurion of a legion, or that the child of a moderately wealthy family would be presented to the emperor as a victorious athlete; but from the perspective of the Roman social historian, that these were seen as plausible and socially appropriate outcomes is a fact of quite extraordinary interest and importance.

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Left: Shop-sign of a Cretan dream-interpreter at Memphis, third century BC. The text reads: 'I interpret dreams, having a commission from the god; with good fortune: he is a Cretan, the one who interprets these things'.

The potential importance of the *Oneirocritica* to the Roman historian has, of course, long been recognised. When, in the third volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault came to analyse the sexual ethics of the high Roman empire, he began with the hair-raising account of sex-dreams in the *Oneirocritica*: 'Of all the texts that have survived from this period,' wrote Foucault, 'it is the only one that presents anything like a systematic exposition of the different forms of sexual acts'. Nonetheless, when I began work on the *Oneirocritica* two years ago, I was startled to find how selectively historians had quarried this remarkable text. A fair amount has been written on slavery in the *Oneirocritica* (the book includes several extraordinary accounts of slaves' own dreams), but Artemidorus' rich and complex analyses of dreams about the human body (including physical disabilities), the gods, the natural world, and countless other topics remain *terra incognita* to most Roman historians. I hope that the forthcoming Oxford World's Classics translation of the *Oneirocritica* (translated by Martin Hammond, with my introduction and notes) and its accompanying 'companion' volume (*An Ancient Dream-Book*) will help more readers to find their way into the bizarre and fascinating world of ancient dreams.

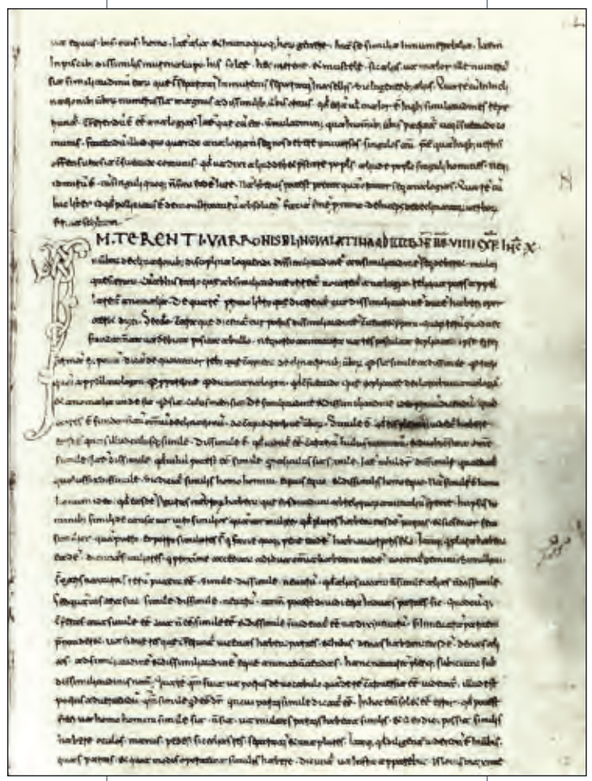
VARRO ON THE LATIN LANGUAGE: **A WORKAHOLIC ODDBALL AT WORK**

Prof Wolfgang de Melo, Professor of Classical Philology; Governing Body Fellow, Wolfson College

In March this year, my work on Varro came out in two beautifully produced OUP volumes. I never miss an occasion to show these volumes to family and friends, and they in turn feel obliged to ask how I got interested in this author. The underlying assumption seems to be that classicists feel deep admiration for specific authors, and that this admiration then inspires them to start their work. If this is how it is meant to be, I have failed in my career so far. The first author I published on was Plautus, about whom we know very little; and if I am being honest, Varro was a workaholic oddball. I started work on the *De lingua Latina* simply because OUP asked me if I were interested in producing a critical text, and one does not say no to OUP lightly. However, by the time I submitted my work in December 2017, I had learned to respect Varro, and to some extent to admire him.

Varro's *De lingua Latina*, in twenty-five volumes, was meant as a comprehensive treatment of the Latin language, and as such it was unique in the first century BC. An introductory volume was followed by six books on etymology, six on morphology, and twelve on syntax. Sadly, that is not how the work has come down to us. What we have today is books 5-10 in direct transmission, and various quotations from the other books. In other words, we have the second, practical half of the etymological part, and we have the first, theoretical half of the morphological part, as well as a number of snippets whose value is not always clear; some are paraphrases rather than direct quotations, and some can be shown to misrepresent Varro's ideas.

Varro's etymologies are of course pre-scientific, and as such they are often wrong from a modern perspective; but wrong does not mean stupid, and there is still a great deal to be learnt from them. It is interesting to see how Varro interprets the linguistic relationship between Latin and Greek, thinking of cognate words and parallel developments rather than seeing Latin as a daughter language of Greek. Often the etymologies are accompanied by quotations from earlier authors that would otherwise be lost to us. And since the etymologies are grouped thematically, we can see what topics matter to Varro; he is thoroughly Roman in his interests, moving on swiftly from the universe and the continents to Italy and then to Rome. Within Rome, he focuses on public office, the military, and food items, revealing a fondness for pork products and sausages. Virgil's *Aeneid* may be programmatic and idealistic, but Varro tells us what really makes a Roman tick.



The theoretical discussion of morphology that Varro provides is not so different in content from modern theories. He talks about the big categories: the case system, number, gender, tense, voice, and many others. And yet he does not give us a grammar as such. These topics are not ends in themselves. Rather, he wants to find out to what extent language is regular and predictable. Later grammarians are better at giving us rules and listing the exceptions to the rules. But it is Varro who tries to understand the larger picture.

Varro will never make it onto a school syllabus; he will always remain an author read by few. But he is an author worth reading: what he lacks in style and elegance he makes up for in thoughtfulness and common sense. I used to think of him as a workaholic oddball, and I stand by that; but I wish more Roman authors were like him.

Top: *Varro's De lingua Latina: Introduction, Critical Text, Translation, and Commentary* (OUP, 2019). Centre: The opening of Book 10 of the *De lingua Latina*.

MANETHO'S ASTROLOGY...
HOMER'S STRANGEST OFFSPRING

Prof Jane Lightfoot, Professor of Greek Literature; Charlton Fellow and Tutor in Classics, New College

Do you have a nightmare question from the person you don't really know who you have ended up next to at dinner? Mine is 'What do you work on?' Not because I am reluctant to talk about it, but because the person is expecting the answer 'Ovid' (or 'Theodorus Metochites', or 'calcium-signalling proteins', or 'jacobians', or whatever) which, however obscure, would at least be clear and well-defined. My problem is that I need to explain a method. I treat texts like archaeological sites. I find and excavate them – which means editing and commenting and writing critical essays – as painstakingly as I can. I will go as late and far afield as my instinct for a new site takes me. I like my site as unexplored as possible: who knows, I may strike gold. Above all I want to show that it's not just the inscriptions and the Vindolanda tablets and the occasional papyrus with spectacular new material that have pulling power. For the traditional philologist it has often been sitting on the library shelves all along. It's just that we need to take it down and read it.

One such work is the corpus of astrological poems attributed to 'Manetho', written in Egypt from the early second century AD onwards. Let me explain why I chose this arid list of astrological inputs and outcomes ('if Saturn is setting in conjunction with Venus, the offspring will be eunuchs') for the subject of my latest big commentary.

The first reason – not the most important – is that astrology is a curious beast in itself. Of course it is hocus pocus. But on the evidence available to the ancient world, where astronomy was founded on the observation that seasonal change was associated with the regular heavenly motions, it was entirely rational to suppose that the stars influenced terrestrial events. The great Ptolemy (he of the *Almagest*) thought this. If the seasons and the life-cycle of animals and plants, why not humans too?

In and after the Hellenistic period, the knowledge gained from long observation of the skies was systematised and applied to the births of individual human beings in the new 'science' of horoscopy. And if by 'science' we mean an observation-based, systematic and organised study of the physical world, astrology fulfils the brief magnificently. It is just that in other respects (experimentation, repeatability, falsifiability) it is a total failure.

Astrology was an impossible hybrid. It involved the imposition of an abstract mathematical grid on the heavens, and the elaboration of a glass bead game of infinite pedantry to interpret the planets' solemn dances upon this ground. And 'game' is just the right metaphor. We have a number of what look like astrologers' boards, where counters of presumably precious stuffs could be moved against a set of concentric circles like a darts board (and were perhaps utilisable for certain types of board-game). The Romans talked about games of chance with the same fatalistic language that they applied to the outrageous ups-and-downs that the stars imposed. A crazy para-universe of demented rules applied to both, only in the case of astrology its practitioners were also rhetoricians vying for control of a discourse which commanded real authority and could make emperors tremble.

A poem like that of 'Manetho' is the best possible illustration of the true nature of this belief-system which swept the Roman world, from the trash of Juvenal's Rome to the paranoid élite. It has the pseudo-science (and explains, nebulously, how to calculate what everyone wanted to know, but dared not ask, the length of life). But it also mobilises the popular clichés of fates and spinners, and it shamelessly appropriates the language of earlier Greek hexameter poetry to talk about the stars as if they were Olympian gods, colourfully-characterised personal agents who interact with high drama, and collectively order the cosmos with all the inexorability of Homeric Zeus. 'Manetho' lays bare that the whole pageant of solemn foolery is erected on the untheorised foundations of popular belief. This has to be among the most bizarre of Homer's progeny.

But the real reason for this work's fascination is that, Homeric though its antecedents ultimately are, it is quite unlike the great majority of our classical texts, which are written by and for élites. The poems supply interpretations for planetary positions which we can see annotated in hundreds of papyrus almanacs and ephemerides from Oxyrhynchus (see illustration). Professionals needed some such material to make a forecast; interested amateurs could use it once they had the planetary data; as it happens the poem often has the character of an aide-memoire for someone who knows the basics and wants a handy digest. Everyone had an interest in stellar prediction, and astrology speaks to what people wanted for themselves, never mind the public language of honorific inscriptions which formalise the proper public conduct of citizens and communities the length and breadth of the Roman empire. Or, rather, they show the extent to which the individual person had accepted it, but how (for example) coercive civic ethics might pull against private desire.

This is the world of the average man. People want money. Expenditure might be ruinous – but also brings prestige. One gets ahead through powerful connections. The truly fortunate man, born under kindly planets, lives in the entourage of kings. He is wealthy and influential. There being no state to support him, he has a strong network of family and friends, whom he acquires and retains through affability and charm, a great asset. This is the world of Cicero and Seneca's ethical treatises on friendship and mutual benefit, only stripped of the fig-leaf of philosophic high-mindedness; these are pragmatic and calculated ways to get ahead. Conversely, we see the social censure applied to the small-minded, the misanthrope, the mean.

The fortunate man has a docile wife and plenteous offspring, although astrology is much more given to elaborating the dolorous situations of the widowed, the childless, the infertile – and the sexual deviant, born when planets naturally masculine or feminine are misaligned in places of contrary gender. Intense shame is attached to anything other than reproductive intercourse within respectable marriage – to the adulterer; to the pandering husband; to the man married to an old woman, or slave girl, or prostitute; to the man who 'does the works of women' (very dark, this) or *vice versa*; to the wretch who cuts off his genitals with his own hands (a reference to the self-castrating eunuch priests of oriental cults in Rome).

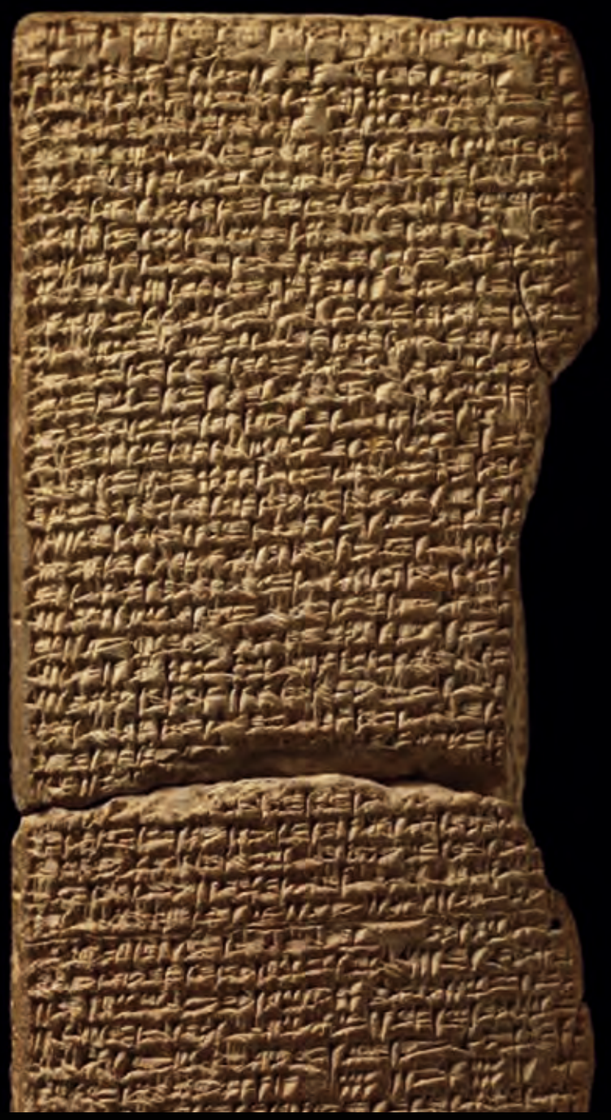
In the world of astrology where the austere mathematics of the heavens are mapped to the mess of human life by means of speculative analogy, the *Medium Caelum* – directly overhead – represents mid-life, one's career and professional success. This is one of astrology's most urgent interests, and the section where the poet describes trades and crafts is his greatest poetic investment. Authors from Plato and Aristotle onwards looked down on anything that involved manual work with the hauteur of the élite classes who can life off land, investments, and slave labour. 'Manetho' (and other ancient astrological texts), however, gives us the viewpoint of the little man, the craftsman, who has pride in his labour; the artisan of luxury products, the sculptors, the engravers (and painters) of gemstones, the perfumiers, makers of garlands, artisans of graceful, gracious, feminine trifles. He gives us the painter in encaustic wax – which, given this is Egypt, is probably the painter of the beautiful mummy-portraits we see in the British Museum. And we have the wretches, too, who embalm the bodies in the necropolis, full of noxious substances and disgusting smells, and slave-custodians of tombs along with the melancholy and mad, like the Gadarene demoniac in the gospels.

I called this Homer's strangest offspring. But it is no real surprise that to represent the gamut of human life the poet's preferred literary model is the *Odyssey*. Now some eight hundred years old, it is still the master-text for a tough world in which one lives by mother wit, sinks or swims – and aspires to the comfortable commonplaces of wealth, advancement, and a fertile wife. As evidence for popular ethics goes, it doesn't get much better than this.

My dinner-companion and I are now well into the chocolate mascarpone trifle, sunk in banal material wellbeing of which the astrologers would certainly have approved. But were I properly to answer the question which she probably asked over the starter, all this is what I would have to explain.

Image left: Fragment of an astrologer's board: drawing from Jean-Sylvain Bailly, *Histoire de l'Astronimie Ancienne* (1775), plate 3.
Above: P. Oxy. 4178, fragment of ephemeris (list of daily positions of planets), c. AD 261.

THE GODDESS AND THE HERDSMAN, FROM SUMER TO ROME



If the famous Roman legend of Aeneas has a Greek origin, what can be said about the Greek story itself, which was clearly well-established at an early stage? The wider questions raised by the literary comparison are complex...

One of the earliest and best-known tales that connect Greece with Rome is the story of Aeneas, Anchises and Aphrodite. The Homeric *Hymn to Aphrodite* recounts the affair that led to Aeneas' birth, describing how Aphrodite once fell in love with and seduced his father Anchises, a noble herdsman tending his cattle on mount Ida. The Hymn thus elaborates the genealogical background of Aeneas as presupposed by Homer's *Iliad* and Vergil's *Aeneid*, to mention just two prominent literary treatments.

If the famous Roman legend of Aeneas has a Greek origin, what can be said about the Greek story itself, which was clearly well-established at an early stage? Some have compared the tale of Anchises and Aphrodite to a mythological motif attested in a number of southern Mesopotamian literary sources in the Sumerian language, dating mainly to the late 3rd and early 2nd millennia BC. Several historical kings of this period claimed to be the husband of the goddess Inana, who was, among many other aspects, celebrated for her erotic power. In Sumerian mythology Inana was imagined to be the spouse of the shepherd Dumuzi, whose identity could be adopted by historical kings in order to depict themselves, in royal inscriptions and propagandistic literature, as lovers of Inana.

Scholars have noted that this myth appears to have affinities with the tale of Anchises and Aphrodite: the goddess involved is the love-goddess; she elaborately seduces her counterpart; the counterpart is a herdsman; but more than that, the counterpart is also a royal figure (the Sumerian king, or in the case of Anchises, the ancestor of the future Trojan dynasty). The relationship between early Greek and ancient Near Eastern literature and religion is one of my research interests, and – as often happens – an originally unconnected project has prompted me to look at this topic in an unexpected new light. Six years or so ago I was preparing to begin a large project, an edition of about twenty unpublished Sumerian literary texts belonging to the Schøyen Collection in Norway, and having only limited experience of editing undeciphered material I asked my senior colleague Dr Marie-Christine Ludwig to help me practise in the British Museum, which holds the world's largest collection of cuneiform texts. Eventually Dr Ludwig directed me to a beautiful and generally well-preserved tablet that has, surprisingly, languished undeciphered in the British Museum for nearly one hundred years (see photograph of the reverse). We have recently published our joint edition of the tablet, which turns out to contribute some new aspects to the comparison with Aphrodite and Anchises.

In essence, the poem inscribed on the tablet describes at length the union between Inana and Ishme-Dagan, king of the city of Isin in the early 2nd millennium BC. While the preparations for their union are at first narrated in conventional terms, a disturbance suddenly occurs, leading the poem to describe the king's suffering under Inana's wrath in highly lyrical terms (the passage is slightly fragmentary):

> Your (Inana's) crescent-moon bed for which you showed no concern […],
>
> Ah, your heart is troubled, unrelenting anger–(the king's) hand did not […],
>
> Mother Inana, most twisted one among the gods, evil […],
>
> You have let there be a slip in his womb for him […],
>
> As he writhes in distress (and) lamenting, as […] fate,
>
> You (Inana) have alienated his wife from him, you have turned his child away from him […].
>
> You have made him fly away like a dove from (its) nook, a lament […].
>
> As you apply the grievous whip and goad, […]
>
> My lady, to sing of your heroism is an empty wasteland!

The goddess has turned away, for unexplained reasons, but the king's protective deity now intervenes on his behalf, and by the end of the poem Inana is reconciled:

> She bandaged (the places where) the whip had fiercely struck,
>
> She cleansed (the king) of the pure dust like a good metal, she polished him,
>
> She cast her joyous glance upon him, she let him rise up in life:
>
> You (Inana) have granted him a wife, (who) bore a son for him (and) set him up in great joy!

Two new aspects emerge from this. One is the central importance of the king's son and heir, which strongly suggests that legitimation of the royal offspring was seen to be at least part of the purpose of the king's union with Inana: the Graeco-Roman evidence always emphasised that a future ruler was to emerge from the affair between goddess and herdsman, and this aspect is now clearly documented also in the Sumerian sources. Second, Inana's punishment of her husband Dumuzi is a well-known motif of Sumerian mythology, and we see here for the first time that this motif could be applied to the historical king in his capacity as Inana's spouse: yet the motif of transgression by the noble herdsman is part of the Graeco-Roman tale too, since Anchises boasted of his conquest of Aphrodite and was lamed by Jupiter with a thunderbolt, which is why we see Aeneas carrying him from the flames of Troy in the *Aeneid*.

The wider questions raised by the literary comparison are complex: some scholars have argued for a historical connection between the Sumerian and Greek (and thus ultimately also Roman) evidence, perhaps by Phoenician mediation. Other interpretations of these apparent parallels may also be possible, and there is further material, both Greek and non-Greek, to consider. But the fresh perspectives offered by the new text in any case illustrate the potential for further research, which I hope to pursue in two ways. The first is traditional and disciplinary: the fact that a tablet such as this one can have remained unpublished in an intensively studied collection like the British Museum shows how much basic decipherment remains to be done, and my edition of the further Sumerian literary texts in the Schøyen Collection, to appear this summer, is just another drop in the ocean. The second strand of my research is broader, and attempts to consider mythology and religion in the eastern Mediterranean in a cross-cultural comparative perspective. In some cases this can reveal historical connections between east and west, which undoubtedly contributed to the formation of important parts of early Greek mythology. In other cases the comparison can simply serve to remind us that, despite the disciplinary boundaries imposed by modern forms of academic organisation, it can be worth looking beyond the familiar Graeco-Roman sources, and to realise that other people were sometimes saying and doing quite similar things elsewhere.

Dr Christopher Metcalf, Associate Professor in Classical Languages and Literature; Tutorial Fellow, Queen's College

Image left: Cuneiform tablet, British Museum, 12.97 x 4.36 cm, ca. 20th century BC, from southern Mesopotamia, containing the 'Song of the goddess Inana and king Ishme-Dagan'.

Below: Federico Barocci, *Testa di Anchise*, between 1585 and 1598, Windsor Castle.

OXFORD–BERLIN RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP

ETHNICITY, CULTURE AND RELIGION IN THE HELLENISTIC WORLD AND THE ROMAN EMPIRE

At the end of 2017 'The Oxford-Berlin Research Partnership' was established between the University of Oxford and four Berlin partners. Last year, the partnership called for academic proposals to create close research collaboration in the Humanities, the Social Sciences, Medicine and the STEM subjects. Together with two colleagues from Berlin – Claudia Tiersch, Professor of Ancient History at the Humboldt Universität, and Susanne Gödde, Professor of Religious Studies at the Freie Universität – I submitted a Classics proposal to investigate: '*Imperial Expectations and Regional Persistence: Ethnicity, Culture and Religion as Fundamental Resources of Regional Identities in the Hellenistic World and the Roman Empire*'. We were thrilled to learn in December that ours was one of the 29 successful projects!

The particular focus of our work is the role of religion and local religious markers, and our goal is to explain how regional persistence in the face of Graeco-Roman cultural dominance was expressed in religious terms. Of interest are phenomena such as the local names of gods, religious calendars, rituals, festivals, the representation of divine power, and the position of ruler cult. In light of the 'integrating' quality normally ascribed to religion in the context of empire, the approach is both surprising and fascinating, and only conceivable within the wider and welcome 'post-colonial' shift in the study of ancient empires. Rather than looking at elite culture within the Roman Empire, the project will steer attention towards expressions of regional and provincial culture. Fascinating recent studies have revealed the persistence of local religious expressions, which formed the core of local knowledge and identity. To give but two broad examples: in Republican Italy, religious beliefs and their collective manifestations were an important means for the Italian allies of Rome to preserve their identity and even to create spaces for resistance. In Asia Minor, cities, sanctuaries and cult communities safeguarded their status vis-à-vis Hellenistic rulers and Roman government by reminding the inhabitants of their religious traditions and longstanding privileges.

THE STUDY OF RELIGION SHOWS THAT ALL RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS FACILITATE THE FORMATION OF COLLECTIVE MEMORIES TO AN EXCEPTIONAL DEGREE AND THAT THE CONSTRUCTION OF CULTURAL IDENTITIES IS ALMOST ALWAYS CLOSELY LINKED TO ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS MARKERS.

The study of religion shows that all religious systems facilitate the formation of collective memories to an exceptional degree and that the construction of cultural identities is almost always closely linked to ethnic and religious markers. In line with these observations, even early Christianity – in spite of its emphasis on the transgression of ethnic, political and social boundaries – formulated its identity by way of ethnic markers in order to both establish its own history on the basis of a genealogical tradition and to distance itself from and advance its position vis-à-vis other groups such as Jews or Pagans. The second-century Christian theologian Tatian, for example, attacked Graeco-Roman cult statues vehemently. Interestingly, he argued not only that they were invalid idols but also that the statues were an expression of a Graeco-Roman cultural dominance, used by Rome in order to subjugate other nations and to deprive them of their cultural and ethnic identities.

Dr Beate Dignas, Associate Professor in Ancient History; Fellow and Tutor, Somerville College

Building on individual research that we have conducted in the past, the collaboration brings together wide-ranging and interdisciplinary expertise in order to explore these questions. Case-studies from within the ancient pagan religions as well as early Christianity illustrate the complex links between religious symbolism and ethnic and cultural assertion, including an understanding of local and regional perspectives as a response to a dominant power. Ranging from the Greek novel to epigraphy or to iconography, the media that reflect how ancient societies dealt with cultural and religious differences, with hegemony and integration, with the emergence of a Christian religiosity, are manifold and evoke fruitful and lively debate.

Our project depends on and fosters widely interdisciplinary co-operation. The award, which enables intellectual exchange and academic workshops in both Oxford and Berlin over an 18-month period, is designed to encourage applications for future funding to set up a long-term collaboration. All activities will continue to include participation and contributions by the project leaders and established colleagues in their respective departments, as well as doctoral and post-doctoral researchers, who form an important part of the partnership.

Left: Priest of Cybele offering sacrifice, Ostia, 3rd century AD.

ROME AND THE ENVIRONMENT:

ROMAN SOLUTIONS FOR FLOOD RISKS

Dr Marguerite Ronin, Marie Curie post-doctoral fellow in Roman History

In a time of increasing concern about the way we exploit our natural environment, and of growing uncertainty as to how we will cope with ever more damaging natural catastrophes, historians cannot but wonder if ancient societies had to face such issues, and how they responded to them. It is not a coincidence that environmental history was developed in the wake of the environmental activism of the 1970s: as ever, historians essentially write the history of their own time. My current research focuses on the management of natural resources in the Roman Empire, and it is undoubtedly my own concern for environmental matters that drew my attention to this topic in the first place. The questions I am asking about the Roman world are thus often inspired by what I read in the press about contemporary natural risks and catastrophes.

Last year, a terrible flood struck southern France. The catastrophe not only caused considerable material damage, but also led to dozens of casualties. It recalled the disastrous flood of 1992, which happened in the same region and destroyed part of the nearby Roman town of Vaison (*Vasio Vocontiorum*). Interestingly, while most of the town's infrastructure was irreparably damaged, the Roman bridge erected in the 1st c. AD resisted the torrents of muddy water, as it probably had done many times before. It was clear that the Roman engineers designed the bridge to withstand floods of a great magnitude. Their aim was to prevent any disruption in the traffic and transport of goods and people towards the rich cities of Apta Julia (Apt) and Aqua Sextiae (Aix-en-Provence). Many other examples of ancient material infrastructures built to protect human and economic assets from damage by natural disasters could be cited. However, protection is only one aspect of what geographers and sociologists call the 'management of risks'.

Today, flood management policies seek to act upon the many causes of the natural event: not only heavy rains, but also agricultural practices, land clearing, and more broadly the management of the drainage basin. Human practices can considerably increase the danger of flooding, as the Romans were very well aware. Rome, the world's first metropolis, faced unprecedented environmental challenges, and the Romans had to develop innovative solutions. For instance, by the end of the 1st c. BC, the most ancient districts, along the Tiber, were cramped and over-populated, with consequences for the safety of the city. Suetonius recalls how Augustus had to clear out from the channel of the river all the rubbish and illegal constructions that were increasing flood risks by preventing proper water flow. Between 27 BC and AD 14, our sources mention a major flood every six years.

Political decisions and action on a large scale were not the only solutions applied, though. Floods were a threat not only to public infrastructures, but also to the private interests of the many individuals who had property, farmland or workshops located along the river. To help them protect their assets, jurists and magistrates worked out a series of regulations enabling private individuals to sue neighbours who were changing the course of a river to the point that a flood risk was created. That is the deep originality of Roman private law and of the numerous and often convoluted legal enactments on waterways, river banks, or run-off water: by safeguarding their own interests, plaintiffs were also protecting those of the community.

The 1st c. AD Roman bridge in Vaison (Vaucluse, France). After 20 centuries withstanding the occasional rises of the river Ouvèze, only the parapet was slightly damaged and repaired in the 1990s.

ACCESS & OUTREACH

The Access and Outreach Programme from the Faculty of Classics continues to grow and adapt to a changing educational landscape, with a number of recent and forthcoming projects, including: more targeted and sustained work with schools; increased collaboration with university programmes; and new online content designed to reach wider audiences. Please enjoy these snapshots of some of what we have been up to!

Qasim Alli, Outreach Officer

OXLAT – OXFORD LATIN TEACHING SCHEME

The OxLat scheme continues to thrive, and thanks to a generous donation from the Stonehouse Foundation, we have been able to extend the programme to a new cohort of Year 8/9 pupils this year. This scheme offers free tuition on Saturday mornings to 30 students from local state schools that do not offer Latin as a regular part of the curriculum. The tuition continues for two and a half years and takes them from beginners' level through to GCSE. Two previous cohorts have completed the scheme, from 2015–17 and 2017–19. A new cohort has begun in June 2019, and will sit their GCSE in summer 2021. The 2015 cohort enjoyed the Trinity Ancient World Programme, which offered them the opportunity to continue engaging with Classics, including Beginner's Ancient Greek and archaeological handling sessions. A number of this group have recently completed their university applications, with several gaining offers to study Classics at Oxford and elsewhere.

Our two GCSE Latin instructors have been instrumental in the success of this programme in recent years, and it is thus with great sadness that we are seeing them leave us in the near future. We thank Alex Gruar and Hannah Clarke for their exemplary work, commitment, and dedication, and wish them all the best in their new jobs. In light of this, we will soon be recruiting for two new part-time Latin instructors for the OxLat scheme – please keep an eye on our job listings if you are interested.

UNIQ EXPANSION

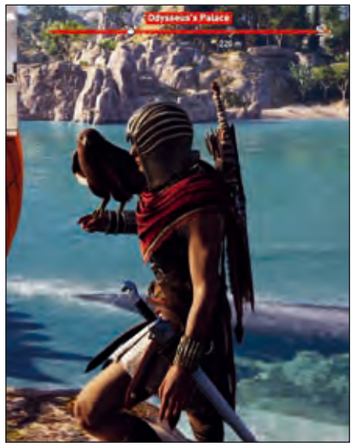
The University has this year expanded its UNIQ programme, and Classics now runs three UNIQ residential schools, focusing on Classical Archaeology and Ancient History, Ancient Greece, and Ancient Rome. UNIQ is open to students studying in their first year of further education, who are based at UK state schools/colleges. The UNIQ programme gives students a taste of the Oxford undergraduate student experience. They live in an Oxford college for a week, attend lectures and seminars, and receive expert advice on the Oxford application and interview process. UNIQ is an access programme, which means that we prioritise students with good grades from backgrounds that are under-represented at Oxford and other highly selective universities. A number of academic staff and students are involved in the design and delivery of our exciting Classics programmes, and this year our themes range across Death and Burial in the Ancient World, Race and Ethnicity in Ancient Greece, and Love and Sex in Ancient Rome.

ANCIENT WORLDS PROGRAMME

In collaboration with Worcester and Corpus Christi Colleges, we are aiming to deliver a free six-part university preparation programme for Year 12s from the North West, Yorkshire and Humber, who are considering studying a humanities subject at university. The programme is called 'Being Human: Ancient and Modern Perspectives on Humanity' and invites Year 12 state school students to join Oxford Classics academics in thinking through some of the modern world's biggest questions – by looking back to the ancient world.

ASSASSIN'S CREED ODYSSEY – ACADEMIC LET'S PLAY!

With the recent release of the video game 'Assassin's Creed Odyssey', there was a fantastic opportunity for outreach, and for introducing people to Classics through an exciting medium. We've been creating an Academic Let's Play, with current students and staff playing through parts of the game, highlighting and discussing different areas of Classics and the game's rich interaction with history, mythology, philosophy, archaeology and culture. The game is set in 431 BC during the Peloponnesian War. You play as Kassandra or Alexios, in the role of a Spartan-born mercenary (misthios). We currently have episodes in post-production-editing on maritime archaeology, gender



and sexuality, the Cyclops and disability tropes in literature, panhellenic sanctuaries, a walking tour of the Acropolis, and even an interview with CAAH alumnus and games designer Josh Baldwin! We are hoping to release these episodes on the faculty YouTube channel over the summer – keep an eye on our social media for updates!

This has been an exciting project, and a forward-looking, accessible engagement with Classics, both for those here with a vested interest in Classics, but also for those who love the various parts of this subject without even knowing it exists as a field of study. Our main concern has not been nit-picking about historical accuracy – rather we wanted to discuss the choices the game has made in portraying ancient Greek history, and where they deviate from our 'scholarly' understanding, to consider why.

ARE MEMES AS OLD AS TIME ITSELF?

In Hilary Term 2018, Corpus Christi's Centre for the Study of Greek and Roman Antiquity ran a seminar series on 'Aristophanes and the Current Political Moment'. In collaboration with the seminar conveners (Sam Gartland & Constanze Güthenke), we engaged a Classics graduate student to create an access video which spoke to the fantastic research and discussion raised. Alison Middleton, who is currently studying at Jesus College for her DPhil in Classical Languages and Literature, has created a hilarious, informative, and thought-provoking short video entitled 'Are memes as old as time itself?' The video draws on Alison's own comedic background and research interests, and explores the work of the playwright Aristophanes, whilst also asking big questions about the relationship between comedy and politics both in the ancient world and today. Featuring a host of Oxford tutors, undergraduates, and settings, the video has been picked up by the University's Oxplore platform, as well as finding use in Classics classrooms across the country; we hope you enjoy!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VpKfDwsQNDA

ALUMNI EVENTS

On **31 October** Nino Luraghi will be giving his **INAUGURAL LECTURE** as Wykeham Professor of Ancient History. Time and place will be announced on the faculty website in due course. There will be a drinks reception afterwards.

The next **FACULTY ALUMNI DAY** will be held on **14 March 2020** in the Ioannou Centre. Once again, the format will be accessible talks on current research conducted by faculty members and in our various research projects and centres.

Trinity Term is the time when all our named lectures take place, ie the **HAYNES LECTURE ON ETRUSCAN ARCHAEOLOGY**, the **GAISFORD LECTURE ON GREEK LITERATURE**, the **FOWLER LECTURE ON LATIN LITERATURE**, and the **LEWIS LECTURE ON GREEK EPIGRAPHY**. The dates for all of these will again be signalled on the faculty webpage.

In addition, the faculty, the sub-faculties, the research projects and centres run an extremely rich **PROGRAMME OF TALKS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR**. These talks are open to the public, so if you happen to be in town, it will be worth checking what is happening on the day. We try to assemble all the talks which take place in a given term in one document: **https://www.classics.ox.ac.uk/seminar**

FOR ALL THE LATEST NEWS, EVENTS, LECTURES AND PODCASTS PLEASE VISIT THE FACULTY WEBSITE:

CLASSICS.OX.AC.UK

To join the Classics Friends mailing list and receive updates on the faculty's seminars, lectures, and events please email reception@classics.ox.ac.uk

BRIDGING COURSE
A SUCCESSFUL START

Prof Tobias Reinhardt, Corpus Christi Professor of the Latin Language and Literature; Chair of the Faculty Board

The Faculty of Classics at Oxford is working hard to encourage students from all backgrounds to think about studying Classics. We also want to ensure that those who receive an offer of a place enjoy the subject to the full once they arrive here. As part of our efforts towards this goal, we have launched a Bridging Course, which ran for the first time at the beginning of the academic year 2018–19. The Bridging Course brought 20 state-educated incoming students to Oxford a week before Michaelmas Term started, for a programme of language classes, sessions on study skills, and talks by faculty members; the hope being that as a result the participants would begin their course prepared and with a clear idea of how to make the most of Oxford.

Participants stayed in one college for a week (before they moved to 'their' college at the start of week 0), and current students were on hand to welcome them, for conversation, and for general support. The first group of participants felt that the Bridging week gave them a head start to the course, allowed them to settle into a routine, and to acclimatise when for many the only experience they had had of Oxford so far was the admissions exercise.

The Bridging Course is also intended to dovetail with University outreach activities, notably the UNIQ summer school (which was the first contact with Oxford Classics for numerous current students), as well as *Opportunity Oxford*, which was announced on 21 May. *Opportunity Oxford*, which is coordinated by the University, caters for candidates from underrepresented groups in particular. The Faculty of Classics will participate in *Opportunity Oxford* from the beginning, but will simultaneously continue its own bridging course aimed at applicants from state schools who have obtained a place.

It was through the support and commitment of our donors that we were able to offer a Classics Bridging Course for the first time in 2018, to be repeated in 2019.

'Our favourite part of the Bridging week was meeting people just like us – people from the same backgrounds, with similar experiences and, especially, those with Course II status as Classicists. The latter has become especially important in building a support network external to college, which we've often relied on when feeling overwhelmed. The Bridging week helped to mitigate this to a great extent by giving us the chance to get a solid foundation in the language - Latin for Zahra, and Greek for Imogen. Our time was greatly enriched by the student helpers, who reassured us and made us feel excited about embarking on our Oxford journeys. The week introduced us to scansion – something completely unfamiliar to us – and offered us advice on essays and using the library, which sounds insignificant but was intimidating. This week marked the beginning of our friendship, which has been a standout moment from our first year. We are hopeful that future students, especially those on Course II, get the same opportunity that we did.'

Imogen Front (left) and Zahra Grieve, Wadham College