

CLASSICS CONVIVIUM

Letter from the Chair

RUTH SCODEL

Dear Friends,

The biggest challenge of the year for me was not directly part of my chair duties, but was organizing Feminism and Classics V. F & C is a quadrennial conference. After attending the 2004 meeting in Tucson, Bruce Frier suggested Michigan might host the next round. The department voted to go ahead, we chose the topic "Bringing It All Back Home" and Bruce and I started raising money.

F&C came to Ann Arbor from May 8 to 11, and it turned out to be well worth all the effort. This conference has a strong tradition of intellectual and social openness: students are encouraged to participate, and the oldtimers make an effort to include newcomers. Papers from a variety of fields, using a variety of methods, are all welcome. That tradition was beautifully sustained. Even though I couldn't hear as many papers as I would have liked, since I was constantly running back to make sure everything was running smoothly, I heard many very good talks—and I heard senior scholars asking helpful questions, and no showing-off at all. Almost everybody kept to time (amazing!). Greek and Latin literature, Greek and Roman history, archaeology and art history were all well represented, and reception was especially visible, with papers on everything from tragic mothers and the Theotokos in the *Christos Paschon* to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. When we decided it would be helpful to have a Region 1 dvd of Buffy Season 5 (the presenter being from England), it turned out that more than one grad student owned it.

Our colleagues from Kalamazoo and Grand Valley brought lots of undergrads with them. Many received free registration in return for

Ruth Scodel continues on pg 3



THIS ISSUE...

CHICKS WITH BRICKS—WARRIOR WOMEN, PG 2

COLCHIS, PG 3

LATIN TEACHING, PG 4

PHILOMEL, PG 6

FACULTY & GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS, PG 8

CHICKS WITH BRICKS

WARRIOR WOMEN by Jenn Finn

Classics Convivium Fall 2008

2

Volume XVI

In the Greco-Roman world, matters of war were overwhelmingly masculine: men decided to go to war, men actually fought in battle, and men dealt with the ramifications of warfare. Women's roles in the war effort are little recognized by ancient historians; when their involvement in military affairs is acknowledged, it is mainly in a context which describes their activities as *para phusin*, or "contrary to their nature."

Their most interesting and revealing role occurred in urban warfare. Though I would like to focus on the throwing of roof tiles especially, evidence exists for women's part in war outside of the so-called domestic sphere. For example, according to Plutarch's *Life of Pyrrhus*, when Pyrrhus of Epirus was about to attack Sparta, the Spartans convened and agreed to send the women and children to safety. The women, however, were determined to remain with the men and fight. The women dug an anti-elephant trench at night, provided food and ammunition, and cared for the wounded. Plutarch also tells of women aiding in a surprise attack against an enemy by smuggling weapons in for men who were otherwise unarmed. Plutarch concedes that, as soon as the royal army returned, the women went home, "no longer thinking it best to meddle in military affairs". The digging of ditches and the supply of general aid was the extent of women's active participation in campaigns. However, when

warfare reached a city's doorstep, matters changed. Women would mount the roofs of their houses and pitch roof tiles at invaders. There are many examples of tile-throwing from the Greco-Roman world. The most famous comes from Polyaeus, corroborated by Plutarch's *Life of Pyrrhus*, where an aged Argive woman, on the invasion of Pyrrhus of Epirus, famously struck him on the head with a roof tile, causing his death. Thucydides describes two such events: one when a Theban force attempted to attack Plataea at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, and another during the civil war in Corcyra in 427 BC. This time, the women's efforts are again described as improper to their sex: *para phusin*. Latin authors describe similar activity. Livy describes the women of Veii throwing stones and roof tiles at the Roman invaders during the sack of 396 BC. Like the Theban women in Thucydides, the women in Livy are partnered with slaves. Later in the Roman Empire, tile-throwing became a collective activity, and Latin authors tend to eliminate any indication of gender from descriptions of it. This gender-neutralization makes even more explicit the preoccupation in the Greek world and the early Roman world with women warriors, either pairing them with slaves, or explicitly mentioning the unnatural nature of the women's actions.

The historical sources suggest, especially with their repeated use of phrases like *para phusin*, that there was no place for women in warfare. All the way from Penelope to Lucretia, the elite Greco-Roman male had certain expectations of their women—above all, that women would stay at home. The last place a Greek or Roman male would expect their women to be was on the front lines. Barry suggests that any discomfort caused by women's entrance into the male sphere of warfare by throwing roof tiles might be assuaged by "a preservation at least of the traditional gender division of public and private space: women fought, but they fought from the domestic sphere." Fighting clearly threatened the elite ideal of women's role in the private sphere. But instead of suggesting, like Barry, that this threat was assuaged by the maintenance of the domestic sphere, I would suggest that the true discomfort arises because the women were taking part in warfare from their homes in the first place. Not only were these women entering into a male sphere by participating in war. In throwing tiles off of their roofs, women were literally breaking down their



Roman Stamped Brick, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology



Colchis in modern Georgia was famously the farthest shore in Greek mythology, the land of the golden fleece and home of Medea. In July of this year, I traveled there at the invitation of the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World at New York University to investigate the possibility of starting a joint NYU-Michigan archaeological project in the region of Vani in 2009. Vani is one of the principal archaeological sites of Colchis, an indigenous settlement near the river Phasis (after which the pheasant takes its name), rich in evidence for interaction with the Greek colonists on the shores of the Black Sea. I spent three days traveling around Colchis and other

parts of western Georgia, and three days in Tbilisi, where I ran a workshop on survey archaeology at the National Museum, and met with a number of local archaeologists and museum officials. Georgia is a beautiful and hospitable country, still as we all know trying to find its place in the post cold-war world. It has a rich archaeological heritage, full of interest for the study of colonization among other subjects. If the country has returned to stability, I hope to return to Georgia next summer with a team of students from Michigan to begin work on an archaeological survey of Vani and environs.

Ruth Scodel

continued from pg 1

helping out, and although they said much that they were hearing was over their heads, they were excited by it. We had a wonderful keynote by Kristina Milnor of Barnard (a Michigan alum, of course), "On the Inside, Looking Out: Ancient Women's Local Knowledge," which examined how some wall-paintings in Pompeii give a somewhat different message when you think of them as addressed to the people who live in the house instead of to outsiders coming in. (Unfortunately, we didn't see much of Kristina later in the conference because she wasn't feeling well: it turned out that she had appendicitis!) On Saturday afternoon, a troupe from Northwestern directed by Kate Boshier (another alum, surprise), gave us a rollicking rendition of Greg Robic's adaptation of Aristophanes' *Assemblywomen*. This was open to the general public, and at least a few of the general public were there.

For a few days, we had a little scholarly utopia in Angell Hall. We rented some tables and coffee urns, and set up breakfast and lunch buffets in the elementary Latin classroom. We bought organic, fair-trade coffee and I baked vast numbers of cookies. A good time was had by all, I think, and much was learned. And we came out in the black.

Scholarly utopias don't last more than a few days, and they require money and effort. But I like to think that F&C was a special case of what we hope the department always is. We try to produce *Convivium* in the same spirit. This issue has two items related to the conference—a summary of the paper given by Jennifer Finn, a student in the Interdepartmental Program in Greek and Roman History, and an article by Kate Boshier about her production of Aristophanes. We are trying to share with our alums and friends something of the intellectual life of the department. I hope you enjoy it.

LATIN TEACHING

LETTERS FROM CLASSICS ALUMNI

Classics Convivium Fall 2008

4

Volume XVI

The status quo for most who enter this enigma of a profession is between your 3rd and 5th years of teaching something happens to you or to your school that forces you out of the profession. It is conceivably a salary issue, an unsupportive administration (maybe trying to fire you for doing the right thing!), bad kids, poorly performing kids. At one point or another we as educators face these dilemmas. Why the same old rhetoric? So why stay? Why face such frustration daily, yearly?

LITTLE THINGS. For the laughs, for that very magnanimous moment of "I get it"; for the relationships we build with our students. For better or worse, we are a TEAM! The teacher steers the ship and the students row the oars. Our students may disrespect us now, but they will remember us, and they will respect us in the end. This is the only job that I know of which you can go home every night and sleep well knowing that all your little accomplishments will turn into big successes. You may not even know it or see it, but our success is real. We gave some rascally kids a chance. A chip and chair, right? We gave them options for their future. That is all anyone can ask for: just give me a chance to prove myself in this life!

I honestly laugh at the notion of the 3-5 year "Danger Zone" for most new teachers. Why? If you think you are in it, get out of the profession today. You were never committed from the beginning. It does take a village...it takes both nature and nurture. Believe and give yourself to it!

Humbly,

Ryan A. Vance
University of Michigan Alum, ED.BA 2005

Loudoun County Public Schools, VA
Harper Park Middle, Latin instructor

PS: This is the funniest job on the planet!!

In 1972, I transferred from WMU as a junior to U of M. From 1972-1974, I studied under some incredible U of M professors: Mrs. Gerda Seligson, Dr. Frank O. Copley, and Dr. Waldo Sweet. I performed in many Latin plays with Mrs. Seligson. I also studied "The Structural Approach" under Dr. Sweet, who gave me low grades in three courses, convinced that I never attended class much although I was there every day. In spite of low grades, I learned so much about transformational grammar from him. He was truly a genius!

My job as the Latin teacher at East Kentwood High School is challenging today because I must prepare daily for many different courses. In the second trimester, I had four 73-minute "preps" daily of which Latin 3-4 Cicero demanded three hours of preparation each night. The next generation of teachers should know that most Latin teachers are teaching 4-7 preps each day. Often we have split classes or teach during some other responsibility, such as homeroom. We also tutor before school at 7 AM and after school until sometimes 4:30. We sponsor a Latin Club and participate in the Michigan Junior Classical League's fall and spring conferences each year. The job is tedious. New teachers need to rely on help from veteran Latin teachers to assist them in meeting these challenges. Therefore, networking is very important.

College students should start participating with Michigan Junior Classical League whether they plan to teach or not. We can use the volunteers to run activities and judge contests. If they do become teachers, they have met the current teachers and built a network. They should become aware of the National Senior Classical League and participate actively as members in the activities of American Classical League, Michigan Classical Conference, and Detroit Classical Association.

Another challenge involves teaching authors I never studied. It is fortuitous if someone has had a class in a certain author, such as Vergil, Cicero, and Ovid, which are mainstays of Latin 3-4. However, it is necessary to see the job as a growing experience. Latin teachers who have not studied an author must be able to learn quickly either through self-study as I have done, or by taking additional classes or pre-conference sessions at the American Classical League's annual institute in June.

The Classics Department at U of M must insist that students are prepared for teaching classical mythology, culture, and history in addition to the literature and language. Since this might not dominate their textbook, Latin teachers should be prepared to supplement with mythology, culture, and history so their students are well-rounded and prepared to compete in certamen at the state and national level and so that their students earn high scores and awards on the National Latin Exam.

Deborah R. Stakenas
University of Michigan, AB in education, 1974

Latin Teacher, Kentwood Public Schools, East Kentwood High School, 2000-present.
State Chair, Michigan Junior Classical League. 2004-2008, 2008-2012.

My teaching experience in the Classics Ph.D. program at Michigan was nothing short of outstanding. I was privileged to teach a wide variety of courses, and when it came to Latin, Glenn Knudsvig and Debbie Ross were wonderful mentors. I could discuss anything with them, from larger issues such as syllabus planning to the minutiae of everyday classroom management, and walk away with a lot of sound advice. I was well served indeed when I made the transition from college to high school, teaching with its considerably heavier workload in terms of preparation, grading, and classroom contact hours—not to mention those days when teenagers will try your patience! Those particular challenges, though, are offset by many rewards, such as the satisfaction of working with

groups of bright kids for four years running. As a private school teacher, I've also had the opportunity to branch out in ways that I had not anticipated, from announcing sports events to coaching quiz bowl.

I would particularly remind the next generation of high school Latin teachers always to market the study of Classics enthusiastically in this modern era of overscheduled high schoolers competing to build unrealistically "loaded" resumes just to be considered for a top university. The demanding parent, especially, may not be as interested in the intrinsic rewards of Latin as in matters such as, "How much admissions leverage will Latin V get my child?" and "Can you assure my child of a 5 on the AP?" This isn't a new phenomenon – Glenn Knudsvig used to refer to it as "consumerism" – but as the expectations of high schoolers have broadened to an unprecedented degree, these are more frequently the types of questions that we have to answer.

While we can always mention the higher SAT scores that Latin students produce, we can effectively address both the intrinsic and the practical by emphasizing how Latin's place at the root of our educational system uniquely benefits a student across the curriculum. Some of the best feedback that I've enjoyed as a teacher involves students coming back to me and reporting that other classes, such as English, history, or even math, are now so much easier since they learned a lot of relevant things in Latin first.

Brad McNellen,
University of Michigan, PhD, 1994

ATTENTION ALUMNI!

Alumni news is on our website and we would like to hear from you! Please let us know what you have been doing since you left the University as an undergraduate or graduate student in our Department.

MICHIGAN CLASSICS

Alumnus

MICHIGAN CLASSICS

Alumna



You can also visit our website for more information on purchasing a Classical Studies t-shirt. Shirt texts include "Michigan Classics," "Michigan Classics Alumna," and "Michigan Classics Alumnus." All proceeds go to help support the undergraduate initiative. Please show your support!

PHILOMEL

by Philip Leaman & Tara Mulder

Philomel is a short film adaptation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* that came out of a collaboration between Tara Mulder and Philip Leaman. It is based in equal parts on trance films from the 1950s, early stop-motion animations, T.S. Elliot's *The Wasteland*, and, of course, Ovid's tale of savagery and revenge. Choosing to revamp the tone of the original poem, *Philomel* uses a literal translation as a mnemonic divining rod that guides a lone female figure through abandoned landscapes and environments in search for the cause of her recent tragedy. Stitching together still photographs to depict a protagonist who is simultaneously alive and inanimate, the film portrays the physical and emotional experiences of the story's two female characters, coalescing them as one internally divided figure—one that acts as both sister and wife, leader and follower, victim and avenger.

The actual structure of the film mirrors the structure of *The Wasteland*. Separate movements, represented by distinct locations, come together to form a whole. The film opens with a winter landscape. Snow blankets a forest at the bank of a large bridge and rises up over the river. Philomel floats like an apparition: beautiful, innocent, pre-rape. The next scene, a large steel, industrial kitchen, falls out of

order and represents both women, Procne and Philomel, post-rape, the appropriate revenge just dawning on them. The film then cuts to a museum-like mansion, filled with large Indonesian statues and bay windows: Philomel's silent imprisonment in the cabin, Tereus visiting her to rape her again and again. More scenes follow, each shot in a distinct location: Philomela weaving the tapestry, Procne in the throws of a Bacchic revelry, the killing of Itys. Over all the images runs a free-translation voice-over taken directly from Ovid, narrating the gruesome tale.



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Chicks with Bricks

continued from pg 2

houses, destroying and throwing away the typically gendered space of the domus while taking part in the male-dominated activity of war. Thus that they were “where they were supposed to be” giving aid to their men was the most threatening fact of all. I would suggest that it was this act of defiance, or at least the fear of women understanding it as such, that was the cause of much commentary on the part of our male historians.

Thus warfare, the worst thing that could happen to a state, was the best thing that could happen for the gender gap in the ancient world. Women and men shared the same ideas as to men’s performance on the battlefield, and men often fought all the more valiantly with their women in mind. Most importantly, when war threatened the city, women finally took action by throwing roof tiles at enemy invaders from their houses. It is the breaking down of the typically gendered space of the *domus* that causes a uniformly disturbed reaction from our male historians.

FACULTY & GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS

Faculty

Derek Collins and **Traianos Gagos** have been promoted to Professor.

Derek Collins has been appointed Associate Dean for the Humanities.

Traianos Gagos has been awarded the University's Librarian Achievement Award.

Bruce Frier has been appointed a Distinguished University Professor; he is the John and Teresa D'Arms Distinguished University Professor of Classics and Roman Law.

Paolo Asso and **Ruth Caston** have been appointed as Assistant Professors. Both are Latinists. Paolo specializes in Lucan; Greek and Latin Epic; Latin Poetry; Latin Literature of the Early Empire. While Ruth is especially interested in Augustan poetry; the passions and literature; ancient rhetoric; comedy and satire.

James Porter has left Michigan to become Professor of Classics and Comparative Literature at UC Irvine.

Graduate Student Placements

Brian Calabrese
Lecturer, University of Michigan

Robert Chenault (IPGRH),
Assistant Professor, Willamette University

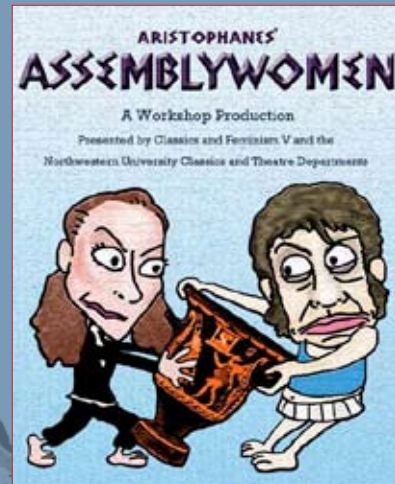
Jake MacPhail
Visiting Asst. Professor, University of Miami

Patrick Hogan
Visiting Asst. Professor, Hope College

Kathryn Steed
Visiting Asst. Professor of Classics & Humanities,
Reed College

Chad Shroeder
Visiting Asst. Professor, Emory University

Sanjaya Thakur
Riley Scholar, Colorado College



Photos taken of the
Assemblywomen Performance
at the **2008 Feminism V Conference**



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The Department of Classical Studies

'08 FALL EVENTS CALENDAR

Thursday, October 16, 7:00 PM, Shaman Drum
Alexis Stamatis

**Book reading and signing: American Fugue
(A Novel)**

Monday, October 27, 7:30 PM, Lydia Mendelssohn
Theatre

**The Argument written and performed
by David Greenspan**

Thursday, October 30, 7:00 PM, 1636 International
Institute, School of Social Work Building
Modern Greek Lecture – Gelina Harlaftis, Ionian
University, Corfu (co-sponsored with CES-EUC)

Conversations on Europe

Thursday, October 30 and Friday October 31,
4:00-6:00 PM

**Ancient Philosophy Lectures –
Dominic Scott, University of Virginia
Titles and Venues Forthcoming**

Monday, November 10, 3:00 PM, Vandenberg Room,
Michigan League

Gerald F. Else Lecture in the Humanities –
Heinrich von Staden, Institute for Advanced Study
Topic on Ancient Medicine

Title Forthcoming

Monday, November 17, 3:00 PM, 2175 Angell
Modern Greek Lecture – Kostis Kourelis
(co-sponsored with the Kelsey Museum)

**Radical Byzantium: American Archaeology
in Greece between the Wars**