



CELEBRATING OUR CLASSICS COMMUNITY

Agora

Spring 2020

Issue 4

IN THIS ISSUE:

Agora returns with an edition packed full of interesting articles to entertain, inform and help us delve into the ancient world in these universally difficult and uncertain times.

Leo Riley gives us a fascinating insight into Greek homosexuality, Declan Boyd explores the complex polarities of Tacitus' presentation of the Roman imperial prince Germanicus, there's an exclusive interview with one of our lecturers, a trip to an ancient party, and a competition crossword that will have you reaching for your Herodotus.

In November 2019, the branch had the privilege of hosting the Presidential Address for the national Classical Association, delivered by Professor Dame Mary Beard. The lecture was fantastic and the whole event thoroughly enjoyed by over 700 members, guests and students! On page 9, you can read a summary of Professor Beard's erudite and engaging talk.

2020 started with a fabulous return visit from our President, Professor Michael Scott and, in February, we were also proud to welcome back one of our favourite lecturers, Professor Michael Wood, to deliver his lecture on Troy to tie in with the British Museum's recent exhibition *Troy: Myth and Reality*.

I would like to give a huge thank you to this edition's contributors:

- Leo Riley
- Katrina Kelly
- Liv Sample

Now that you know the names of the people behind this newsletter, on behalf of us all, I would like to thank you for taking the time to read this edition, and we sincerely hope you enjoy it!

Declan Boyd, Editor

The Love that dare not speak its name

Views on homosexuality have varied widely throughout the ages. But how did the Ancient Greeks perceive it? Classics Ambassador Leo Riley sheds a fascinating light on the two varying Greek views of what Oscar Wilde termed "The Love that dare not speak its name".

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Portrait of Livia

Read about the Sculpture of the Issue, a fascinating depiction of Livia, the wife of Augustus. We all think we know Livia, a treacherous, malign woman who supposedly wiped out all competition for her son Tiberius, but what does this sculpture tell us about how she was presented during the Age of Augustus?

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An Interview with Tom Holland

We delve into the back catalogue for an interview with historian and writer Tom Holland, who delivered his captivating lecture on Herodotus at the Association last April.

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Caesar's wife must be above suspicion

The Roman empresses have never failed to enthral people from the ancient world down to today. Editor Declan Boyd reports on Mary Beard's engaging lecture on this subject.

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The Love that dare not speak its name - the two faces of Ancient Greek Homosexuality

by Leo Riley

In 1895, poet and playwright Oscar Wilde stood on trial charged with sodomy, and during his defence he gave his famous speech discussing "*The Love that dare not speak its name*" in which he presented a romantic view of same-sex love throughout the ages and criticised the society of his time for misunderstanding what this love meant. However, modern research by classicists suggests that Wilde was mistaken in stating that it was merely his contemporaries that misunderstood and mocked male-male relationships; in fact, it seems the ancient Greeks could be just as hostile as later societies when it came to these relationships. In this article, therefore, we shall look at the two coexisting yet contradictory visions of homosexuality in ancient Greece – the romanticised view presented in literature and art, and the less picturesque reality.

First, some background. In ancient Greece there was not a specific word for same-sex love, it was simply another form of love, but the predominant form it took was pederasty – relationships between youths and older men, in which the older man (erastes) would act as a role model for his young lover (eromenos, literally 'beloved'), educating him and initiating him into society. Of course, there would still be the presence of attraction and a sexual side to the relationship, but as long as it conformed to the strict rules in society then the relationship was an honourable and accepted one. Whilst this idea, on the surface, seems to fit with the relationship presented by Wilde in his speech – one in which "*The elder man has intellect, and the younger man has all the joy, hope, and glamour of life before him*" – the reality was

that it was not this simple or idealistic. Instead, there were a series of strict rules to follow to ensure that your relationship stayed within the strict confines of what was respectable:

Firstly, – in art and in life, the erastes must be shown as bearded (to indicate that he is of a much higher age than his lover) and should be taking on the active role. The eromenos, on the other hand, should be clean shaven and taking on a more passive role. This is to indicate that the older man is still in charge, as although these relationships were accepted on the whole, adult men still had to appear to be 'macho'. Should they not appear to be in charge, or should they have a relationship with another adult male, they would be ridiculed and seen as less of a man.



Kylix attributed to the Kiss Painter, circa 500 BCE, now in the Johns Hopkins Archaeological Museum. This scene is set in a gymnasium and shows either a statue or a victorious athlete on a podium taking on the role of eromenos, with the man on the left taking on the role of erastes. An inscription on the interior reads "Leagros is beautiful".

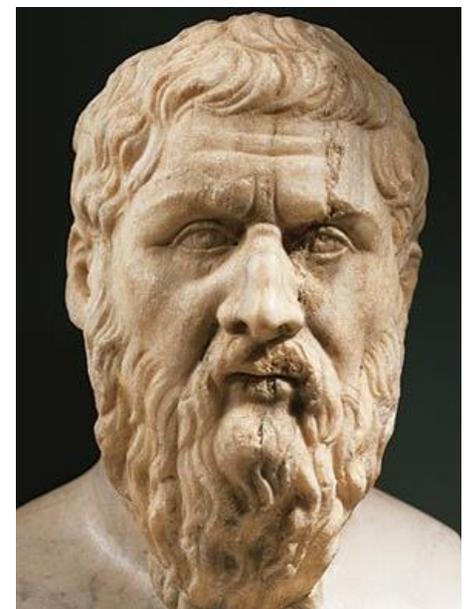
Secondly, once the eromenos had a beard of his own – thus indicating that he was now a man – it would be his job to end the relationship with the older man and find a beloved of his own, giving him the opportunity to now take on the role of active partner.

Furthermore, although out of marriage sexual activity was accepted no matter who the partner was, it was first and foremost a man's duty to have children (particularly sons) within his marriage. If his same-sex relationships interfered with this duty, they were then deemed to be unacceptable.

These standards for what constituted a respectable same-sex relationship and what was seen as shameful therefore set a

very different tone to that of Athens as a gay paradise, the image projected onto the past by many who struggled with their own identity and craved acceptance from the past when they could see no foreseeable future in which they would be accepted.

But what of ancient Greek culture itself, of figures such as Socrates or Plato, whom Wilde states made this male-male love "*the very basis of his philosophy*"? Are they not at odds with this more conservative society? In his famous work *Symposium*, Plato does indeed highlight the importance of masculine love, and through his character Phaedrus muses that "*If then one could contrive that a state or an army should consist entirely of lovers and loved, it would be impossible for it to have better organisation.*" This thought is a romantic one, and one that certainly lives up to the idea of ancient Greece as a place where homosexuality could flourish; however, it does unfortunately stay as just that – a thought. In reality, both Plato and his teacher Socrates – whom he describes in his own words as 'boy crazy' – had to be careful about what they wrote or said, with Socrates apparently drawing a clear boundary when it came to sexual relations between two men. This shows how the restrictions placed on what was acceptable for pederastic relationships in ancient Greece makes Plato's musings "more of a thought experiment than a reflection of lived reality in ancient Athens."



Plato, marble portrait bust, from an original of the 4th century BCE; Capitoline Museums, Rome.

Nevertheless, the significance of Plato's thoughts should not be ignored. In E.M Forster's classic novel *Maurice*, written in 1913-14, the character Clive Durham uses the *Symposium* to allude to how he really feels about a fellow student – the protagonist Maurice Hall – believing that having read this work he would understand that Clive too was guilty of craving “*the unspeakable vice of the Greeks.*” This shows that, although traditional ideas of a more permissive ancient Greek society may not be factually accurate, they have certainly helped many people through the ages come to terms with what they felt, knowing that others who had gone before them had felt the same way too.

But does this mean that everyone in modern history who looked back upon ancient stories and thoughts on same-sex relationships felt the same?

The short answer to that is no, unfortunately ancient myths have been used to hurt as well as heal. For example, the story of Ganymede and Zeus. In Homeric Hymn 5 to Aphrodite, we see how “*verily wise Zeus carried off golden-haired Ganymedes because of his beauty*”, taking him to Olympus to be his cup-bearer and lover (which royally irritates poor Hera). Whilst this story may be viewed upon simply as a tale of love, showing how even the womanising King of the Gods sometimes fell victim to the charms of a pretty boy, it has sometimes been viewed in a more negative light. For example, by the time the story had reached Roman mythology Ganymede had become a much more reluctant character than in the classical representations of the myth (in which he is fully aware of Zeus' intentions) in order to show that love between two men was not as desirable as the love between a husband and wife. More alarmingly, Ganymede later became a term of abuse towards men thought to be 'sodomites'. Perhaps the most famous example of a modern 'Ganymede' is London jeweller and bookseller Samuel Drybutter, who was given this title in a series of prints by satirist Matthew Darly. Drybutter was tried on numerous occasions in the 1770s for attempted sodomy but managed to escape conviction, eventually dying after his house was sacked in 1777 and he was badly beaten.

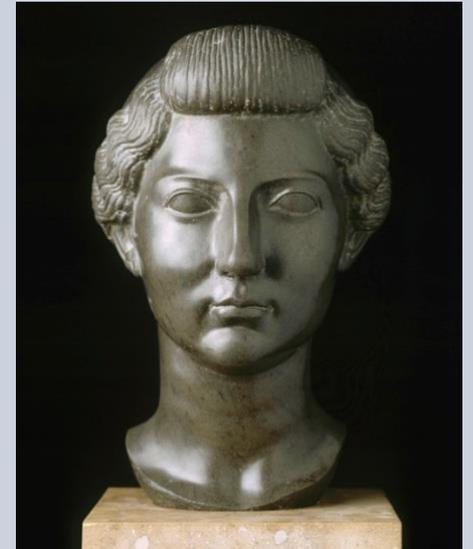
In the end it is clear that homosexuality in ancient Greece exists in two separate spheres - first, the romanticised view

presented by both contemporaries such as Plato and through the thoughts of many in later history; and secondly, the somewhat less glamorous and idyllic reality, in which male love was strictly regulated and one foot out of line meant social suicide. However, this does not mean that homosexuality had no part to play in ancient Greece. Pederasty allowed knowledge and virtue to be shared, and for young men to be initiated into society; all sexual relations, no matter the participants, were seen as equal in their importance and validity (although of course the procreation of sons was the main duty of the ideal Athenian man); and stories of homosexual relationships such as Zeus and Ganymede, the tragic Apollo and Hyacinthus, and the much debated Achilles and Patroclus, allowed for these relationships to have a presence in ancient culture.



Ganymede, March 1st 1771, by Matthew Darly. This etching depicts Samuel Drybutter, and is part of a set of 24 caricatures by Darly and his wife satirising “macaronis” (the name given to contemporary dandies in London).

Sculpture of the Issue: Portrait of Livia



Now in the Louvre Museum, this statue of Livia dates from 31 BC, the year of the Battle of Actium between her husband Octavian and Mark Antony, who had allied himself with Cleopatra. The bust is made from Egyptian basanite as a reference to the defeat of Egypt in the battle, and Livia is presented as the perfect Roman *matrona*, with a modest hairstyle and a lack of strong emotion in the Classical Greek style.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of Livia's portrayal here is the contrast between this statue and later representations of Livia, as familiar from the works of Tacitus and in the *I, Claudius* novels of Robert Graves and their 1976 BBC adaptation. Such works present Livia as scheming and malign, a dangerous woman working behind the scenes of the Roman imperial family and relentlessly removing any threat to her son Tiberius' accession to the throne. This reflects the Roman fear of powerful women, which is likely to lie behind such stories and to have created the evil idea of Livia that exists today, and highlights how much Livia's image has been damaged over time, transforming her from an ideal Roman woman to one of the villains of history.



An Interview with Tom Holland

by Liv Sample and Katrina Kelly - Throwback Thursday!

Prior to delivering his excellent lecture (<https://saclassics.com/2019/04/06/holland-on-herodotus/>) in April 2019, award-winning author and historian Tom Holland spoke to Classics Ambassador Liv Sample and Chair Katrina Kelly.

Who or what first got you interested in the ancient world?

Two things. One was *Asterix Legionary* in which Asterix and Obelisk (for complicated reasons) have to become legionaries and end up fighting Julius Caesar. It's not history at all but I thought it was wonderful and it set me off on a Roman tangent. The other was that my grandmother had a very old collection of books about mythology, which I started reading and found fascinating, around about the same time. I was going off on a Roman history angle and a Greek mythology angle and of course they both meet up – that's what got me hooked!

Were you expecting the success that came with *Rubicon*? How did it affect your career?

When I was in an optimistic mood, I hoped that it would do well because the story is so fantastic. Unlike with a novel where you are responsible for the plot, the plot kind of wrote itself and it's such an amazing story, and when I wrote it there weren't that many books about ancient history at all so it felt like I had this amazing theme and no one else is writing about it, so I was quietly hopeful about that. It was also the time of 9/11 and the Gulf War when America had suddenly become this imperial republic suddenly invading everywhere in the Middle East, which is of course what was happening with Rome, so I thought, oddly for something that was 2000 years old, it was topical and I was therefore hopeful, but I didn't know whether people were interested in the Romans or if they thought it was dull ancient history.

Which of your books about the ancient world are you most proud of, and why?

That's an impossible question! Like asking which of my children are my favourite! Very difficult to answer; however, what I will say is the book that I've just finished (I would always say that – you're always proudest of the thing you've just finished working on!) about the most enduring legacy of antiquity, which is Christianity. I'm proud of that because I don't stop with the ancient world, I trace it all the way up to the present day. I begin with a Persian general being crucified on the banks of the Hellespont in 497BC and I go right the way up to Trump, *The Handmaid's Tale* and all kinds of things like that. That's probably what I'm proudest of but if you ask when my next book is finished, I'd probably say that too!

You must have had many fascinating experiences, filming and travelling in the Middle East in particular, but what have been some of your most memorable moments?

The most haunting moment in the Middle East was at Miletus on the Aegean Coast, the edge of Turkey. One of the problems visiting archaeological sites is that they can be quite dull, ropes everywhere, little signs, tidied up and it feels like you are visiting somewhere quite dead. But at Miletus, there were no ropes and there were great shattered pillars lying about and frogs sitting on the pillars croaking and it felt like an adventure in the 18th century. Turning up at a shattered temple was very moving, almost romantic.

The most unsettling experience was going to a town called Sinjar on the frontline with IS when they were still there. Sinjar was the main centre for the Yazidi (people with a strange religion, a fusion of Zoroastrianism, Islam, Christianity and Judaism, who were targeted by IS for that reason), and I'd written about late antiquity, when Christianity and Islam and Zoroastrianism and Judaism became key parts of power politics in the Middle East. I never thought I'd be visiting a city where these religions were the cause of genocide. Talking about whether ancient history matters, standing there, it clearly mattered, and one of the things that really sharpened it for me was going to a place really sacred to the Yazidis,

QUICKFIRE ROUND WITH TOM HOLLAND:

Pompey or Caesar?

Caesar.

Cicero or Demosthenes?

Cicero.

Tacitus or Herodotus?

Herodotus (although I love Tacitus too!)

Darius or Xerxes?

Darius.

Themistocles or Miltiades?

Themistocles.

London or Cambridge?

London.

English or Classics?

Classics.

Athens or Sparta?

Athens.

Greece or Persia?

Greece

Fiction or non-fiction?

Non-fiction

Hedgehogs or Dinosaurs?

Hedgehogs – because they're still alive!

Cricket World Cup 2019 or the Ashes?

Ashes.

Favourite cricketer?

Kevin Pietersen.

Brian Blessed or Derek Jacobi in *I, Claudius*?

Brian Blessed.

about 30 miles inland from Mount Sinjar, safe away from the frontline, and there in the temple complex there is a room that non-Yazidis can't go in, but you can look into the temple chamber with a stone block sacred to a figure called Sheik Shams (or Sheik 'Adi). No one knows who that was, but the Babylonian god of the sun was called Shamash and all the Yazidis will say about the Sheik Shams is that he has something to do with the sun. So it's possible that this is the very last place where ancient Mesopotamian worship of the gods is preserved as a living thing. That's kind of amazing to think of!

Before you were able to go to the Middle East, you had to undergo some training back home – what was that like?

It was horrible because it's two days of people telling you what to do if your arm or leg blows off but it's pointless anyway because if my arm gets blown off I'm going to cry! I'm not going to do anything they tell me. We got taken out into woods where there were various ex-army actors playing the parts of terrorists or rogue army units who would capture you etc., and that was horrible, but it turned out that these woods were the Hundred Acre Woods that Winnie the Pooh or Tigger frequented. You'd find a blown off arm in the trees and think, 'What would Piglet make of that?' It was grotesque and it massively put me off going to the Middle East. The director and I went back to London and were sat there saying, 'I don't want to go.'

Herodotus would certainly have a plethora of sources, characters, and 'achievements' to lead an inquiry now – how relevant is his historiographical method today?

Hugely relevant because Herodotus isn't just the father of history, he's basically the father of being interested in stuff. There is nothing he's not interested in and essentially his method, his work of history, is like the internet, where you can go from one thing to another to another etc. and whatever you are pursuing, you end up in a place you never imagined you would be and that's exactly what his book is like. Obviously he's living in an age of no internet, but in an age where there is not even an idea that you might be interested in stuff that other people over the hill are

doing and yet he is interested in everything. So essentially this whole book is showing that the stuff that people do and have done can be a source of interest for everyone – how timeless a lesson is that?

We are often encouraged to take a globalised view of ancient history – was Herodotus one of the first to expand horizons in this way?

Yes, hugely. Although he didn't think Britain existed!

How did you go about your translation of the *Histories*?

It's divided into 9 books and then into further sections, so I committed myself to doing one section a day and it was like a keep fit routine (like a certain number of press ups each day) but the thing that kind of made it fun (!) was that some sections would be really long and some would be very short so if there were short ones, like a sentence, I would have the choice of having a day off or of doing three or four more and then banking the days up. It is a long book so it took many years, and Herodotus was a constant companion. When we were filming in the Middle East, I would take Herodotus, and the great thing is that I can remember exactly what I was doing – the translation is linked to my memory.

Any new documentaries in the pipeline?

I'm not sure because I've been so busy with the book which has been so huge and has taken so long that I'm only now starting to think about what I might do now that I've finished – I'm like someone emerging into daylight, blinking.

Dominion – it's a book that is informed by all the other works of history I've done and essentially reflects the fact that the Greeks and Romans, the more you live in their minds, the more you realise how alien and unlike us they are, and almost everything that makes them alien essentially derives from the fact that they don't have Christian assumptions, and so I've come to the conclusion that almost everything in Western society is founded in deeply Christian assumptions and that, in a way, Christianity is like the birds that survived the asteroid that hit in the planet at the end of the Cretaceous period – everything else is gone but we still have the birds, and

Judaism, Christianity and Islam are what have survived from antiquity. But Christianity in particular because it synthesises the Greek and the Jewish in a radically original way that then sets what will become the West on a very distinctive path.

Can that project be contained within one book?

It was difficult. I have divided it into 3 parts (significant to Christianity because of the trinity) – Antiquity, Christendom and Modernity – and then each section is divided into 7 parts (sacraments, virtues, deadly sins etc.) and each chapter has a dramatic moment on which the themes of the chapter are then hung – which was the only way to impose any order on this huge theme. The opening scene is this general being crucified on the banks of the Euphrates which is an episode that comes from Herodotus (I'm holding onto my comfort blanket here!). The very final chapter opens with a Palestinian girl who had come to Germany to be given medical treatment and she's in a school where Angela Merkel has come live on TV and the girl asks, 'Why do I have to be sent back home? Why can't I stay here?' And Merkel says, 'I'm afraid we can't let everyone into Germany'. And the girl starts crying and Merkel ends up letting her stay and opening the borders to all refugees from Syria and Afghanistan, etc.

Merkel here embodies one Christian tradition (the idea that people have a duty of care to those who are suffering, homeless, lost everything, which is a very radical idea in the context of antiquity – not the attitude that Romans generally had to people arriving on their doorstep from foreign climes!), but equally there is another attitude which is strongly embodied amongst other European politicians, which is that people who are not Christians should not be allowed into Europe, and that was particularly in Hungary a very strong position, which goes back to the Ottomans and before that to Roman attitudes to barbarians, so even though it is happening in the present day these are issues with very long ancient roots and the only example where the line of inheritance from antiquity to now is a continuous one.

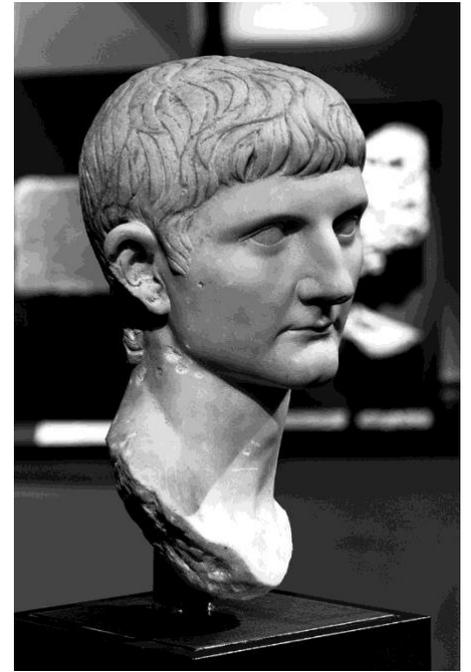
Germanicus: The hero of the early Roman Empire?

by Declan Boyd

In the early books of Tacitus' *Annals*, perhaps no figure is more intriguing than Germanicus. The nephew and adopted son of Emperor Tiberius, this imperial prince is generally viewed as a foil to the imperial ruler through his admirable virtue, which is contrasted to Tiberius' vices and highlighted during Tacitus' account of Germanicus' death, believed to have been brought about by Piso, governor of Syria, on Tiberius' orders. The reader is no doubt intended to feel enormous pity for Germanicus and praise him, but is this praiseworthy image one that Tacitus wished to maintain throughout his work, or are there other sides to Germanicus that are generally ignored in favour of this far more laudatory depiction?

In Book 1, Germanicus is described as having "the civil character of youth and marvellous kindness, and he was different from Tiberius, who was arrogant and mysterious, in conversation and in countenance". This

positive initial impression of Germanicus is built up throughout the first book, and through explicit contrast with Tiberius, he seems to offer a glimmer of hope in a Roman world ruled by an emperor who is first described to the reader as possessing "the old, inherited pride of the Claudian family and many indications of savagery, which burst out even though they were suppressed". Surely Tacitus is suggesting here that Rome would be far better off ruled by a man such as Germanicus, and his characterisation exacerbates Tiberius' lack of commendable qualities, which Tacitus, as a senator, was keen to emphasise due to his resentment at the power the Principate had taken from the Senate. Tacitus continues to praise Germanicus throughout the first two books of the *Annals*, describing Germanicus' saving of his adversary Piso, despite their rivalry, when a storm drives the latter towards some rocks, even though, as Tacitus highlights, "the death of his enemy could be attributed to chance".



Bust of Germanicus

This praise concludes with a eulogy of sorts after Germanicus' death, comparing him to Alexander the Great and remarking that even "foreign nations and kings grieved", not only suggesting that Germanicus was such an important and praiseworthy figure that he was worthy of being mourned by powerful rulers, but also that he was a popular figure even among the enemies of Rome (the Romans viewed kings as alien and dangerous). Therefore, to both friends and foes, Germanicus' death became a universal focus of attention.

Nevertheless, Germanicus does not always come across as a great hero in the *Annals*. In Book 1, he suppresses a mutiny among the Roman legions in Germania, but the means by which he achieves this are questionable: he forges a letter in the Emperor's name, dismissing all soldiers who had served for twenty years and granting conditional release to those who had served for sixteen. Germanicus must then pay the legacies demanded by the soldiers, using up all his own money and that of his friends. While this incident shows the reader that Germanicus possessed a level of common sense in providing an



The Death of Germanicus
Nicholas Poussin, 1628

immediate effective solution to the situation, the threat he posed to the Roman army's finances and the possibility that there may not have been sufficient money to pay the soldiers, which could have resulted in further mutiny, also suggests a certain rash side to his character which could have posed further danger. In addition, while Germanicus is shown to be an effective military leader, exhorting his light-armed cohorts when they fall into disarray in Germania, his conduct against the enemy can also be severely criticised. Under Germanicus' command, the legions attack a helpless and inebriated German tribe, and "neither age or sex aroused pity", emphasising that their slaughter is indiscriminate and without care. Tacitus' mention of pity here may be intended to invoke such a feeling in the reader and therefore to convey the idea that Germanicus should have been moved by the same emotion. Tacitus himself certainly had a tendency to sympathise with the enemies of Rome, and the harshness of Germanicus in this episode may be compared with the unattractive character of Tiberius himself when crushing his own opposition in Rome throughout the *Annals*. Perhaps Germanicus is therefore not so different from his adoptive father as it first appears.

Why does Tacitus appear to have these two differing attitudes towards Germanicus? The reason seems to lie with Tacitus' need to present Germanicus as a victim. Despite Germanicus' many deplorable actions, by reinforcing the more positive aspects of his character, Tacitus creates a sympathetic character whose death greatly impacts the reader. In this way, Germanicus can (surprisingly) be paralleled in some respects with his adversary Piso, another often dislikeable figure who becomes a pitiable victim of Tiberius' machinations. Piso gains popularity through bribery, replacing the strict army officials with his own, and allowing the troops to run rampant;

such lack of attention to Roman military order and strictness could hardly be condoned by a Roman reader. Yet when Piso has been deserted by Tiberius while on trial for the death of Germanicus, Tacitus undoubtedly expected his reader to feel sorry for him when his wife (also on trial) asks to be tried separately, then leaves his bedroom in the middle the



Bronze statue of Germanicus
Museo civico di Amelia

night, before he is found lying dead with a sword on the floor the next morning. As suicide was viewed as an honourable way for prominent Romans to end their lives when faced with the prospect of execution, Piso's decision can be viewed as noble to an extent, and so while he is disreputable, he can be pitied upon his death because of the hatred of Tiberius aroused by pity for Piso. Germanicus (while pity for him is greater due to a greater focus on his

admirable qualities) can be viewed in a similar light, as Tacitus' key to stressing his negative portrayal of Tiberius - the main target of Tacitus' diatribe throughout the first hexad of the *Annals*.

While Germanicus is often interpreted as Tacitus' hero, a force of opposition to the despised Tiberius, there are many times when he is to be criticised. Tacitus seems perfectly content presenting Germanicus' horrific massacres and utilising duplicitous means to end a mutiny, but a more positive element to this prominent figure must be included in order to ensure that the reader's opinion is constantly opposed to the emperor against whom the major criticisms of the first third of the *Annals* are directed and for whom the reader should feel the most spite and hatred.

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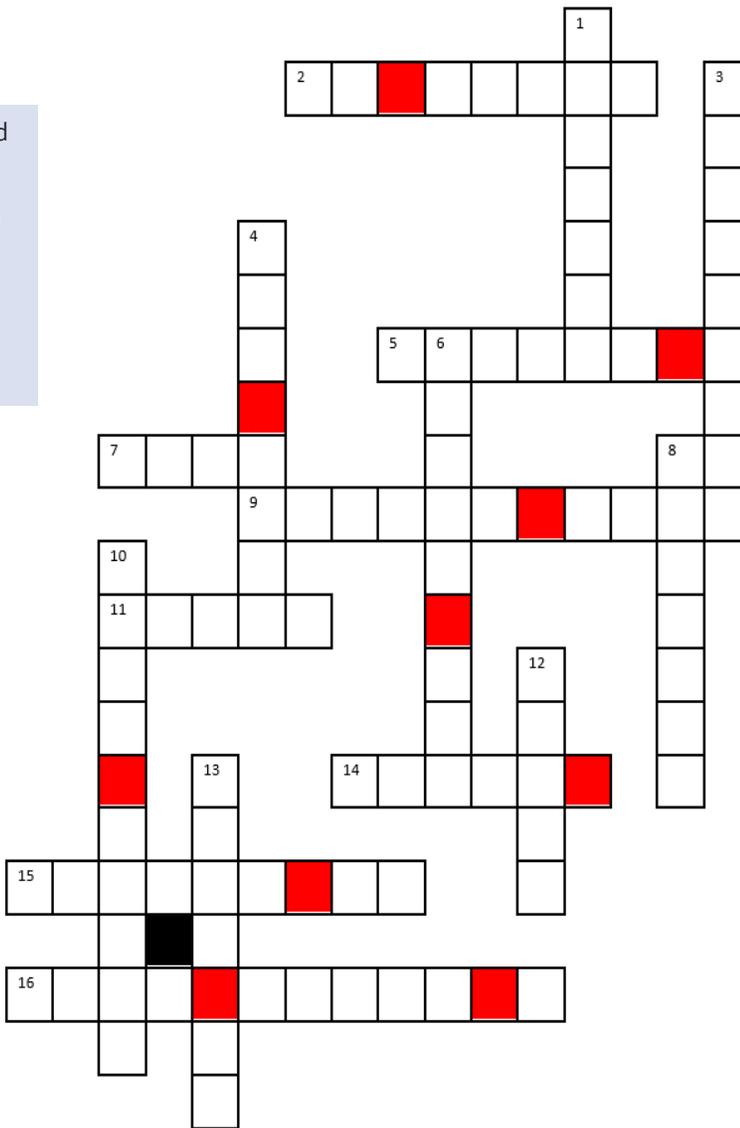
CLASSICAL CROSSWORD

Across

- 2. Greek vase for storing olive oil, used at funerals (8)
- 5. Political opponent of Cleisthenes at Athens during the late 6th century BC (8)
- 7. Author of the influential work *The Roman Revolution* (4)
- 9. Battle at which Leonidas died in 480 BC (11)
- 11. First major naval battle fought between Rome and Carthage in 260 BC (5)
- 14. Greek writer who wrote *The Anabasis of Alexander* (6)
- 15. Monumental gateway to the Athenian Acropolis (9)
- 16. Athens was "liberated" by the two Tyrannicides: Harmodios and _____ (12)

Down

- 1. Roman general who led major operations against Parthia during Nero's reign (7)
- 3. Nurse in Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers* (7)
- 4. Noble virgin raped by Sextus Tarquinius (8)
- 6. River fought by Achilles in *Iliad* 21 (9)
- 8. The administrators of the ancient Olympic Games were drawn from the clans of the Klytidai and the _____ (7)
- 10. Deathplace of Brasidas during the Peloponnesian War (10)
- 12. Excavations of the palace at Knossos were led by Sir Arthur _____ (5)
- 13. Father of Alexander I of Macedon (7)



Use the letters in the boxes highlighted in red to find the hidden word.

For a chance to win, email this word to lsaclassics@gmail.com, and one entry will be picked at random to win a copy of Edith Hall's *Aristotle's Way: How Ancient Wisdom Can Change Your Life*

Caesar's wife must be above suspicion

by Declan Boyd

On Saturday 9th November, we were delighted to host the national Classical Association's Annual Presidential Address, delivered this year by outgoing President Professor Dame Mary Beard at AKS Lytham to a record-breaking audience.

Professor Beard transported us on a fascinating journey through time to explore the artistic representation of the Roman empresses – and the sinister tales told about them – across the ages.

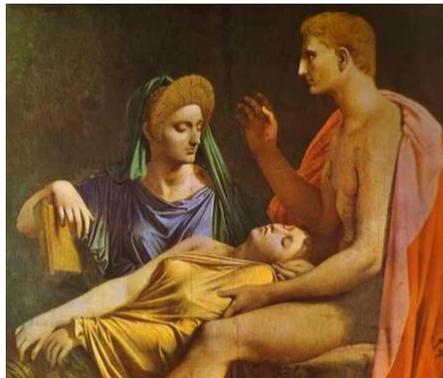


Ancient Roman writers such as Tacitus and Suetonius never failed to criticise the wives of their emperors and to accuse them of horrific and immoral deeds: Augustus was commonly believed to have died at the hands of his wife Livia to secure the succession of her son Tiberius; Claudius' wife Messalina supposedly challenged the prostitutes of Rome to sleep with as many men as they could in one night (and won!); Nero's mother Agrippina is not only said to have poisoned Claudius but also to have been her son's lover. Such damning accounts of these powerful women, whether true or fuelled by Roman misogyny, have never failed to thrill and have pervaded artwork as favourite subjects from the ancient world to today.

Professor Beard gave us a captivating insight into artistic depictions of a moment when the poet Virgil, upon reading an excerpt of the *Aeneid* about the death of the imperial prince Marcellus, caused Marcellus' mother Octavia, the sister of Augustus, to faint. This tale has been popularized in modern art, and the French neo-classicist painter Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres painted more than 100 versions of this single moment! Livia is depicted as a passive figure, not reacting to

the horror of the collapse of the emperor's sister but watching events unfold with an apathetic gaze. The scene gains force when one remembers the allegations that Livia herself was believed to have had a hand in Marcellus' death (again to remove a rival to Tiberius). This rather chilling image of the passive Livia, failing to show any concern whatsoever for Octavia's health, reminding us of the crime that she is supposed to have committed, clearly indicates the extent to which the idea of Livia as a wicked schemer has persisted from Ancient Rome to the modern world.

The same can be said for the many representations of Nero's fascination with the corpse of his mother, killed on his orders. According to Suetonius, Nero rushed to view his mother's naked dead body, examining it closely, commending some parts and criticising others, while simultaneously quenching his thirst with a glass of wine. Such a grotesque tale as this was bound to attract the attention of artists, and Professor Beard explored multiple presentations of the examination of the corpse, with Nero sometimes casually sipping at his wine, sometimes getting uncomfortably close to the body, and even, in a plethora of rather hideous images, dissecting his mother. The



existence of this scene, invented by artists (it exists in no surviving classical source) but notably popular, highlights Nero's obsession with his mother's body – which is often portrayed rather erotically, lying out nude before the emperor, who seems desperate to touch her – and reminds the viewer of the incestuous relationship between the two, which Nero seems to

long for even in his mother/lover's death. It emphasises the critical view of Agrippina as seductress and of Nero as a sexual deviant that we have inherited from the ancients, as well as the macabre way in which we often view the empresses of Rome.

In a rather engaging conclusion to her address, Professor Beard explored the connection between Agrippina and Letizia



Bonaparte, the mother of Napoleon. In the early nineteenth century, the Italian sculptor Antonio Canova modelled a statue of Letizia on a classical statue of Agrippina. However, it was unknown whether the Agrippina represented in the statue was Nero's incestuous scheming mother Agrippina the Younger, or her mother Agrippina the Elder, a celebrated opponent to the tyrannical rule of Tiberius and wife of the beloved prince Germanicus. Was Canova therefore trying to represent Letizia as a great woman or as an evil one? Professor Beard offered a solution: it did not matter which Agrippina Canova used as a model. What mattered was that both had given birth to monsters: Agrippina the Younger to the despised Nero, Agrippina the Elder to the sadistic Caligula who slept with his three sisters. The message of Canova's sculpture was a clear criticism of Napoleon, exemplifying the way in which **classical associations** (I think we all enjoyed Professor Beard's pun here!) can continue to be used in artwork to further the artist's message.

I would personally like to thank Professor Beard for this compelling lecture, which I believe conveyed one of the key reasons why the classical world must continue to be studied: it is a world which never fails to enthral us, whose stories are no less enjoyable today as they were two thousand years ago, and because the messages of the ancient world can continue to be relevant in modern society. Were the Roman empresses as bad as Tacitus and Suetonius made them out to be? Probably not. But at least they give us some good stories to tell!

Classics Competition 2020: Your Three Guests

by Katrina Kelly

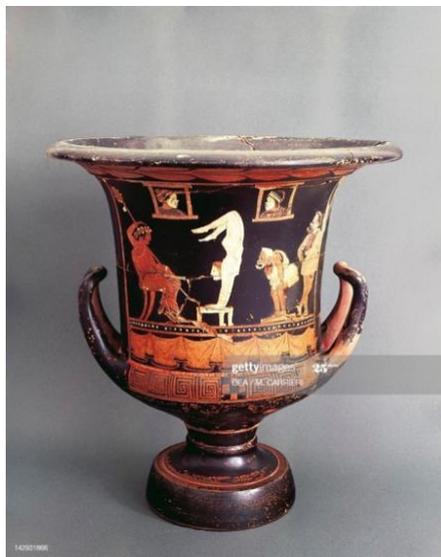
If you could invite three ancient characters to a party, which three would you invite? Would Socrates be your ideal conversationalist, or would his constant questioning make him too much of a 'gadfly'? Would you prefer a wry joker like Plautus or Juvenal, a social butterfly like Clodia, or an intriguing character like Sempronia or Agrippina? Would you set your party at the opulent surroundings of the Domus Aurea or a Baiae villa, at your own humble abode or in the halls of Mount Olympus? These are just some of the questions considered by entrants into our 2020 Classics Competition and their answers and approaches were eclectic, resulting in all sorts of raucous, feisty and fascinating guestlists.

Our President Prof. Michael Scott started us off as he picked 'Megasthenes for the chat, Alcibiades for the partying, and Diogenes to make sure that the evening never got dull' for his hypothetical symposium. You can learn more about the reasoning behind these choices in his video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLasiz4B8pc&t=6s>. Many others carefully balanced the talents, temperaments and power dynamic of their guests, for example, runner-up Katherine Baker chose Caligula, Cicero and Artemis, 'the profane, the witty and the sacred', and Michael O'Leary, via Twitter, proposed perhaps an archetypal triumvirate of 'Aristotle for his wisdom, Virgil for his poetry and Bacchus to keep things lively'.

Indeed, some of my personal favourites came from Twitter where many of you shared your ideas, including @asherwickens with Paris, Menelaus and Helen 'so I could help them work out that whole situation' – a *hell* of a couples' counselling session, indeed – and former Classics Ambassador Niamh Banner's 'Catullus so I can watch him drunkenly sob over Lesbia and give him a hug, and Herodotus so I can ask him why on earth he considered the Persians' preference for dessert a negative!'. Indeed, Herodotus was our most popular dinner-guest (for good reason, as explained by 2019 Champion Thomas Hewitt, who also opted for two

other historians, Tacitus and Livy), followed by Sappho, Hypatia, Alexander the Great and Aristophanes. Representing the Romans, we had Caesar, Seneca, Scipio, and Eurysaces; and appearances from lesser known figures like Iambe, Philo, Helioglabus, Olympias, Aemilia, and Sergius Orata.

Abbi Holt (@stickfiguregods) suggested Cicero 'because he would make the best snide comments' and, indeed, Cicero's sharp wit and comic potential, his lesser known verbal talents, featured in the Grand Final. Orpheus was also a popular guest, perhaps for his musical prowess as well as his ability to give an account of his time spent in the underworld, and his story was magnificently brought to life by Jess Harris, who was voted the People's Choice winner for her weaving together of a housewarming party scenario complete with Arachne the many-legged businesswoman and her neighbour, Tantalus. To accompany the cithara or pipes, perhaps an acrobat, such as those depicted on Paestan or Apulian vases, could entertain us with their contortions and educate us in the craft of phlyax performers.



At the Final, Connor Irving took the mythological approach – devising a unique episode of Long Lost Families (with musical

accompaniments!) to reunite Medea and her aunt Pasiphae, alongside Hades himself, to get to the bottom of the intense, passionate and often bloody relationships all three had with their respective partners. His fantastic efforts and sharp sense of humour were rewarded with the title of National Champion and prestigious trophies, presented below by judge Dr Holmes-Henderson. For a full recap of the Final: <https://lsaclassics.com/2020/03/09/partying-ancient-style/>.



To a party of my own, I would be tempted to invite Homer, simply to see how many guests would turn up, and would love to meet Eumachia, priestess of Pompeii and sponsor of the fullers' guild, but, to add a competitive edge, my trio would have to be an ensemble of dramatists – Euripides, Aeschylus and Sophocles – to enact their own version of Aristophanes' *Frogs* (since Sophocles was absent from the original work) and determine who really would have saved Athens from disaster with the power of their words. Did Aeschylus actually speak in 'splatter-puff and knotted bombastology'? Was Euripides really anti-theistic? Verbal-spars, freestyled composition, games of kottabos, and pea soup would be in abundance...the perfect recipe for a party, ancient style!