



THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

RESEARCH SEMINARS

1ST SEMESTER 2019

Discipline of Classics and Ancient History
School of Historical and Philosophical Inquiry

8 March	1. Dr Pantelis Michelakis (The University of Bristol) 'Routes of the Plague in Homer, Sophocles and Thucydides'
22 March	2. Tyla Cascaes (The University of Queensland) 'The Young and the Restless: Receptions of a Republican Caesar'
	3. Jacqueline Webber (The University of Queensland) 'Work in Life and Death: Corduban Common Workers and Coppersmiths'
29 March	4. Duncan Grey (The University of Queensland) 'The <i>Lacuna</i> in the <i>Historia Augusta</i> : A Reassessment'
	5. Dr Anna Corrias (The University of Queensland) 'Spinning the Whorls of the Spindle: Marsilio Ficino on Plato's Myth of Er'
12 April	6. Dr Jim Ross AM (The University of Western Australia) 'Precious Metals and the Rise of Philip II and Alexander the Great'
3 May	7. Dr Duncan Keenan-Jones (The University of Queensland) 'New High-Resolution Rainfall Records for Ancient Rome'
17 May	8. Dr Sebastiana Nervegna (Monash University) 'Sositheus and His "New" Satyr-Play'

Research seminars are held at 4 pm on Fridays in room 217 of the Michie Building (building no. 9) on the St-Lucia campus. Seminars are always followed by a reception on the 5th floor of the same building. Seminars 1 and 5-6 will be recorded for podcasting. Within one week a podcast of each of these 3 seminars will be available at <https://hapi.uq.edu.au/classics-and-ancient-history-seminar-listing>. Questions about this program should be directed to Associate Professor David M. Pritchard (d.pritchard@uq.edu.au or +61 401 955 160).

TITLES AND ABSTRACTS

Tyla Cascaes (The University of Queensland) 'The Young and the Restless: Receptions of a Republican Caesar'

Like many ancient figures, Julius Caesar is often used to promote or diminish political power in the present. Different images or tropes of Caesar have been employed by modern authors to convey a desired message on the uses or abuses of political power today. For example, an author will focus on one aspect of Caesar's character and will often portray him either as a popular politician, a brilliant general or a ruthless dictator. Within these tropes there is still room for further distinctions. By emphasising certain characteristics and focusing on particular events, one can drastically adjust the

overall picture of Caesar. At the beginning of his political career, Caesar can be cast as a demagogue, a saviour of the Republic or a symbol of Rome's imperial future. This paper will investigate the use of Caesar as a popular Republican politician to promote or diminish specific political regimes during the Cold War. The trope of Caesar as a popular politician was used surprisingly frequently in discourses of political power in the immediate postwar period.

Dr Anna Corrias (The University of Queensland) 'Spinning the Whorls of the Spindle: Marsilio Ficino on Plato's Myth of Er'

The story of how souls stood in ranks in front of Lachesis, Clotho and Atropos just before choosing the form of their next incarnations is a place to which Plato's readers kept going back throughout the centuries. Seeking to find answers, they often found new questions. For Plato's splendid narrative at the very end of the *Republic*, also known as the 'Myth of Er' (X.614-621), is in itself ambiguous, defending and threatening at the same time the soul's capability for self-determination. This paper will discuss how this myth was received by Plato's most famous Renaissance translator and interpreter, the Italian Marsilio Ficino. It will focus, in particular, on Ficino's understanding of the delicate relation between the Fates spinning the 'Spindle of Necessity' and the soul's free agency.

Duncan Grey (The University of Queensland) 'The Lacuna in the *Historia Augusta*: A Reassessment'

The *Historia Augusta* is a notoriously problematic text. It consists of a series of thirty biographies of emperors, Caesars and usurpers that cover the years from 117 to 285 AD. It is presented in the manuscript tradition as the collected work of six authors, writing at the beginning of the fourth century AD. However, we now know that the *Historia Augusta* was written by one author at the end of the fourth century. Nonetheless it is still no less difficult to interpret because its pages are beset by a bizarre mixture of fact, fiction, fabricated sources, jokes and literary allusion. Alongside this interpretative challenge is another problem: a large *lacuna* in the text which has resulted in the loss of the biographies covering the period from 244 to 260 AD. Anthony Birley has argued extensively that this *lacuna*, rather than a true loss of text, represents an additional forged textual element. Birley suggests that this period was deliberately omitted by the *Historia Augusta's* author for two main reasons: to avoid covering the contentious emperors Decius and Valerian, and to give the work the appearance of greater antiquity. Birley's theory has received widespread acceptance in recent scholarship on the *Historia Augusta*. This paper is a critical analysis of his theory that provides evidence that, to the contrary, the nature of the *lacuna* is far from clear.

Dr Duncan C. Keenan-Jones (The University of Queensland) 'New High-Resolution Rainfall Records for Ancient Rome'

Ancient Rome represents a rare opportunity to compare a longitudinal study of rainfall records with an unusually extensive historical record covering more than a millennium. However, the few existing climate records covering this period and region suffer from dating uncertainty, discontinuity and human impact. This paper investigates the potential of dark layering in calcium carbonate deposits formed in past water systems as a well-dated and high-resolution proxy for rainfall distributions, through a case study on ancient Rome's Anio Novus aqueduct. Such a proxy would have broad applicability, since carbonate deposits are found in water systems from Australia's Great Artesian Basin to pre-Columbian North America. Dark-coloured layers within deposits from this aqueduct have multi-scalar distribution and elevated organic concentrations that are consistent with formation during the organic-rich flows of the Anio Novus's source water during storms (Keenan-Jones *et al.* 2014). This paper will present stable isotope ratio measurements from the Anio Novus deposits in order to investigate the time period over which these dark layers formed. Apart from its palaeoclimatic value, this rainfall record will illuminate the influence of climate on flooding, disease and fire, all of which were serious concerns in densely-populated ancient Rome.

Keenan-Jones, D. C., Foubert, A., Motta, D., Fried, G., Sivaguru, M., Perillo, M., Waldsmith, J., Wang, H., Garcia, M.H. and Fouke, B.W. 2014, 'Hierarchical Stratigraphy of Travertine Deposition

in Ancient Roman Aqueducts', in E. Calandra, G. Ghini, and Z. Mari (eds.), *Lazio e Sabina 10 (Atti del Convegno "Decimo Incontro di Studi sul Lazio e la Sabina", Roma, 4-6 giugno 2013)*, 293-5, Lavori e Studi della Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici del Lazio.

Dr Pantelis Michelakis (The University of Bristol) 'Routes of the Plague in Homer, Sophocles and Thucydides'

This paper focusses on how the plague moves through the spatial coordinates of three of the earliest and most canonical narratives of epidemic disease in Western literature: the opening episode of Homer's *Iliad* (1.1-487), the opening scenes of Sophocles's *Oedipus the King* (1-215) and the digression on the Athenian plague in book 2 of Thucydides's *History of the Peloponnesian War* (2.47.3-2.54). The paper undertakes an examination of some of the key strategies that the three narratives employ for their representation of the movement of the plague through space. It argues that the movement of the plague is disruptive for narrative as a static structure of physically and symbolically distinct and autonomous spaces but also formative for narrative as a dynamic network of spaces that are porous and interconnected. The paper also argues that we cannot fully account for the transformative power of plague narratives without focusing on spatial operations which, rather than protecting the boundaries of the narrative, bridge the divide between the world of the narrative and the world of its readers, listeners or spectators.

Dr Sebastiana Nervegna (Monash University) 'Sositheus and His "New" Satyr-Play'

Dioscorides lived in Alexandria during the second half of the third century BC. He wrote some forty epigrams preserved in the *Greek Anthology*. Five of his epigrams are concerned with Greek playwrights: three dramatists of the archaic and classical periods, Thespis, Aeschylus and Sophocles, and two contemporary ones, Sositheus and Machon (7.37, 410-11, 707-8). Dioscorides conceived four of the epigrams as two pairs (Thespis and Aeschylus, and Sophocles and Sositheus) that were clearly marked by verbal connections. Dioscorides celebrated each playwright for his original contribution to the history of Greek drama. His Thespis boasts that he had discovered tragedy and his Aeschylus that he had elevated it. The twin epigrams devoted to Sophocles and Sositheus present the former as refining the satyrs and the latter as making them, once again, primitive. Finally, Machon is singled out for his comedies as 'worthy remnants of ancient art'. Dioscorides's miniature history of Greek drama is interesting both for its debts to the ancient tradition surrounding classical playwrights and for the light it sheds on contemporary drama. This paper explores the relationship that Dioscorides establishes between Sophocles's and Sositheus's satyrs and the scholarly interpretations of the latter's innovations. It will argue that Dioscorides speaks the language of New Music. His epigram celebrates Sositheus as rejecting New Music and its trends, and as composing satyr plays that were musically old fashioned and therefore reactionary.

Dr Jim Ross AM (The University of Western Australia) 'Precious Metals and the Rise of Philip II and Alexander the Great'

This paper explores the key role of precious metals in making possible the rise of Macedonia under Philip II and its capacity to conquer the Persian empire under his more famous son. From 359 to 336 BC Philip II turned Macedonia from a small, threatened and relatively poor regional state into an unprecedented land empire that endured for almost two-hundred years. His extraordinary achievements provided the foundation for his son, Alexander the Great, to lead the Macedonian army in his conquest of the Persian empire. Both father and son required immense sources of coined money to train, equip, provision and pay the huge army of Macedonians and mercenaries that were employed in their conquests. In antiquity silver, gold and base metals were much more intrinsically valuable than they are today. By controlling and developing precious metal deposits Philip II generated much of the wealth that underpinned his success. In contrast, Alexander III, as a result of his military brilliance, seized from the outset the stored precious metals in Persian treasuries, which were more than sufficient to pay for his invasion force. Philip II and Alexander III brought irreversible change to the ancient world through exceptional attributes and driving ambition. Nevertheless it was precious

metals that largely underpinned their rises to greatness and their re-ordering of the geopolitics of the ancient world.

Jacqueline Webber (The University of Queensland) ‘Work in Life and Death: Corduban Common Workers and Coppersmiths’

During the Roman empire many occupational workers chose to represent themselves and others by their trade on Latin inscriptions in a variety of contexts. This practice is present not only in Italy, but, notably, also in the western provinces of Hispania and North Africa. It is important to analyse these provincial examples in order to gain a better understanding of both the social and the economic roles of working-class traders in the Roman provinces. This paper will discuss a selection of occupational inscriptions from the Hispanic city of Corduba, including three inscriptions that preserve the title *aerarius* (‘coppersmith’). Corduba was an important city that became the capital of Hispania Baetica under Augustus. The success of Corduba stems largely from the activities of working-class individuals and groups. It is therefore important to gain a better understanding of the ethnic, gender and class identities of these workers, and to consider why they chose to use Latin epigraphy to represent themselves and others.

Associate Professor David M. Pritchard
The University of Queensland
d.pritchard@uq.edu.au