OCTOBER 2016

NOVA

THE JOURNAL OF THE FRIENDS OF ANTIQUITY

THE ANTIKYTHERA MECHANISM
WHAT DID IT DO?

ITS RELEVANCE
TO
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATHEMATICS (STEM)
AND
LEGO

ALUMNI FRIENDS OF ANTIQUITY
THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

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Contributors

- **Don Barrett is** Honorary Associate Professor in Classics, School of Historical and Philosophical Inquiry.
- **Professor Alastair Blanshard** is the inaugural Paul Eliadis Professor of Classics and Ancient History.
- **Professor Trevor Bryce** is an Honorary Professor in Classics in the School of Historical and Philosophical Inquiry.
- **Emeritus Professor Bill Caelli AO** is in the Science and Engineering Faculty, Queensland University of Technology (QUT).
- **Peter Caelli** works at Gold Coast Techspace.
- **Caillan Davenport** is a Lecturer in Classics and Ancient History and ARC DECRA Research Fellow.
- **Shushma Malik** is a Lecturer in Classics and Ancient History.
- **Emeritus Professor Bob Milns AM** is a Patron of the Friends of Antiquity, and was Professor of Classics and Ancient History from 1970-2003.
- **Dr Steve Papas** is a Patron of the Friends of Antiquity. He is also on the Executive Committee of the Alumni Friends of UQ.
- **Carlos Robinson** received a University Medal in Ancient History in the July 2016 graduations.
- **Dr Ann Scott** is an Adjunct Professor in the School of Historical and Philosophical Inquiry. She has edited *Nova* since 2009.
- **Emeritus Professor Roger Scott** is in the School of Political Science and International Studies.
- **Dr Rashna Taraporewalla** teaches at Brisbane Girls Grammar School and also lectures in Ancient History at QUT.

Since 2011 electronic versions of previous issues of *Nova* have been put on the Friends of Antiquity website each January (at: http://www.friendsofantiquity.org.au/index.php?id=2). I have now started experimenting with adding supplementary direct hyperlinks to other material, bearing in mind that *Nova* does eventually become available in an electronic version.

EDITORIAL

Ann Scott

This is the final *Nova* for 2016. We hope that you will celebrate the end of the year with us at the lunch at Women's College on 19 November (see the Program on the back of *Nova).*

We are at the end of 2016, the year in which we have marked the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death. I am grateful to Alastair Blanshard and Shushma Malik for providing a synopsis of their memorable presentation as part of 'The Delighted Spirit: Shakespeare at UQ 2016' celebration. The topic of their lecture was 'Shakespeare's Romans: origins and legacy'. Shush described the historical sources Shakespeare would have depended on for his Roman plays, and Alastair gave an illustrated talk on 'silent Shakespeare' - the portrayal of Shakespeare's Roman plays in early cinema. Many thanks to Alastair and Shush for the lengths they went to to get copies of some of these films from UK archives.

Also in this *Nova,* Trevor Bryce discusses the challenges he faced when invited by Oxford University Press to write his recently-published *Babylonia: A Very Short Introduction*. And I invited Roger Scott to review it.

I also invited Don Barrett to review Rebecca Gowers' *Horrible Words* (Penguin, 2016). In 2014 Penguin published her revision of Ernest Gowers' *Plain Words. Horrible Words* made me laugh and I hoped it would appeal to Don.

As someone who has published books myself, I know only too well how hard it is to get them reviewed, and then, if they are reviewed, how egocentric you have to be to regularly search the web for the name of your books in case someone has reviewed them. Publishers don't do it for you. So I welcome alerts from any authors who would like to be reviewed in *Nova*.

My profound thanks to all who have contributed to *Nova* this year - and indeed over the past six years. When Adrian Heyworth-Smith asked me to succeed him as editor seven years ago my immediate reaction was to wonder how I could possibly produce enough copy each quarter to keep readers interested. The answer, of course, was that it is a team effort. We have both regular and occasional contributors, and I have been most fortunate that everyone has been so reliable about producing such high-quality copy, on time to meet my deadlines.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Denis Brosnan

Warm thanks to Lyn and Bob Milns for leading the team which brings us our Sunday Series. Is anything of comparable quality offered elsewhere in this country? I doubt it. So what has happened in that area since the last NOVA? Any person who thought that the Greeks were not "modern" had only to hear Bill Caelli on 14 August, and to see his son's spectacular LEGO version of the Antikythera Mechanism. On 11 September, Caillan Davenport showed us that a real scholar and teacher can rise above technical glitches and do so with grace. Poor old Thermopylae has received a caning over the years, and Caillan showed us why. He also made it clear that the last word has yet to be written on this topic, as with countless others in our discipline, because new material keeps coming to light. Vivien Muller was then announced as the winner of the Betty Fletcher Travelling Scholarship and she outlined how she will be applying the funds. We look forward to hearing, next year, her report on her travels. While I was unable to attend Rashna Taraporewalla's talk on Leonidas on 9 October, the reports I've heard show that she kept our standard high.

Speaking of funds, if you happen to be looking for a worthy place to re-locate any surplus sesterces, do let me know. The trust fund which enables the Betty Fletcher Scholarship would be a really good starting point.

Only two major events remain to fill out what has been another remarkable year. Be sure to hear Sue Edmondson on 'Fish and Ships' on 6 November. Sue has a rich background; almost as rich as the garum she'll be speaking about. (Vietnamese nuoc mam sauce may come close; if you've never had the chance, have a sniff next time you can.) Sue will be followed by Bob Milns' tribute to Aristotle; we can be sure of that rare combination of good humour and deep insight.

Our End of Year Party will be held at The Women's College on 19 November. It will be an entertaining event, and all of us on your committee look forward to seeing you there. If you've not managed to be at one of these parties recently, or maybe not at all, do put your glad rags on and re-schedule the other things on your plate: you'll be glad to have done so. The food and the fellowship are first-class. A final word of thanks to our Social Committee, members of which also organise the afternoon teas we enjoy each Sunday. A range of volunteers sell raffle tickets, donate prizes and provide the refreshments. If you would like to become more involved with your Friends, this might be an area to start with.

NEWS FROM THE DISCIPLINE

Alastair Blanshard

The second semester is fast coming to a close and once again it has proved a very successful one for the discipline. Our course enrolments continue to exceed projections and, judging by surveys of teaching satisfaction, our students are very happy with the offerings that we provide. Our courses are continually ranked amongst the most popular with students in the School.

The intellectual life of the discipline continues to blossom. This semester, Dr Tom Stevenson organised a full and exciting programme of talks for our Friday afternoon seminars. Topics have included the representation of the emperor on Roman provincial coinage, the virtue of mercy in Greek tragedy, and the treatment of the gods on the Athenian comic stage. The seminars are held at 3:30 pm on most Fridays during the semester and are followed by refreshments. They are open to all, so please do come along if there is a topic that sparks your interest. A full list of the talks can be obtained from the School office.[1]

We have also hosted two visits by distinguished professors. At the very start of semester, our R. D. Milns Visiting Professor was Prof. Nancy Worman from Columbia University in New York and she was followed by Prof. Katja Sporn, the Director of the German Archaeological School at Athens. Prof. Sporn's visit was sponsored by the Australian Archaeological Institute at Athens (AAIA) and we are grateful to the Institute and the Queensland Friends of the AAIA for their assistance in bringing such a distinguished visitor to Brisbane.

The academics in the department continue to be a well-travelled group. Both Caillan Davenport and Amelia Brown have been off in Europe and the UK conducting research. I managed to squeeze a short trip to Harvard's Hellenic Studies Centre at Nafplio in the second week of the semester. While Tom Stevenson went off for a week in Italy to present at an international conference on Roman history.

STOP PRESS

Ann Scott

As many of you will be aware, the University recently advertised for a 10-month appointment in Classics and Ancient History, funded from Amelia Brown's DECRA grant, and primarily to teach Greek and Latin.

Dr Edith Foster, currently a Senior Research Associate at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, has accepted this appointment. Dr Foster's publications include a monograph, *Thucydides, Pericles, and Periclean Imperialism* (Cambridge University Press 2010); an edited volume, co-edited with Donald Lateiner, *Thucydides and Herodotus* (Oxford University Press 2012); an edited volume, *Kinesis: Essays for Donald Lateiner on the Ancient Depiction of Gesture, Motion, and Emotion* (University of Michigan Press, 2015).

She is also the historiography editor of the forthcoming *Oxford Handbook of Thucydides* 2017), and is preparing a commentary on book four of Thucydides for the *Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics* series of Cambridge University Press.

Perhaps the Program Committee may find her a spot in the 2017 FoA Sunday Series so we can all meet (and hear) her.

ALUMNI FRIENDS TO CELEBRATE ITS 50TH BIRTHDAY WITH GOLDEN JUBILEE BURSARIES

IUS NOMINANDI[2]

Steve Papas

In 2017, to celebrate its 50th birthday with maximum impact and eclat, the Alumni Friends of the University of Queensland (AFUQ) will offer 50 Gold Jubilee bursaries to the university. These, valued at $1,000 each, underwritten by AFUQ, will be awarded selectively throughout the UQ student body.

The Friends of Antiquity Executive Committee has resolved to donate one bursary in the name of the Friends of Antiquity. Discreet inquiry has revealed that within the Department of Classics and Ancient History there are several worthy potential recipients most deserving of such recognition.

Thereby, a unique occasion has arisen to invite your personal participation and support. The Golden Jubilee committee is offering you the opportunity to acquire one or more of these bursaries, together with the right to direct its destination.

In addition, there is the singular honour of choosing the NAME: Ius Nominandi.

For more information please contact the chair of the committee, Vice-President Dr Catherine (Cathi) Lawrence: c.a.lawrence@uqconnect.edu.au or Dr Stephen Papas tel: 38709871.

[1] This link to HAPI events should also work if you want to check online. Ann Scott (ed).
[2] 'Ius Nominandi' is Latin for 'the right of naming'.

ANOTHER UNIVERSITY MEDALLIST IN ANCIENT HISTORY

We had an oversight in our last issue of *Nova* as we failed to congratulate Carlos Robinson when we featured the University Medallists in Ancient History in July.

Carlos sent us an abstract for the thesis on which he is currently working. He presented his confirmation seminar in August 2016:

Carlos Robinson

Mapping the Uncharted Waters of Ptolemaic Maritime Religion and Naval History

> This thesis aims to demonstrate that the deification of the Ptolemaic Queen Arsinoë II (c.316 – 270 BC) as the maritime goddess Aphrodite Euploia in the third century BC was at least partly intended to further the political and naval policies of King Ptolemy II.
>
> This thesis proposes to analyse and map the locations of the surviving altar plaques to Arsinoë Aphrodite and to examine their correlation to the Ptolemaic 'League of Islands,' the political institution which the early Ptolemies used to administer the Aegean islands in the mid-third century BC. In order to establish the political context of the deification of Arsinoë II, the first part of this thesis will argue that primary sources demonstrate that possessing naval power (ναυτικὴν δύναμιν) and naval supremacy (θαλασσοκρατεῖν) were important goals of some of the early Hellenistic Kings.
>
> It will be argued that Ptolemy I pursued a persistent goal of achieving naval supremacy (thalassokratia) throughout his reign, laying the foundations of the maritime empire of Ptolemy II.

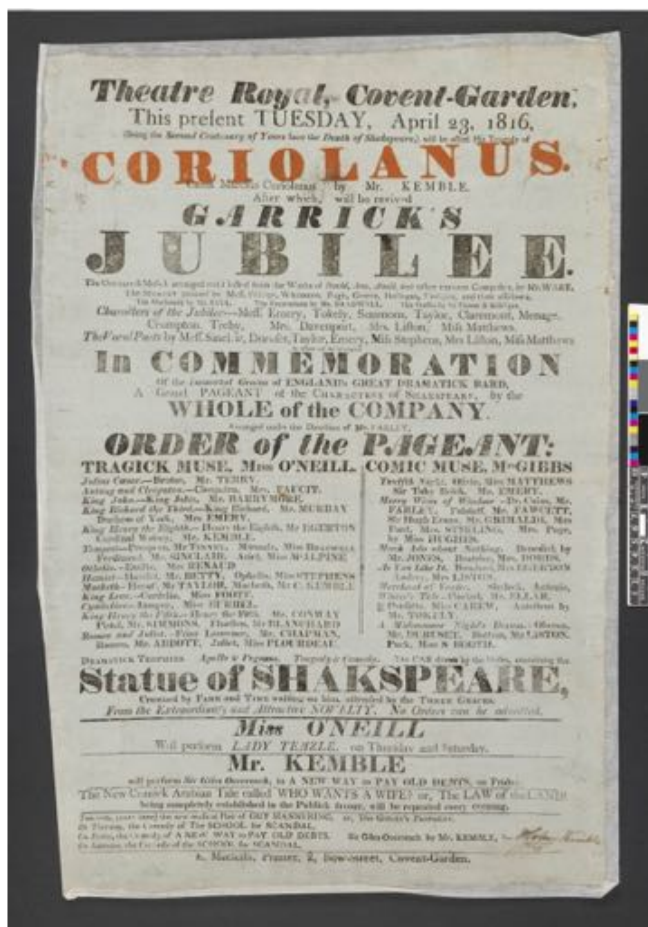
Many congratulations to Carlos on being awarded the University Medal, and apologies for our earlier omission.

SHAKESPEARE'S ROMANS: ORIGINS AND LEGACY

Alastair Blanshard and Shushma Malik

Sources

Shakespeare's genius has been ascribed, in part, to his ability to take familiar myths and histories and transform them into stories that have proved captivating, enduring, and accessible over these past 400 years. We recognise many of his themes and characters from the mythic and historic traditions of our own cultures, but Shakespeare gives them words that bring them to life. We can see this clearly in Shakespeare's Roman plays. He takes popular figures from the Roman past – Julius Caesar, Marc Antony, Cleopatra, Octavian – and creates characters that exceed the originals in their fame.



Shakespeare wrote a number of Roman plays. *Julius Caesar* (1599), *Antony and Cleopatra* (1606), and *Coriolanus* (1608) are the three firmly rooted in well-known Roman historical sources. Two other plays also have a Roman connection, *Titus Andronicus* (1592) and *Cymbeline* (1610). *Titus* is a fictional play set in late-antique Rome that borrows heavily from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Seneca's *Thyestes*. *Cymbeline*'s protagonist is the Ancient British King Cunobeline – an early British ally of the

Romans. Shakespeare would have encountered ancient Rome through his study of Latin texts at school, an integral part of the curriculum at that time. The Romans, particularly Republican Romans, evidently captured his imagination.

The main source for Shakespeare's Roman historical plays is the Imperial Roman writer Plutarch, a philosopher and biographer from Chaeronea in Greece.

Plutarch was born during the reign of the emperor Nero in the mid-first century A.D. The biographer paired his Romans with key figures from Greek history in order to draw out comparisons and contrasts, a technique which has afforded his collected biographies the name the *Parallel Lives*. Plutarch, being from Greece, naturally wrote in Greek, which is a significant feature of his work when considering his influence on Shakespeare.

Shakespeare attended Stratford's Grammar school, King's New School until around the age of fifteen. There he would have learned Latin, studying the history of Livy, the speeches of Cicero, the comedies of Plautus and Terence, the tragedies of Seneca, and the poetry of Virgil and Ovid.

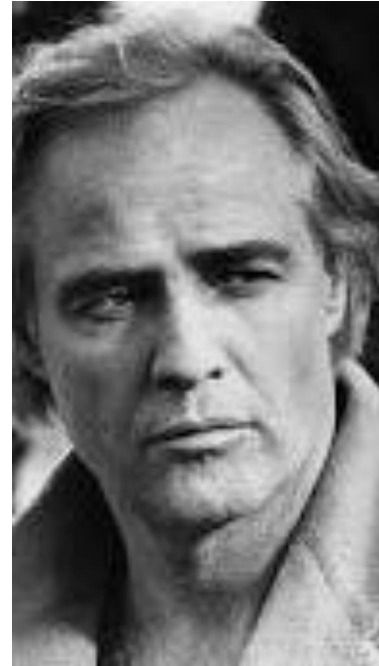
However, he would not have learned Greek. This led Shakespeare's friend and contemporary Ben Jonson to describe his language capabilities as 'small Latine and lesse Greek' (see Martindale and Taylor, eds. 2004. *Shakespeare and the Classics*, Cambridge: 1-5). As a result, to access his main Roman source, Shakespeare used Thomas North's newly released (1579) translation into English of Plutarch's *Lives*, which North had translated from Jacques Amyot's 1559 French translation of the Greek. A multi-layered reception indeed!

On the whole, in the Republican plays, Shakespeare follows Plutarch's narrative as translated by North very closely indeed. However, there are important moments of difference that help to give Shakespeare's Roman plays their distinctive complexion.

Julius Caesar gives us the best example with the addition of Marc Antony's now immortal eulogy of Caesar (over 130 lines long), beginning:

> Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears; / I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him. (Act 3, Scene 2).

There is no such comparable speech in Plutarch's *Lives* nor in Plutarch's near-contemporary Suetonius' *Divus Julius*. That Antony delivers a speech over Caesar's body is mentioned (Plut. *Brut*. 20), but its content is not recorded. Shakespeare gives Antony words that demonstrate loyalty ('My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar, / And I must pause till it come back to me'), that cleverly criticise his opponents ('But Brutus says he was ambitious; / And Brutus is an honourable man'), and that whip up the mob into a frenzy ('Good friends, sweet friends, let me not stir you up / To such a sudden flood of mutiny'). In doing so, the Bard marries the universal themes of love, death, betrayal, and revenge with enthralling monologue to create a speech that for centuries has placed Marc Antony securely in the popular imagination as Caesar's undoubted champion.



Marlon Brando contributed significantly to Marc Antony's popular image in the 1953 film of Julius Caesar (Wiki Commons)

Promotional image for the 1953 film of Julius Caesar, featuring Edmond O'Brien (left) as Casca and John Gielgud (right) Caius Cassius (WikiCommons)

Legacy

Few examples show up the powerful influence of Shakespeare on Western Culture like the over 100 silent films produced of his plays. On the face of it, 'Silent Shakespeare' seems a paradox. Why take an author famous above all for his facility with words and translate him into a medium in which no words are spoken? The phenomenon of 'Silent Shakespeare' is a useful reminder that Shakespeare is more than just a master of the telling phrase. He is also a supreme genius when it comes to plot and characterisation. The characters he created are so potent and the stories he told are so compelling that he doesn't need words to make them work. Certainly the audiences that flocked to performances of Shakespeare in the cinema didn't feel that they needed the words to enjoy an evening's spectacle.

The silent films are also testament to the enormous prestige afforded Shakespeare. Films of Shakespeare are amongst the earliest silent films produced. At the very birth of professional cinema we find him. Amongst the many films produced by George Méliès was *Le Rêve de Shakespeare* in which the bard is pictured imagining the plot of Julius Caesar.

The same year Méliès also produced a version of Hamlet. There was an artistic imperative that drove these early producers towards Shakespeare. These films were produced at a crucial moment in the history of cinema. Prior to these films, cinema had been largely the product of carnivals and sideshows. They were spectacular entertainments presented alongside stage magicians and side-show freaks. The Shakespeare films were offered as proof of cinema's claim to be treated as a serious art-form. They showed that cinema could rival the stage as a vehicle for drama. Indeed, in their ability to produce special effects so that, for example, Ariel could fly across the screen or the ghosts of Banquo and Julius Caesar materialise or Bottom instantly transform into a donkey, cinema exceeded the capabilities of the dramatic theatre.

Producing Shakespeare films was a way for filmmakers to reach international markets. The popularity of his work ensured that films could be sold on every continent. Silent films were easy to package for export. Unlike the later 'talkies', there was no need for expensive and difficult dubbing. It was just a matter of editing the film and inserting intertitles in a new language. So, for example, the Vitagraph company of New York, the largest US filmmaker of the first couple of decades of the 20th century produced a whole raft of Shakespeare plays for sale in Europe with intertitles in French, German, Italian, and Spanish.

The Vitagraph version of *Julius Caesar* (1908) preserved in the British Film archive is a good example of this international dimension. Produced in America, it now exists only in a German print with German intertitles. With a running time of 12 minutes (fairly typical for early silent film) the film is a jewel which shows just how effectively Shakespeare could be adapted for cinema. All the key scenes are there and the intertitles provide all the famous quotes (and many not so famous ones). It is no wonder that these films became popular with teachers and educational groups and the Vitagraph company produced a large amount of supplementary printed material to accompany their showings.

The Vitagraph *Julius Caesar* is a faithful adaption of its source material. Not every film was so scrupulous about its treatment of Shakespeare's text. The Pathé brothers' production of *Cleopatra* (1910) represents just how filmmakers were prepared to play fast and loose with their subject matter. Billed as a production of *Antony and Cleopatra*, the film makes a mockery of its Shakespearean origins.

Plot is sacrificed to melodrama as the bewitching oriental queen seduces Antony leading him into adultery and suicide.

One suspects that the Pathé brothers knew their film was a travesty. Only a couple of years later they produced a much longer and more faithful version of the Antony and Cleopatra story. Nevertheless, the early film is an enjoyable romp. It is also a powerful witness to the prestige of Shakespeare when one considers that the Pathé brothers were worried that they couldn't even sell a Cleopatra film without attaching Shakespeare's name to it.

THE ANTIKYTHERA MECHANISM : WORLD'S FIRST COMPUTER?

Bill Caelli and Peter Caelli[3]

Overview

This FoA Sunday Series lecture discussed the background to the Antikythera Mechanism and the work being done at the Gold Coast Techspace by Peter Caelli and James Sapsford on building a LEGO simulator for the mechanism.

The existing model is the first step towards creating a new replica based on recent research on the mechanism using advanced photographic and allied analysis technologies on the actual fragments discovered around 1901.

Background

A recent 2016 issue of *Almagest: International Journal for the History of Scientific Ideas*[4] (Vol 7, No. 1, 2016) was dedicated solely to the work of the Antikythera Mechanism Research Project.

This issue made available the latest research results and opinions about the nature of this device. As stated in its introduction:

> The Antikythera Mechanism was a geared device displaying chronological cycles of the Sun and Moon, and motions and phenomena of the heavenly bodies, made somewhere in or before the early 1st century BC. Its mechanical components and display facings were made of bronze alloys, while the casing was wooden.

While not being totally sufficient as a full description of the device or its possible uses, *Almagest* summarises it as being a cross between a 'planetarium' and a 'calendar computer'.

However, many popular discussions of the mechanism have labelled it, rather controversially, as the world's first 'computer'. In some way it does resemble, in its possible use and function, the analogue computers that were well known and used from around the 1930s to at least the 1960s. These were quite different to the modern 'stored program digital computer'.

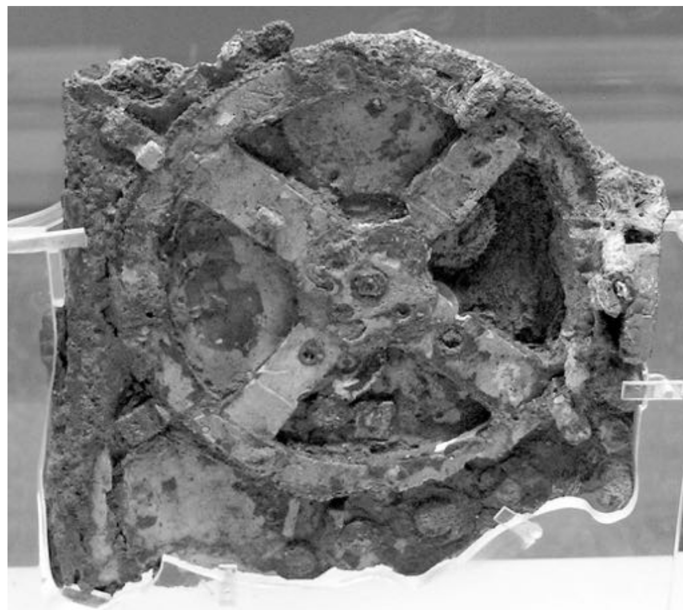


Figure 1 : Antikythera Mechanism (Large Wheel) Image: Creative Commons

A simple internet search will soon elicit many references to the Antikythera Mechanism, while a similar search on 'YouTube' will provide many videos of TV programs, seminars and video reconstructions of the mechanism.[5]

However, the presentation to the Friends of Antiquity at the University of Queensland enabled members to actually see and use a LEGO simulation of the mechanism.

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[3] This is a summary of the talk and demonstration of the Antikythera Mechanism Lego model given on 14 August 2016 for the Friends of Antiquity.

[4] *Almagest: International Journal for the History of Scientific Ideas*, Vol 7, No. 1, 2016.

[5] See list of references and internet links at the end of this article.

Aims of the presentation

Exposure to the Antikythera Mechanism was intended to increase interest by young and old alike in both STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), and the study of antiquity/history and its relevance to the present. In this way, study of the Mechanism could promote STEM to students through appreciation of the past and the role of technology in the development of mankind.

At the same time this session also aimed to develop interest in the funding and/or support for a new replica of the Antikythera Mechanism based on the latest research. One aim of the Gold Coast Techspace is to further investigate creation of a larger version of the mechanism which could be usable for educational purposes - particularly for school groups.

The Wreck and the Mechanism

According to Wikipedia the associated wreck of a Greco-Roman ship, dating from the 1st century BC, was discovered by sponge divers at coordinates: 35.8897°N / 23.3078°E off Point Glyphadia on the Greek island of Antikythera, north-west of Crete, in 1900. It was further explored in 1901 and most of its artifacts were salvaged, including the heavily encrusted remnants of the mechanism. The Wikipedia entry states that:

> The wreck yielded numerous statues, coins and other artifacts dating back to the 4th century BC, as well as the severely corroded remnants of a device many regard as the world's oldest known analog computer, the Antikythera mechanism. These ancient artifacts, works of art, and elements of the ship itself are now displayed at the National Archaeological Museum of Athens.

Based on the 2016 *Almagest* report, the Antikythera Mechanism can be summarised as follows:

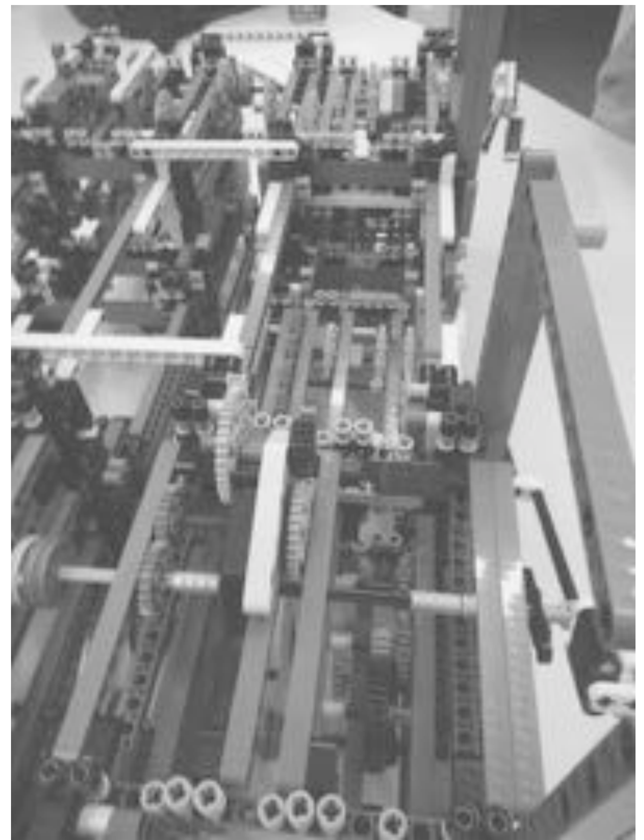
> Geared device displaying chronological cycles of the Sun and Moon with 82 known salvaged pieces;
>
> Used to predict the motions and phenomena of the heavenly bodies, as well as possible astrological predictions;
>
> Made somewhere in the Hellenistic world in or before early 1st century BC;
>
> Mechanical components and display facings made of bronze alloys;
>
> Casing of wood;
>
> Now, in actual fact some similar devices were mentioned in some classical sources, such as Sphairai (Latin), for cosmic sphere.

Interestingly, the USA's *Forbes Magazine* stated in its 30 June 2016 edition that the 'Antikythera Mechanism May Have Been World's First STEM Project'.

It was going to be a long time until 1948 when the first stored program digital computer, named 'Baby', went into operation at Manchester University as an outgrowth of the building of code-breaking machines, such as the UK's Bletchley 'Colossus' computer used during World War II.

LEGO

In the United States around six years ago Andrew Carol, an engineer at Apple, created a LEGO model of the Antikythera Mechanism. Under the leadership of Peter Caelli the Gold Coast Techspace funded a project to recreate the LEGO US model following the work plans published by Andrew Carol.



LEGO model of Antikythera Mechanism

The preliminary result of this recreation was demonstrated at the Friends of Antiquity meeting - with some minor glitches as some of the LEGO parts could be easily dislodged as the wheels rotated. Indeed the model held a strong fascination for some engineering students present.

Replicas/models so far

The story of the building of models or possible replicas of the mechanism has been an interesting one for 80 years or more. The first suggested model is from the 1930s by Ioannis Theofanides and then in the 1980s Robert Deroski built a model based on

the engineering/archaeological work of Derek Price. This was donated by Price to the National Archaeological Museum in Athens.

Interestingly Australia comes into the story with Australian clockmaker Frank Percival's model is based on research done by Allan Bromley and Michael Wright. Allan Bromley was in the Basser School of Computer Science at the University of Sydney. Wright subsequently developed his own model. Current activities include a number of computer graphics simulations as well as the design and creation of a wristwatch by Hublot.

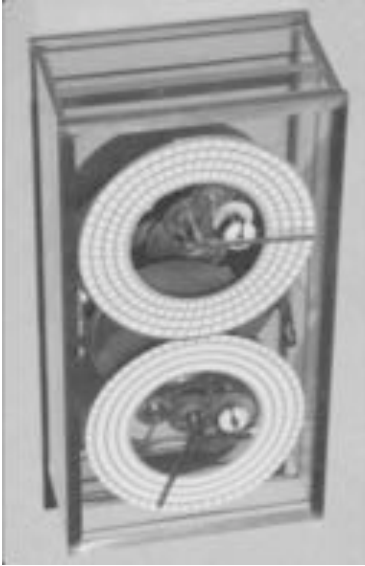


Figure 3 Bromley/Percival Model

BUT - What Did the Antikythera Mechanism Do?

This an interesting question since, unlike today (well sometimes), we do not have a full instruction manual. Some functions that have been identified include:

Metonic calendar dial – month on lunar month cycle;

'Olympiad' dial - to predict the date of the Olympic games? - but this has now been questioned by the latest research;

Saros lunar eclipse dial;

Zodiac dial - demonstrating the use of the Antikythera Mechanism for astrology - only recently suggested from latest research but still apparently debatable;

Egyptian calendar dial; and

Planetary pointers.

Recent archeological activity.

Archaeological work using new technologies has been able to illuminate the inscriptions more clearly. This has been achieved using high resolution photography, reflectance imaging and Polynomial Texture Mapping (PTM).

This work sponsored by Hewlett-Packard has enabled surface inscriptions to become more visible and analysed. Indeed microfocus X-ray computer tomography (CT) has also been used to enable closer analysis of the mechanism and its inscriptions.

In November 2015 the Computer History Museum in Mountainview, California, held a major conference on most aspects of the Antikythera Mechanism and much of that conference is available as video records on the internet.

Ongoing work in Australia

It would be great to be able to build a full replica of the Antikythera Mechanism using that very latest research reported in March 2016.

We at the Gold Coast's Techspace are seeking support to achieve this. To build a full replica will require the milling of finely detailed brass cogs and wheels, as well as building a wooden box to house the replica.

We need a computer-controlled milling machine/ lathe and additional work on creating the required 3D CAD files for the machine. And - of course - some brass sheets and rods (of course, just to be Australian, perhaps we could make it out of stainless steel!).

Further Reading and Video/Audio Resources.

For a list of 118 references see URL http://www.antikythera-mechanism.gr/bibliography

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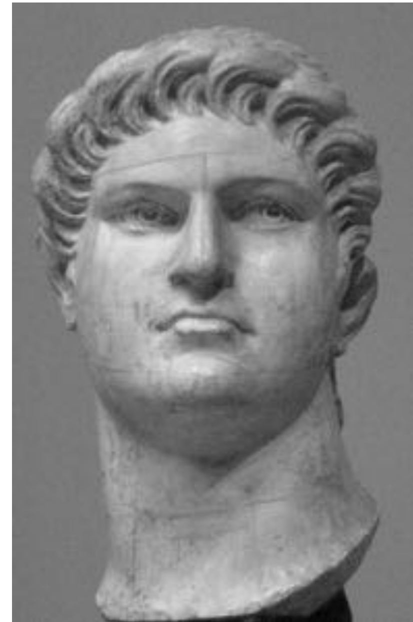
Contacts

Peter Caelli email: pb.caelli@gmail.com
James Sapsford email:james.sapsford9@gmail.com
Bill Caelli email: w.caelli@illeac.com

MYTHBUSTING ANCIENT ROME - THE EMPEROR NERO

Caillan Davenport and Shushma Malik

[Editor's introduction:
Those of you who attended the lecture by Caillan Davenport, 'A New Battle of Thermopylae: the Gothic Invasions of Greece in the 3rd Century AD' on 11 September will recall that was preceded by a loud pop from the ceiling, indicating that the projector's bulb had blown so he could not use his slides. We marvelled at his ability to revert to 'chalk and talk' - and his freehand maps - when deprived of Powerpoint. Caillan was not talking from a script, so has no written abstract and suggested I reproduce the following article that he and Shushma Malik published in *The Conversation* on September 28 2016.]



Nero
(cast in the Pushkin Museum, from the British Museum (Wikimedia Commons)

If asked to think of a single individual who epitomises the decadence, destruction and debauchery of Ancient Rome, the name Nero would surely be on many people's lips.

Attaining power in AD 54 at the tender age of 16, over the next 14 years Nero allegedly murdered his two wives, his mother, and his aunt while also marrying two different men and sleeping with his mother and a Vestal Virgin.

As if these sexcapades and murders weren't enough to keep the youthful emperor busy, he is also supposed to have set fire to Rome, played (or fiddled) while the city burned, and then blamed the Christians in order to deflect attention from himself. The image of the capricious and crazed Nero is

immortalised in films and TV series such as Quo Vadis and I, Claudius, not to mention in the computer software Nero Burning ROM.

But are any of these stories that feed our popular conception of the emperor Nero actually true? We'd like to tackle two of the most pervasive misunderstandings about Nero's reign – that he was responsible for setting fire to Rome and that he had a sexual relationship with his mother, Agrippina the Younger.

These tales can be found in our ancient historical sources (all of which were written at least a generation after Nero's death) but should not be taken at face value. This is because they are reported by sources as rumours, rather than facts.

Did Nero set fire to Rome?

Nero had a reputation as an arsonist even in antiquity, with rumours that he started the Fire of Rome in A.D. 64 appearing in the histories of Tacitus and Cassius Dio and the biography of Nero by Suetonius. While most scholars now agree that Nero was not responsible for the fire, the modern-day rumour mill (as represented by the Internet) is loath to exonerate the emperor.

There are two reasons usually given for why Nero set fire to Rome. The first is that he was a mad megalomaniac who burned down the city simply because he could. There is a story told by Suetonius that when a man said to Nero, 'When I am dead, let the earth be consumed by fire', the emperor replied, 'No, while I live!'

The second reason often proffered is that Nero wanted to rebuild Rome according to his own plans, which included a sumptuous new residence for himself, the "Golden House" (Domus Aurea). There is a modern myth that the new palace was built solely for parties and orgies.

If we examine our historical accounts closely, the only evidence for Nero the arsonist comes from rumour and hearsay. This is freely admitted by the historian Tacitus: even though Nero was out of Rome when the fire started, a rumour spread that the emperor had sung of the destruction of Troy from his palace stage.

Cassius Dio describes chaos in the streets as the fire took hold, as people ran about asking each other how the blaze started. In such a desperate situation, without reliable channels of information, it is easy to see how rumours could start.

Did Nero commit incest with his mother?

Ulrike Schneider as Agrippina
Brisbane Baroque, 2016

Nero has not only earned an undeserved reputation as an arsonist, but also as an incestuous deviant. His alleged sexual antics with his mother Agrippina have earned him a place on a list of the "most sexually depraved things Romans ever did" and in news stories about his "pleasure palace". As with the story of the Fire of Rome, this image of Nero derives solely from ancient rumours, not from facts.[6]

The Roman people loved to speculate about the emperors and their sex lives. One story involves Nero and his mother being carried through Rome in a litter (a portable couch concealed by curtains), only for the emperor to emerge with suspicious stains on his clothes. People started to whisper that the pair had been doing more than reviewing imperial legislation behind the curtains.

Even more scandalous was the fact that the emperor took a mistress who turned out to be the spitting image of his mother – a situation which got tongues wagging throughout Rome.

These rumours can be explained as responses to an unusual political situation. Nero was only 16 when he was acclaimed emperor, and his mother Agrippina asserted herself as the emperor's guardian by appointing men loyal to her in key positions. Her extraordinary influence is demonstrated by contemporary coins with busts of both the emperor and his mother on the "heads" side.

Agrippina's unprecedented position was the subject of continual speculation throughout the city of Rome, according to Cassius Dio, because the people could not obtain accurate information about affairs inside the palace. Without reliable information, rumours spread based on cultural preconceptions: in the Roman world, it was believed that a woman could not exert political power unless it was gained by underhanded or immoral means. One particularly pervasive rumour developed after Agrippina began to lose influence over Nero, as he began to pay more attention to his comely courtier Poppaea Sabina. Agrippina allegedly dressed

[6] Some readers may have attended Laurence Dale's memorable production of Handel's opera Agrippina at the Brisbane Baroque Festival earlier in 2016. The libretto by Cardinal Vincenzo Grimani, certainly made the most of the ancient rumours.

herself up to the nines and propositioned her son as he lay in a drunken stupor after a long liquid lunch.

Cassius Dio remarked:

> Whether this actually occurred, now, or whether it was invented to fit their character, I am not sure.

The fact that our ancient historians do not believe such tales should give us pause.

The purpose of rumour

Sociological studies of rumours have shown that they develop in situations when people do not have good information to explain current events. The rumour that Nero started the fire of Rome can be explained as an attempt by people to make sense of a confused, traumatic situation during which little or no official information about what actually happened was available.

The sight of the Domus Aurea being built so soon after the fire undoubtedly fanned the flames of rumour, pointing the finger at the emperor himself. The same point can be made about Nero's alleged incestuous relationship with his mother. The stories about the sexual relationship developed as a way of explaining both Agrippina's extraordinary power and prominence as well as her fall from favour.

Our ancient sources are clear about the fact that they are reporting rumours and innuendo. Suetonius, the biographer of Nero, reports that the emperor was merely thought to have desired his mother, but was persuaded not to act on his feelings. Similarly Tacitus reveals that, while some believed in the rumour that Nero started the fire, there were also those who did not.

If our ancient authors knew these stories were just rumours, why did they record them? There are various reasons for this. There was certainly a tradition in ancient historiography of reporting different versions of events and allowing the reader to make up their own minds. The stories are also very entertaining: we should never forget that these histories and biographies were designed to bring pleasure to their readers.

Finally, the salacious rumours served a political purpose. An emperor's sex life was not simply juicy gossip for the masses: his private peccadilloes were believed to reflect the character of his government. Rumours, even if ultimately untrue, helped to define the expectations of a good emperor in the minds of the readers.

Slightly different motivations underlie the circulation of these rumours about Nero as facts in the modern world. They are enjoyable and entertaining to read, appealing to our cultural preconceptions of ancient Rome and its emperors as corrupt and morally bankrupt.

But perhaps most significantly, they enable us to impose a moral distance between ourselves and our ancient forebears. Making the past seem strange and unfamiliar helps to forget that the same problems still exist in the present.

Memory, History and the Double Burial of Leonidas

Rashna Taraporewalla

Leonidas, Agiad king of the Spartans at the time of Xerxes' invasion of Greece, fell on the battlefield of Thermopylai in 480 BC. As described by Herodotus (7.225), there ensued a Homeric struggle over the body of Leonidas, in which his men retrieved his corpse, but ultimately to no avail; soon they, too, perished at the Hot Gates, and could defend their dead king no longer. According to Herodotus (7.238.1), Xerxes ordered the decapitation of the corpse, and the head of Leonidas was fixed on a stake.

Monument to Leonidas erected at Thermopylai in 1955 (Wikicommons Media)

The Spartans must have faced a significant challenge when faced with the events of Thermopylai[7] in the aftermath of the Persian Wars. The battle had, famously, ended in defeat. In military terms, Thermopylai contributed little to the ultimate victory over the Persians. Thermopylai was intended as a point of sustained and concerted resistance and the almost total annihilation of the force at Thermopylai within three days, when viewed objectively, was a devastating blow for the broader military strategy of the Greeks, and represented a complete failure of the battle's objective. Given that Thermopylai was a defeat, there could be no booty, no trophy, no victory monument – in short, no tangible remains which could provide an objectivised focus for remembrance.

[7] The Greek form of Thermopylae.

The typical Greek monuments of victory were dependent upon control of the battlefield following the conclusion of battle. Indeed, all that the Spartans were bequeathed were their dead, with the bodies of Leonidas and those accompanying him littering the battlefield. While Greek custom dictated that the victors allow the enemy camp the opportunity to make its own arrangements on the battlefield, it is clear that the foreign king Xerxes did not provide the Spartans such an opportunity.

When, finally, the Spartans gained access to the battlefield following the retreat of Xerxes' army, the scale of destruction which confronted them must have been overwhelming and traumatic. In the immediate wake of the Persian Wars, it appears that Leonidas' remains were left on the battlefield and he was buried in effigy, a practice accorded to Spartan kings who died in battle which Herodotus (6.58) describes:

> News of the death is carried by riders all over the country, and women go the rounds of the capital beating cauldrons. This is the signal for two people, one man and one woman, from every citizen's household to put on mourning – which they are compelled to do under penalty of a heavy fine. One custom is observed on the occasion of a king's death, which is the same in Sparta as Asia: this is, that when a death occurs, not only Spartans but a certain number of the country people from all over Lacedaemon are forced to attend the funeral. A huge crowd assembles, consisting of many thousands of people – Spartan citizens, country folk and helots – and men and women together strike their foreheads with every sign of grief, wailing as if they could never stop and continually declaring that the king who has just died was the best they ever had.
>
> If a king is killed in war, they make a statue (eidolon) of him, and carry it to burial on a richly draped bier. After a king's funeral there are no public meetings or elections for ten days, all of which are spent in mourning.

We are not told directly that a simulated image of Leonidas was buried in place of his corpse, but at the time when Herodotus was writing Leonidas was the only candidate to be accorded these rites and it has been suggested that the eidolon-burial form was created especially to address the exceptional and unprecedented circumstances of his case.

It was not until some 40 years later that what might pass as the remains of Leonidas were repatriated, as the geographer Pausanias (3.14.1, late 2nd century AD) reveals in the course of his description of Sparta:

> Opposite the theatre are two tombs; the first is that of Pausanias, the general at Plataea, the second is that of Leonidas. Every year they deliver speeches over them, and hold a contest in which none may compete except Spartans. The bones of Leonidas were taken by Pausanias from Thermopylae forty years after the battle. There is set up a slab with the names, and their fathers' names, of those who endured the fight at Thermopylai against the Persians.

The bones of Leonidas were transferred to Sparta sometime after his death, and came finally to rest in a tomb proximate to that of royal Pausanias, the victorious general at Plataea, and near a stele bearing the names and patronymics of the 300. At some point, it did become important for the Spartans to engage in inscribed memorial practices, to repatriate Leonidas' remains and to erect a tomb in his honour in central Sparta.

This change in the treatment of Leonidas' remains perhaps reflects a transition in the commemorative activities in which the Spartans were engaged when telling the story of Thermopylai. In the early years after the Persian Wars, the Spartans worked to reconfigure the defeat at Thermopylai as a moment of glory and valour through performative memory practices which took place away from the battlefield. This process began quite early, and may be detected already in a fragment of Simonides (fr. 531) recorded by Diodorus (11.11.6):

> Of those who perished at Thermopylai
> All glorious is the fortune, fair the doom;
> Their tomb's an altar, ceaseless memory's theirs
> Instead of lamentation, and their fate
> Is chant of praise. Such winding-sheet as this
> Nor mould nor all-consuming time shall waste.
> This sepulchre of valiant men has taken
> The fair renown of Hellas for its inmate.
> And witness is Leonidas, once king
> Of Sparta, who hath left behind a crown
> Of valour mighty and undying fame.

In these lines, what was essentially a national trauma, resulting in the destruction of a large cohort of Sparta's finest and their king, is transformed into a praiseworthy demonstration of valour. Issues of remembrance are conspicuous throughout this verse. Commemorative rites focused upon an altar rather than the tomb, rituals of vocal praise rather than bereavement – these are the ways the Spartan dead will be remembered. The fragment articulates an attitude which views embodied rituals of praise a more appropriate form of remembering the fallen of Thermopylai and their deeds than physical memorials connected with the tomb. What is more, the act of commemoration represented by the poem appears to disengage entirely from the battlefield which was also the burial ground of Leonidas' men. It is conspicuous from the outset, the fallen are situated on some distant patch of soil. Simonides specifies the location of the battle, an unnecessary measure if the reader or auditor were on-site, in the presence of the dead. The fragment, then, articulates an attitude which views rituals of exhortation conducted away from the tomb and

battle site as a more appropriate form of remembering the fallen and their deeds than physical memorials connected with the grave. The rejection of the physicality of the tomb detected in the fragment of Simonides and the preference for performative memory practices are both reflected in Leonidas' 'first' funeral. Given that the collective memory of Thermopylai cultivated by the Spartans in the aftermath of the war was one abstracted from the tomb and battlefield, Leonidas' actual remains could contribute little to the way he and his part at Thermopylai would be remembered. It seems that what was essential was to observe the elaborate ceremonial rites involved in the funeral of a Spartan king. The pompous state funeral of a Spartan king, a rite repeated each time a monarch died, must have had a continual and cumulative impact on collective memory. It was not Leonidas' remains, but what they represented, which counted in terms of social memory, and it was not important to return the king's corpse to Sparta.

Later, however, Sparta came to compete with Athens over who had made the decisive contribution against the Persians. As this competition came increasingly to be played out through physical memorials, it became more important to construct inscribed memories of Thermopylai and Plataia, the two key battles in which the Spartans had participated. At this time, Leonidas' remains were repatriated, and placed within a network of memorials in central Sparta. Nearby the tombs and stele mentioned by Pausanias, to the southwest of the sanctuary of Athena Chalkioikos, was found a larger than life-size statue of military nature often identified as King Leonidas. Also within the vicinity was the Persian Stoa, for Pausanias (3.11.3), 'the most striking feature in the agora'. The Persian Stoa was adorned with white-marble likenesses of Persians including Mardonius and Artemisia. The impression we get from this choreography of monuments (and indeed from Pausanias' description of downtown Sparta) is of a cityscape designed to evoke memories of Sparta's role in the Persian Wars, and in two battles in particular – Thermopylai and Plataia. The Spartans appear to have switched to a new commemorative mode, giving a more prominent role to inscribed memory and physical monuments. The transfer of Leonidas' bones and the creation of a tomb for the king appear to form part of this pattern. Indeed, the repatriation of Leonidas' remains seems a purposeful and deliberate part of the creation of this memoryscape.

The repatriation of Leonidas' bones may thus be viewed as symptomatic of a more general shift in the way the Spartans remembered and represented Thermopylai and their role in the Persian Wars in response to competing claims. Athens and Sparta appear to have been locked in a rivalry over how the Persian Wars were remembered. Certainly by the mid 5th century, the question of who had made the decisive contribution in the victory over the Persians was an open and fiercely contested one. It was a question contemplated by Herodotus, who decided in favour of the Athenians on account of their superior naval strength, though he also considered Plataia, a Spartan victory, as 'the fairest victory of all those we know' (9.64.1), suggesting the issue was one widely debated.

The Spartan decision to create a memoryscape redolent of the Persian Wars may well be a response to Athenians' claims regarding their preeminent role in the defence of Greece. The physically conspicuous tombs of the generals who had led the battles which the Spartans could claim as their decisive contribution to victory over the Persians – Thermopylai and Plataia – were moved to the centre of Sparta, where they were contextualised within a network of monuments commemorating the Persian Wars more generally. Performative memory alone would no longer suffice to contest the memory threatened by Athenian claims. In this atmosphere, it was far more important to bring the physical remains of Leonidas back to Sparta, allowing an inscribed memory to crystallise around them.

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THE CELTIC INVASION OF MACEDONIA AND GREECE, 280-276 BCE[8]

Bob Milns

By the mid-4th century BCE the Celtic tribes of central Europe had reached the Balkans in their southward expansion and migration. When Alexander the Great made his Balkan campaigns in 335 BCE, soon after his accession, he was met by an embassy of Celts seeking an alliance with Macedonia. By the end of the 4th century the Celts had reached the area of modern Bulgaria.

In the year 280/79 BCE, motivated by the weakened and confused state of affairs in Macedonia brought about by the conflicts between Alexander's

[8] This article is an abbreviated version of the talk given to the Dionysius Solomos Society on June 15 2016. It was intended to be published in conjunction with the article based on Callan Davenport's talk given on 11 September.

successors, a large body of Celts invaded Macedonia and ravaged the country until 276 BCE, when they were defeated by the new and vigorous King of Macedonia, Antigonus Gonatas, at Lysimachia. The damage they had done was highly significant for the future of Macedonia – and perhaps of Europe generally.

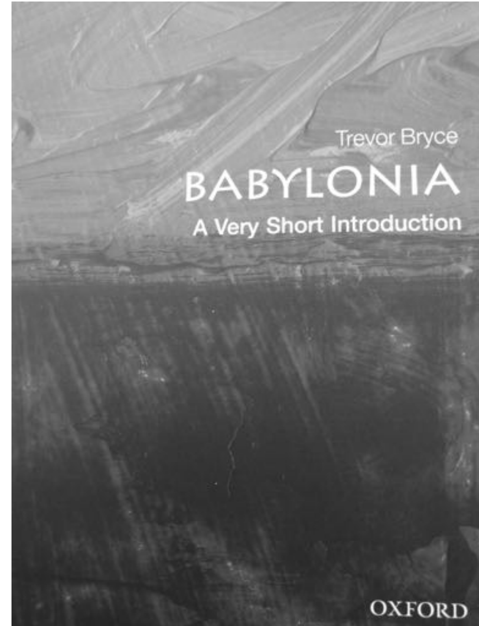
In 279 BCE, a large body of the Celts, led by Brennus and Acichorius marched south from Macedonia to attack Greece, but especially Delphi, famed for the wealth of the shrine of Apollo. Their numbers are said to have been 152,000 infantry and potentially 60,000+ equestrian troops. The invaders went, as had the Persians 100 years previously, by way of Thermopylae, which they found defended by a Greek force led by Athens. As in 480 BCE, the Celts managed to turn the pass and the Greek forces, unlike Leonidas and the Spartans, were evacuated by the waiting Athenian fleet. A large group of Celts were diverted westward into Aetolia in order to distract the Aetolians from the general resistance. The town of Callium in Aetolia was destroyed by the Celts, with horrific torments inflicted on the inhabitants by the Celts.

The main body of Celts, under Brennus and Acichorius, went on to attack Delphi. They were driven back with great loss by the Greek forces, so much so that the retreating Celts even killed their own wounded who could not keep up with them. According to Pausanias (2nd cent. CE), Apollo defended his shrine and the Celts were driven away with great losses because of the natural disasters sent upon them by the gods (earthquakes, rock-falls, snow, hail). During the night a panic, said to be sent by Apollo, seized the Celts who began to kill each other indiscriminately. There is, however, another tradition going back to the 3rd cent. BCE that the Celts did in fact get into the shrine and plunder it.

Brennus himself was badly wounded and, it is said, committed suicide by drinking neat wine. The few surviving Celts made their way back to Macedonia and thus closed what has been described by one modern scholar as “The Second Finest Hour of Hellas”. Most scholars agree that the Celtic threat to Greece was potentially greater than the Persian in the early 5th cent. BCE, since the Persians wanted to incorporate Macedonia and Greece in their empire, but the Celts simply wanted to loot, plunder and destroy. Indeed, it has been argued by R. Billows, in Kings and Colonists: Aspects of Macedonian Imperialism, that the four years of Celtic depredations and the internal chaos in Macedonia caused by this were responsible for weakening Macedonia through the loss of population so that it was less able to stand up to the growing and expanding power of Rome. In other words, without the Celtic invasion the course of European history might have been very different.

BABYLONIA. A VERY SHORT INTRODUCTION

Trevor Bryce



A few years ago, Oxford University Press launched a new series of books under the heading Very Short Introductions. The basic concept of the series was to provide a set of concise publications on a diverse range of topics, primarily for readers interested in these topics but with little or no prior knowledge of them. The series has proved outstandingly successful, with over 450 titles published so far, in 40 different languages, and millions of copies sold. The titles vary enormously – from ‘Ancient Egypt’ to ‘Classical Literature’ to ‘Buddhism’ to ‘Astronomy’ to ‘Happiness’ to ‘The Great Depression and the New Deal’. All volumes have similar formats. They are pocket-book in size, quite literally able to be carried around in one’s pocket. One of their distinctive features is their striking abstract cover designs. Another is their low cost. They sell for £7.99 or £8.99, about $15 to $17 Australian.

The authors contributing to the series are presented with specific guidelines. These include a strict limit of 35,000 words with up to ten illustrations and maps. The books are NOT to be presented as mere summaries of facts. They are to be comprehensive in the material they cover, and authoritative, but written in a lively and engaging manner to ensure their appeal to the general reader. They are also expected to be of sufficient depth to appeal to students embarking on any of the fields of study covered by the series.

Many new titles are added to the series each year, and it was in this context that I was invited by OUP to write a book on ancient Babylonia, with the main focus on the city of Babylon. This has proved an extremely challenging task. Babylon was one of the longest-inhabited cities of the ancient world, its

history stretching from the Early Bronze Age, the third millennium BC, until down into the first millennium AD, the Roman imperial era. The task was to write 'a lively and engaging' account not only of the history and civilization of Babylon itself over a period of several thousand years, but also of Babylonia, or southern Mesopotamia, as a whole and the many cities it covered. My treatment of the topic was to encompass the political and military history of the region, within the context of ancient Near Eastern history as a whole down to the Roman period, with chapters also on the archaeology and material civilization of the land, the daily lives of its peoples, its cultural and religious activities, its social hierarchies, and its system of law and justice.

It was also important to have some overall theme to give thematic and structural coherence to the book. That is to say, 'the book needs a hook'. I thought about this quite a bit before beginning to plan the book's shape and content. What I came up with is encapsulated in the blog that OUP asked me to provide for its website. You can check this for yourself, but as a sample, I've included here the blog's first and last paragraphs:

> 'Babylon' is a name which throughout the centuries has evoked an image of power and wealth and splendour – and decadence. Indeed, in the biblical Book of Revelation, Rome is damned as the 'Whore of Babylon' – and thus identified with a city whose image of lust and debauchery persisted and flourished long after the city itself had crumbled into dust. Powerful visual images in later ages, like Bruegel's 'Tower of Babel' and Rembrandt's 'Belshazzar's Feast' perpetuate the negative image Babylon acquired in biblical tradition. The latter found musical expression in William Walton's composition 'Belshazzar's Feast', and the reign of Babylon's most famous – and infamous – king Nebuchadnezzar in Verdi's opera 'Nabucco', best known for its 'Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves'. In recent years, the representation of Nebuchadnezzar as a ruthless, despotic tyrant was given a fresh airing in the political propaganda of Saddam Hussein who claimed to be the ancient king reincarnated – and sometimes had himself depicted on posters riding a chariot and decked out in Nebuchadnezzar's military gear. ………..
>
> Babylonian contributions to the arts and social and physical sciences remain among the most important achievements of all ancient civilizations, as the decipherment of the ancient Near Eastern languages and the excavation of the Babylonian cities have so amply demonstrated. Yet the image of Babylon itself as the archetypal city of decadence, profligacy, and unrestrained vice is the one that remains paramount in modern perceptions. Thanks to the influence of the Judaeo-Christian view of this city, strongly reinforced by the lurid depictions of it and its rulers in western art, this image continues to dominate all others, despite all that modern Mesopotamian scholars have done to provide a more balanced view of this the centre of one of the world's greatest civilizations.

Let me conclude with what I found the greatest challenge of all: covering all the above and getting it all within a 35,000 word-limit. It took almost as long to reduce the original draft to this length, with masses of material ending up on my computer's cutting-floor, as it did to write the book itself!

Now the commercial. The last time I looked online for the purchase price, Book Depository (Australia) offered the best deal at $14.27 (with free postage).

REVIEW: *BABYLONIA – A VERY SHORT INTRODUCTION*, TREVOR BRYCE

Roger Scott

At last a book I can review rather than merely provide a synopsis of the opinions of other reviewers. This is not because I know the author (which I do) but because I am part of the much wider readership to which the book is directed.

Being asked to write 'a very short introduction' to anything might seem a chore but being set this task by Oxford University Press is recognition of international pre-eminence in the field. I have about ten in this series on my bookshelves – mainly in history and political science.

Trevor gave a sneak preview to his work in a lecture to the Friends of Antiquity in 2015, and the book allows him to deal in more depth than his lecture. He has divided his material into a series of historical overviews which are followed by in-depth discussion of the highlights of particular regimes and the nature of social life under those regimes.

This is an approach which captivates the general reader, avoiding the trap on the one hand of chronological plodding through difficult names of places and leaders and on the other of freezing in time a society which was dynamic and increasingly creative and influential beyond its political borders.

I had the significant advantage sixty years ago of not being diverted by a requirement to acquire language skills in a university major which was carefully not called 'Classics' but 'Ancient Civilisations'. (Latinists were very thin on the ground in postwar Tasmania.) So I spent one term-length course on Egypt and another on Mesopotamia and gained a dispensation to be able to choose the ancient eastern Mediterranean as my (political science) honours thesis topic in international relations.

So I met a lot of old friends in Trevor's book, with their reputations burnished by subsequent scholarships and the very special perspective which Trevor himself could offer - Sargon, Sennacherib, Ashurbanipal, Belshazzar, Tiglath-Pileser,

Nabopolassar, Nabonidus and the Assyrians, the Elamites, the Kassites and the Chaldaeans. And we get whole chapters on the two best known - Hammurabi and Nebuchadnezzar.

In the case of Hammurabi, there is a major chapter: 'Babylonian society through the perspective of Hammurabi's Laws'. This is full of resonance with contemporary debates about the nature of law in protecting the weak against the strong and in regulating social life, including marriage and property rights.

For students of the circumscribed term 'Classics', chapters seven and onwards offer an invaluable perspective where the Greeks and the Jews are on the margins of the neo-Babylonian empire and its relationships with the Egyptians and the Hittites. Herodotus and the Old Testament have added one dimension to the image of Babylon in general and Nebuchadnezzar specifically, but Trevor offers a much fuller portrait. This adds, in particular, to the role of Babylon as a cultural and religious centre which was influential independent of its fluctuating political hegemony. (There may be a parallel here with Paris after the fall of Napoleon.)

Trevor deals, as he must, with the obvious topics intriguing general readers. For example, he reports on the debate about the so-called 'Hanging Gardens of Babylon' – noting that none of the literary sources actually viewed them so they might not have existed, except possibly some distance away in Nineveh (alongside Masefield's quinqueremes, perhaps).

He also offers a correction to the perception promoted by Christian writers about the dissolute nature of late Babylonian society. He points to the sustained influence of Babylonian scholarship in areas such as mathematics, astronomy and astrology, lasting through until the second century AD and the wide variety of nationalities represented there.

For this reader, the important new message was the analysis of the role of language over the centuries. Cuneiform was retained as a specifically arcane code for the intelligentsia long after it had ceased to be common parlance and this restricted understanding of early Babylon until the cuneiform script was decoded in the nineteenth century. (An echo here of the role of Latin in western Europe was the increasing use of Aramaic across the 'near-eastern world' even though Babylonian scribal institutions continued the cuneiform tradition.)

Chapter five is entitled 'Writing, Scribes and Literature'. Scribal schools preserved cultural and literary links back to the earliest period of the Sumerians and students at these schools had to master the arcane aspects of the Sumerian cuneiform. As Trevor reports:

> School hours were long – from sunrise to sunset – and education began at an early age and continued into early adult life. Discipline was harsh with beatings inflicted on students for incompetence, lack of application or misbehavior. But the rewards for successful students could be considerable. Possessed of skills which the great majority of their fellow countrymen lacked, and in a society where the kings themselves may have had no more than basic literacy, a scribe was a vital element in the maintenance of society.(p.54)

Parallels abound with medieval monasteries and even Oxbridge training for the Humphrey Appleby generation of British civil servants. Advanced study included training for the highly regarded profession of divination (analogous to priestly advisers to the Delphic Oracle) and for literary and scientific creativity. The chapter includes commentary on a selection of Babylonian literary compositions, notably the Atrahasis Epic (the first known literary account of a great flood and advice on boat-building) and the Epic of Gilgamesh, which 'occupies a venerable place in the repertoire of world literature … one of the great ancestors of the epic genre'.

Gilgamesh
(from: 'Iran's heritage', Louvre Museum
photograph by Rmashhadi, courtesy WikiCommons)

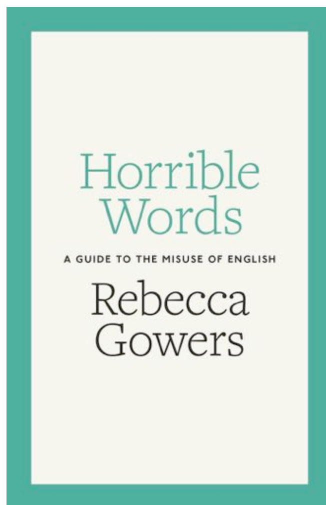
Gilgamesh was squeezed into the Tasmanian 'Ancient Civilisations' curriculum, (as a special study comparing it with Sinuhe and Genesis), but Trevor's few pages in this chapter are masterful in their erudition and clarity and worth the admission price

for the whole book. For those wanting to go further, he provides twenty pages of references and suggestions for further reading. But this is a great place to start.

Review: Horrible Words: A Guide to the Misuse of English, Rebecca Gowers

Don Barrett

This book[9] depicts an age-old war between those whom the author calls gripers, the self-appointed guardians of Good English, and those they accuse of misusing the language in any number of 'horrible' ways.



In Part I, *On Horrible Words*, Gowers discusses the following 'crimes' (some titles modified for clarity):

> Slipslops (erroneous but intelligible, not as bizarre as malapropisms)
> Folk Etymologies (*harbringer*)
> Verbifying (*message*)
> Back-Formations (*burgle* from earlier *burglar*)
> The Past Tense, (*snuck*)
> Creating Transitives (*impact)*
> Phrasal Verbs (*understand up*)
> Compounds in General (*stakehold*)
> Particular Compounds (*downsize*)
> Portmanteau Words *(guesstimate*)
> Syncope (*deteriate*)
> Baby Talk (*diddums*)
> Affixes (*hopefully*)
> Negatives, Opposites (*dis/uninterested*)
> Double Negatives (*irregardless*)
> Word Inflation (*omnishambles*), and
> Imprecision (*nanosecond*).

In Part II, *On Register*, Gowers demonstrates that there is such a thing as class distinction in words and phrases. Each one has a register, or status, ranging from high (Fred Vincy declares, 'Correct English is the slang of prigs.') through middle-grade to low. Different words resonate with different classes of people, and their status can change over time. Four chapters concentrate on the handful of registers that gripers appear to hate the most:

> Fancy Language (*liquidity constraints*),
> Monosyllables (*zap*),
> Bovrilisation (word-shortening, e.g. *wuu2* for 'what you up to?' – the most hilarious chapter of all) and
> Macaronic Hoo-Ha ('its *anguiform* length *wriggling* through the city' – re the Berlin Wall).

Gowers' writing is informed by a remarkable store of knowledge. She is steeped in English literature of all periods. She is intimately acquainted with the history of the language. The *OED* is a happy, trusted (mostly) hunting ground.

She is not, however, a completely dispassionate observer, and this is one of the charms of the book. She delights in showing that, if the gripers only knew it, many of the usages that annoy them are centuries old: 'unfamiliarity breeds contempt.' *Disinterested* versus *uninterested* is a classic example. Some erstwhile slipslops have quietly gained acceptance: the original meaning of *brothel* was 'prostitute'; *redound*, 'to flow over', has given way to *rebound*, 'to bounce back'.

As each chapter comes to a close, Gowers, with tongue only partly in cheek, encourages people to use against the gripers some of the 'horrible' words she has been describing and even suggests some new ones for good measure.

Her favourite targets bob up again and again: Simon Heffer, Richard Grant White, Ambrose Bierce, Bill Bryson, A P Herbert and Kingsley Amis. Before long, the reader realises that the sub-title of the book, *A Guide to the Misuse of English*, is delightfully ambiguous: gripers might well interpret *guide* as *manual of instruction*.

Every page abounds in good humour and gems of observation. A few examples:

> It is intriguing to learn that the past tense of *creep* was once *crap*.
>
> We are told to fear a visible *panty* line though it is caused by our *panties* (supposing we wear them).
>
> As for the use of *literally* ... as an intensifier ... the ink wasted decrying this shift would be enough to make a squid despair.
>
> *Head over heels* should be *heels over head*.

[9] Particular Books, an imprint of Penguin Books, London, 2016. Available from the Book Depository, $A16.70, free delivery worldwide. The Avid Reader bookshop in West End will also be stocking copies.

For the many examples of baby talk from Dickens, Swift, Austen and Orwell, Gowers suggests having a sick bag at the ready. She even refers delicately to the endearment addressed by 'the man second in line to the British throne to 'the then Miss Middleton': *Babykins*.

Gowers has a word of comfort and encouragement to anyone who has been criticised for the incorrect use of English:

> You could decide that there are horrible words that you fancy, consider useful and are ready to defend. Why not dot them about the place on purpose?...The English language is as much yours as it is anyone's: it is one of the wonders of the world that is free. If you choose to, you can play your part in style.

If this book runs to a second edition, it would be good to have an index of 'horrible' words. It could serve as an examination of conscience for all of us who use them from time to time. A select critical bibliography would also be valuable.

Rebecca Gowers is the most recent editor of *Plain Words* (1948), the monumental guide to English usage by her great grandfather Sir Ernest Gowers. *Plain Words* is in very capable hands.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Bob Milns

A Mythical Train-Journey

A few weeks ago my wife Lyn and I, together with two good friends, went on a marvellous trip lasting less than three whole days. We did the journey from Darwin to Adelaide on the train known as The Ghan, with brief stops at Katherine and Alice Springs.

Everything about the journey was first-class; and it was a memorable experience. At the beginning of the journey, as we were leaving Darwin and perhaps influenced by the excitement of it all, there occurred a series of little incidents that almost had me believing that we were in some classical time-warp, not a train. Firstly, as we were pulling out of Darwin, I saw, on a waiting goods train, two enormous containers. One had the word Nox written on it and the other the word Cronos.

Nox, the Latin equivalent of the Greek Nyx, was both the night and the goddess of the night, whose parent was Chaos and amongst whose offspring were Moros (Doom) and Thanatos (Death).

Cronos (more correctly Cronus in the Latinised form) was the ruler of the Titans, who gained power by castrating his own father with a sickle and was himself deposed by his son, Zeus, and cast down into Tartarus, the Greek equivalent of Hell. What, I wondered, could be lurking in those two containers?

Earlier, when we had boarded The Ghan, we found that we had been allocated two stewards: Jason and, as I thought, Danae.

Jason being regurgitated by the snake who keeps the Golden Fleece (centre, hanging on the tree); Athena stands to the right. Red-figured cup by Douris, c. 480-470 BC. From Cerveteri (Etruria)

Again, I was fascinated, since the Greek hero Jason was not only the captain of the first-ever ship, the Argo, in search of the Golden Fleece, but became the husband of the witch, Medea, thereby producing a whole series of human catastrophes.

Danae, the mother of the famed hero Perseus, was not only impregnated against her father's will by Zeus in a shower of gold, but was cast adrift on the sea by her angry father, together with her baby, in a chest. Were these, I thought, names of good omen at the start of our journey through the wilds of central Australia? (As it happens, I learned later that the stewardess was called Dani, not Danae.)

Red-figure krater with Danaë (detail), Greek, ca. 450–425 BC Terracotta, Louvre Museum, Department of Greek, Etruscan and Roman Antiquities (Wikimedia Commons)

Two more ‘classical’ surprises awaited me. In the bathroom in our cabin, I found a small case containing materials for beautification.

Alexander in Apelles’ studio
Salvator Rosa (c.1662) Wikicommons Media

Its trade-name was Appelles. Apelles, with one ‘p’, was the name of perhaps the most famous painter of ancient Greece, renowned for his painting of Aphrodite and for his –certainly idealized – portrait of Alexander the Great (‘the only person’, says Plutarch, ’that Alexander would allow to paint him’). Was the name Appelles purely coincidence or deliberately chosen by the manufacturer?

Finally, on this, our first day on the train, I was a little startled to see that the water jug on our table in the restaurant car had inscribed on it the letters NERO. Was this the name of the notorious Roman

emperor? Or was it the Modern Greek word for water? I certainly could not think of Nero having any penchant for water. But then, why use the modern Greek word written in non-Greek letters?

This was the last of the classical surprises that I encountered, to some of which I still have no answer. Suffice it, however, to repeat that the whole journey from Darwin to Adelaide was delightful in every way; and Jason and Dani were outstanding in the way they looked after us.

And then, perhaps, a South Australian wine? (ed)

POEM: TIMON[10] SURVEYS THE WORLD

Bob Milns

The world is a mess
And less and less
Do I think that it other could be;

And the problem goes back
To that miserable pack
That they call 'humanity';

Timon of Athens outside his cave
Richard Conway
(Wikimedia Commons)

For wherever you turn,
With hot anger you burn
At the villainy, pain, cruelty;

And there's really no hope
For an old misanthrope
A better world ever to see.

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[10] * Timon of Athens was a famous misanthrope at Athens at the end of the 5th century BCE. He was the inspiration for Shakespeare's play of this name.

2016 FRIENDS OF ANTIQUITY PROGRAM[11]

SUNDAY 6 NOVEMBER
2pm

FISH AND SHIPS: GARUM PRODUCTION AND TRADE IN WESTERN HISPANIA
Mrs Sue Edmondson

2.30pm
ARISTOTLE: 2,400 YEARS ON
Emeritus Professor Bob Milns

(SEE FLYER INSERT)

DON'T FORGET TO BOOK

FRIENDS OF ANTIQUITY END OF YEAR PARTY

SATURDAY 19 NOVEMBER

WOMEN'S COLLEGE
DINING ROOM

12 NOON
PRE-LUNCH DRINKS
FOLLOWED BY LUNCH

COST $50 PER PERSON

(SEE FLYER INSERT)

2017 FRIENDS OF ANTIQUITY PROGRAM[12]

SUNDAY 5 FEBRUARY
2PM
THE ADRIAN HEYWORTH-SMITH MEMORIAL LECTURE

OVID'S METAMORPHOSES IN CONTEMPORARY ART AND LITERATURE
Dr Paul Roche (University of Sydney)

SUNDAY 5 MARCH
2pm
HEADLESS IN CORINTH: CREATING, DISPLAYING AND DESTROYING PORTRAIT STATUES OF IMPERIAL OFFICIALS IN LATE ROMAN GREECE
Dr Amelia R Brown

SATURDAY 25 MARCH
ANCIENT HISTORY DAY: 'ART IN THE ANCIENT WORLD'
8am – 4pm
Venue: TBA

SUNDAY 2 APRIL
2pm
TOPIC TBA
Dr Jessie Burkett-Rees (Monash University)

SUNDAY 7 MAY
2pm
HALF AN OUNCE OF GOLD:
STUDYING GREEK AND ROMAN PRECIOUS METAL JEWELLERY
IN THE R D MILNS ANTIQUITIES MUSEUM
James Donaldson

SUNDAY 4 JUNE
1.45pm
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
2.30pm
HOBNAILS AND HEXAMETERS:
A QUICK RUN THROUGH ROMAN POETRY
Denis Brosnan

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[11] The 2016 Sunday Series lectures will be held in Room E302 in the Forgan Smith Building. An entry donation of $10 includes refreshments.
[12] The 2017 Sunday Series program will be held in Room E302 unless notified otherwise in the January issue of *Nova*. Preliminary speakers have not yet been included in the 2017 program.