

## **Department of Classics & Ancient History**

### **Annual Research Colloquium**

Wednesday 24th May 2017

University of Warwick - Wolfson Research Exchange rooms 1, 2 and 3

#### **SESSION 1: Materiality**

##### **'Mantiklos' Apollo: Real-World Object, Poetically Defined'**

**- Nick Brown**

This paper will investigate the relationship between poetry and objects when they inhabit the same space and are co-dependent. I will use the case study of a small bronze figurine dedicated by a man called Mantiklos to explore this phenomenon. The figurine was dedicated by Mantiklos at the beginning of the seventh century BC at the sanctuary of Apollo Ptoios in Thebes in Boiotia. The figurine represents a male figure and has a hexameter dedicatory inscription etched upon its thighs in the boustrophedon style. The inscription outlines in a formulaic way who dedicated the object, the epithets of the god to whom it was dedicated, and the dedicator's hopes for a return from the god in the future. I will explore the way in which the inscription informs, defines, and repositions the identity of the object, sometimes in contradiction to its physical and material limitations, to accentuate the various roles that it adopts by being a dedicatory offering. The poetic language of the inscription borrows phrases from the Homeric corpus, particularly the Iliad, and enlists language to create a significance for the object far beyond its intrinsic nature as a sculpted bronze figure. This language positions the object within the religious sphere, as its context suggests, placing it within a complicated system of reciprocity between the human and divine realms. However, the identities of this object are multiplied by the inscription's reference to the other material possessions of the dedicator, stressing the base monetary value of the object and thus its limitations. I will through close reading of this offering's inscription and its presentation on the figure explore the ways in which the application of poetry can construct the function, value, meaning, and identity of a real-world object.

##### **'Token issues: Discerning the role played by lead tokens in Greco-Roman Egypt'**

**- Denise Wilding**

The leaden tokens of Roman Egypt have been little studied in the past century, especially in terms of the role that they played in the everyday lives and identities of past communities. Milne's work in the early 1900s categorised them as a low denomination currency, while a more recent study by Mitchiner (1984) analysed a sub group of tokens and presented the view that they are a form of tax receipt. Therefore, no previous study has attempted to consider these lead tokens as a corpus in light of their findspots or

iconography, in order to establish their purpose and their perception by those who used them.

This paper aims to investigate how the place of discovery and known contexts of these tokens have a bearing on their interpretation. This shall be undertaken through an analysis of findspots to establish to what extent the distribution of the tokens across a variety of different contexts (temples, houses, rubbish dumps) demonstrates an embeddedness in everyday life, and to show how the divine imagery of the tokens relates to these contexts. However, many tokens were discovered through antiquarian excavations and the quality of the data is not to the standard of modern archaeological investigation. Therefore the difficulties associated with attempting to ascertain their purpose through this method shall be explored.

Additionally, this paper will outline the potentials for ascertaining how the tokens were perceived by those in the communities who used them, and the extent to which they were tied to group identities. The fusion of Greek, Roman and Egyptian styles and divinities depicted on the tokens indicate a society infused with a mix of religions and cultures, thereby providing scope for investigation into the link between material culture and collective identities.

**'All that is gold does not always glitter:  
Does metal matter in Iron Age South Western British coinage?'**  
- David Swan

This presentation considers the coinage of Iron Age South Western Britain, often termed Durotriges coinage. This area is notable for its uniformity in styles, and the dramatic debasement of its coinage over a few decades, from a gold-silver to a debased silver and then a bronze alloy. This presentation proposes that the South Western staters and quarter staters, despite the multiple changes in metal content, retained the same political, votive and possibly even monetary function they had as a gold-silver alloyed coinage. Iconography, individual hoards, larger patterns in hoarding, single and site finds, weight and metallurgy are all evaluated to support this hypothesis. The study makes significant use of other areas of Iron Age archaeology, through comparisons with coinage from outside the production area of the South Western staters, including Eastern Britain, Western France and the Channel Islands.

**SESSION 2: Definition and Redefinition**

**"The Trouble with Glaukos: first thoughts on untethered colours in Ancient Greece"**  
- Vicky Jewell

As members of modern society, we tend to arrange our understanding of colour using a wheel or spectrum of hues. We know which colours, when mixed together, create another. We can quantify those colours as accurately as a digital code, and we have a huge lexicon of terminology with which we define them. Many of those colour terms are abstract;

they do not specify which source was used to make that colour (often they are created by a collection of pixels on a screen), nor do they stipulate the object that colour lays upon. Red is red, whether it is on a pillar box or in a strawberry.

In my first chapter, I explored how in ancient Greece the source from which a colour was produced affected the associations of that hue. Greek colours such as *krokos* are therefore tethered to the hue or hues which that dye source could produce – and no other. In the next phase of my research, I am looking at Greek colour terms which break both our modern construction of colours, and those ancient terms that have an intrinsic connection with their source.

To explore this phenomenon, I will use the famously flexible colour term, *glaukos*. Alongside ancient material, I will use as comparanda interdisciplinary studies in contemporary language systems which seem to utilize these ‘untethered’ colour terms. This paper will outline my first thoughts and questions as I begin to explore an area that promises to be delightfully messy.

**‘The Key Role of *Humanitas* in Aulus Gellius’ Educational Programme’**  
**- Simone Mollea**

Despite the famous label “Humanisme Gellien” coined by René Marache and despite a chapter titled *Humanitas Gelliana* in Beall’s Berkeley dissertation *Civilis eruditio. Style and Content in the ‘Attic Nights’ of Aulus Gellius* (1988), a thorough analysis of Gellius’ (instances of) *humanitas* has to my knowledge yet to be undertaken. This is all the more surprising given that Gellius’ discussion of the “true” meaning of *humanitas* at *Noctes Atticae* 13.17 is quoted in almost every article dealing with *humanitas* in Latin literature. In this paper I argue that such an analysis reveals that *humanitas* is actually a cornerstone of Gellius’ educational and cultural programme. This emerges not only from the occurrences of *humanitas* throughout the *Noctes Atticae*, but also from the preface of this work: although the word *humanitas* itself never appears here, in outlining the aims of his book Gellius employs terms and concepts which ultimately correspond to the definition of *humanitas* he himself sets out at 13.17.

**‘Changes in the Form and Function of Roman Gold Coinage: AD 64 to AD 312’**  
**- George Green**

Roman gold coinage is considered to be the anchor of the Roman monetary system. The Neronian standard is introduced in AD 64 and, with the exception of an attempt to reverse the Neronian reform under Domitian, continues largely uninterrupted until the weight reduction under Caracalla. Between AD 64 and AD 200 gold hoarders can be divided into two groups: ‘small depositors’ who hoard 40 aurei or fewer, and ‘large depositors’ who hoard over 40 aurei. These groups have noticeably different behaviours. Small depositors seem to preferentially select their aurei by filtering out ‘low weight’ – generally under 7g – aurei; large depositors, on the other hand, are happy to regularly accept a much greater

range of weights. This preferential selection suggests that aurei were circulating by face value, rather than by weight.

The third century presents a radically different picture, however. The weight standard drops four times between Caracalla's reduction and AD 260, at which point in time it is almost certainly abandoned. A degree of stability is restored under the Tetrarchy, but this does not appear to be the same kind of firm weight standard seen in the second century. For the first time in the Imperial period, precious metal objects are regularly used as a store of wealth alongside gold coins from AD 238 onwards. Furthermore, from AD 260 onwards it appears that small depositors are no longer preferentially selecting by weight. The abandonment of the weight standard, the re-introduction of bullion and precious metal objects in hoards, and the ending of preferential selection by weight all suggests that aurei are circulating by weight by AD 260.

**'The Sound of War and the Erinys in Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*'  
- Emmy Stavropoulou**

This paper discusses the ways in which war sound is conceptualised and linked to the supernatural in Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*. I argue that war sound is a major motif and that its function is closely connected to that of the Erinys, the daemonic entity – often represented as a Curse – that plagues the Labdacid house and its members, generation after generation; this implies a daemonic perception of sound as opposed to its understanding as a tool that humans use in battle.

Like the sound that comes from outside the walls, the Erinys is an unseen entity. The audience only 'see' this daemonic force through Eteocles' change of mind and the reaction of the Chorus (677-719). They also 'see' it through the metamorphosis of Eteocles into an 'iron man' in the scene where he puts on his armour (675-719). I argue that through the medium of sound, the audience is led to realise a link between external and internal enemy: when the sound invades the walls and fills the souls of the women of the chorus with terror, Eteocles states that the city is destroyed from the inside (192-194). Similarly, when Eteocles announces his decision to fight his brother, the Chorus see his sudden change of heart as the result of him being invaded by some external wild desire (687-688, 693-694, 698). The similarity between the cunning nature of the daemonic divinity that shifts Eteocles' mind and of the sound that overwhelms the mind of the women point towards a strong link between sound and the daemonic force that operates in this tragedy. The invasion of the external and the internal enemy paradoxically become one, and the vehicle is sound.

## **SESSION 3: Views and Reviews**

### **'The Rediscovery of Pompeii and Herculaneum and the Idea of Universal Phallic Worship'**

**- Kathryn Thompson**

The formulation of an 'apotropaic' class of material emerging from the sites of Pompeii and Herculaneum has long been underpinned by the frequently phallic and 'explicit' nature of many of the items being uncovered, and the subsequent attempts at censorship which arose as a result. Accordingly, the period of the sites' re-unveiling saw an array of attempts at explaining the apparent ubiquity of the phallus in ancient Roman daily life that was seemingly testified by the excavations, via the idea of a fundamental, cross-cultural human impetus to 'worship' the 'generative principle'. The first and arguably the most influential proponent of this theory was Richard Payne Knight, author of the infamous *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus* [...], published 1786. Unsurprisingly, Payne Knight and his contribution feature prominently in most modern scholarship concerning ancient phallic artefacts and phallic symbolism, such as the work of Catherine Johns and Giancarlo Carabelli. But to what extent does our modern notion of Roman apotropaia truly owe anything to Payne Knight's treatise and those he inspired, and to what extent is this supposed genealogy a historiographical fallacy? Why do we even assume that our interpretation of Campanian phallic artefacts owes something to Payne Knight? This paper will highlight a historiographical problem long overlooked: how do these two modes of discussing ancient phallic symbolism – that of a universal theory of comparative religion, and that of apotropaism - relate, and is our current bracketing-together of these two concepts actually helpful?

### **'Historical Bias and Disability within Ancient Greece'**

**- Annie Sharples**

The study of impairment and disability within ancient Greece only began in earnest in the mid-nineties. However, since that time the field has struggled to gain significant momentum. In part, this is due to a number of historic biases and assumptions whose continued discussion have prevented the study from pushing forward into new territory. The three main culprits of this are: the continued fascination towards the exposure of deformed infants, the supposed synonymous relationship between the unideal body and the grotesque, and the unchallenged authority of Lysias 24 as a paradigm for the treatment of the disabled within ancient Athens. Through the course of this paper, I aim to explore each of these historic biases and assumptions, evaluating their continued relevance to discussions of disability within ancient history in turn. To do so, this paper will track the historic development of each assumption, outlining their key argumentation within modern scholarship and interrogating their source material. In doing so, I aim to show how the insistence upon these historical biases by scholars is directly hindering the continued development of ancient disability studies as a discipline. It is a field with the potential to

offer a new mode of thinking about life within the ancient world but it will inevitably stagnate if scholars continue to cling to the dubious authority of infant exposure, grotesque statuary and a single Athenian law court speech. In order for the field to make significant progress, a new methodology must be sought and employed.

**'The fabric of myth in late antiquity: the Meleager and Atalanta textile in the Abegg collection'**  
- Miriam Hay

This paper will consider the fragmentary Meleager and Atalanta wall hanging in the Abegg-Stiftung in its late antique context. While many late antique decorative textiles would have once had a domestic function, most that survive were in fact uncovered in burials. Despite this, the potential funerary significance of their iconography has only recently been acknowledged, and has not yet been fully explored, particularly in relation to more concrete funerary monuments. The Meleager and Atalanta textile proves a good example for comparison with its architectural framework, and provides an insight into how myth continued to be woven in the fourth century AD.

**SESSION 4: Memory**

**'The Severan reforms, a case of monetary *déjà vu*'**  
- Nathan Murphy

The coinage debasement carried out under Septimius Severus in AD 194 and the introduction of the 'antoninianus' under Caracalla in AD 215 have long been seen as watersheds in the history of the Roman economy. The reforms of Severus and Caracalla were the first steps on the road to rampant inflation and monetary collapse, both contributory to and symptomatic of the wider 'Crisis of the Third Century' which gripped the empire for over fifty years. But is this tale of doom and gloom representative of the truth?

This paper presents the early results of an analysis of coin hoards from across the Roman empire, examining the effects of the Severan reforms on the monetary economy of the period. Hoards appear to show a period of preferential hoarding of finer silver issues, followed by a period of mixed hoard composition. Pre-reform fine silver then rapidly disappears from hoards to be replaced by post-reform coin around AD 230. Comparisons are drawn between this sequence of events and that which took place following the series of reforms under Nero and Domitian in the late first century AD. Both sequences feature an initial debasement (under Nero/Septimius Severus), followed by what appears to be an attempted restoration of the original silver standard (under Domitian/Caracalla.) This attempt is ultimately unsuccessful, the coinage reverts to the lower standard and the finer silver coins still in circulation are rapidly withdrawn in order to prevent problems in exchange. The paper concludes with a discussion of possible future avenues of inquiry.

## **'Historical *exempla* in Seneca'**

**- Martina Russo**

The use of historical examples is a practice central to Roman social life and literature. Seneca's writings are especially rich in these historical references: after all the philosopher claims in his Letters that the way is long if one follows precepts, but short and helpful if one follows patterns (*longum iter est per praecepta, breve et efficax per exempla* epist. 6, 5).

In this paper I deal with the historical exemplum in the consolation addressed to Polybius, as a lens through which to understand Seneca's remarkable relationship with Claudius. In the last chapters of the *Consolatio ad Polybium*, after having instructed Polybius to restrain his pain through *praecepta*, Seneca offers a series of *exempla*. The list of bereaved Romans quoted by Claudius is impressive: the Scipiones, the Luculli, the Pompeii and then Claudius's own family, Augustus, Gaius and Lucius, Tiberius and Drusus Germanicus, even Marcus Antonius. The gallery is completed with Claudius's own grief. By examining these *exempla*, I will highlight the strategies adopted by Seneca: in particular I will discuss a striking aspect of this passage, the fact that Claudius himself, by introducing these historical *exempla*, takes on the role of consolator. Seneca closes the parade with Claudius' own losses, and thus the emperor himself is raised to exemplary status.

In the final part of the paper I will analyse why Seneca, by the figure of *prosopopoeia*, has Claudius rehearse the *exempla* drawn from Rome's history and whether his objective is merely to please the emperor, as some scholars have claimed.

## **'Mob violence, *damnatio memoriae*, and the demise of Commodus'**

**- Nigel Heathcote**

One may be attempted to assume that the violent destruction of images by angry crowds, as described by the terms *damnatio memoriae* or 'iconoclasm', are consigned to the pages of history, modern society being too enlightened for such a primal response to images representing the 'opposition'. Yet, we continue to see instances of mob violence against images, or the use of effigies to attack a political opponent. Through the case study of the spectacle of the *damnatio memoriae* of Commodus, I hope to uncover how exactly this process practically functioned in Rome, and how its various interpretations would have affected and interacted with the condemned emperor's reputation.