‘In keeping with the idiosyncratic climate that prevails there and the fact that their river behaves differently from any other river, almost all Egyptian customs and practices are the opposite of those of everywhere else’ (Herodotus, *Histories*, 2.35). Discuss how this principle works in Herodotus’ account of Egypt in Book Two of the *Histories*.

Herodotus tells us both more and less about Egypt than we could reasonably expect. Less because we hear little from him about important matters such as clothing, food, art, music, and Egyptian culture generally, and more because we hear Egypt is incredibly ancient, and, buried under the weight of antiquity, nothing ever changes there, and that the Egyptians do everything backwards compared to the rest of humanity. He claims to have visited Egypt and to have received information at first hand from the priests. Whether this is true or not his account presents Egypt as an otherworldly place, a land outside ordinary time, and even outside normal geography; as the, ‘gift of the Nile’, Egypt is neither in Libya nor in Asia, but is an in-between land.

One problem that ancient ethnographies have presented traditionally is that often there is no way of knowing if the information in them is accurate. One approach has been to see what in the account is stereotypical and could be from any ancient ethnography of a ‘barbarian’ people (e.g. nomadism, skin-wearing, human sacrifice etc.) and leave that aside and see what is left as true. Francois Hartog’s advance on this in his *Mirror of Herodotus* book was to not worry too much about whether what the ethnographer says is true or false but to see how it fits into the narrative that he tells. I recommend that an approach similar to Hartog’s should be taken: we should not worry too much if a detail is not obviously a part of the ethnographic tradition and so therefore may be real. We can still see how it fits in with the sort of story ethnographers might like to tell. Any story, however true, is always a view from somewhere.

Remember also that ancient ethnographers like to work ‘by contraries’. Herodotus is a good example. His ethnographic technique is by symmetry and inversion, parallels and contrasts. This is particularly true in Book Two of the Histories where Egypt becomes a mirror world to Europe, as if a mirror had been placed along the Mediterranean from west to east in which Greeks could view themselves, imagining that they were viewing the Egyptians. The Nile and its backwards behaviour, flooding in Summer rather than Winter, provides Herodotus a touchstone for all of Egypt; just as the river behaves in the opposite way to all other rivers, so Egypt itself becomes a mirror world. Herodotus’ Egypt is an extreme case of the use of the mirror technique.

The Nile is mystery for Herodotus both in its behaviour and its source, and it is not only a river that flows *through* the country of Egypt; Egypt is, as he says, the *product* of the river itself, formed as it deposits silt into the sea. This makes Egypt mysterious and problematic. It is an in-between land that does not fit into traditional Greek ideas of geography, in which the world is divided into Europe, Asia and Libya. Egypt is either a fourth continent in itself, or it is half in Libya and half in Asia, or perhaps it is part of neither, but floats between both. Because it is still being formed, it is the youngest of countries, but has the oldest of peoples
living there. Herodotus comes to the odd conclusion that the Egyptians pre-exist their country, even though they have always lived there. The Nile is the force that nourishes Egypt as well with its regular Summer floods, but it also washes away the Egyptians’ land, so that they have to continually repair their fields and boundaries. It is a unique river as well in that Egypt has no other rivers. They do, however, have a vast number of canals that they use both for irrigation and transport. The grid pattern that the canals have imposed on the land surface of Egypt has, however, caused the use of carts to die out. This illustrates another paradox of the Nile: that it is both a dynamic, creative force, but also tends to impose a sort of cultural and historical stasis on Egypt, a land where everything is always the same because nothing ever changes there, except the eerily regular yearly pulse of the Nile’s floods. Thus, Egypt has a vast history stretching back in a line of three hundred and thirty kings, but most do nothing and leave no trace, seemingly sunk in a cultural torpor, while a few are manically active and build vast monuments that are the wonders of the world. The Nile’s effects then are not simply geographical, but also cultural, historical and political.

Prescribed text:


Suggested Bibliography


Hartog, F., 1988, *The Mirror of Herodotus*, Berkeley. This is the book that identified the mirror technique. Very useful, even if Hartog’s style can be hard going at times. See esp. ch. 6. ‘A Rhetoric of Otherness’, and ch. 7. ‘The Eye and the Ear’.


Very good on how stereotypes can move about and attach themselves to different peoples.


GC350 ESSAY PROJECT
This essay relates to the second-year option GC217: Power and the People in Imperial Rome.
Dr Jonathan Davies

What can provincial revolts against Rome show us about the problems with Roman imperial rule under the early emperors?

Deadline: Tuesday 23rd April 2019
Word limit: 5,000 words

The Early Imperial period saw a number of well-documented episodes of mass insurrection, when people in various provinces rose en masse in attempts to expel the Roman governing authorities and establish independence for their region from Roman rule. Studying these provincial revolts is a way that historians can consider provincial discontent with Roman rule; in particular, the reasons which our literary sources give for the outbreaks of these revolts may potentially expose the “dark side” of Roman imperial rule, and draw attention to problems within the system which were likely to engender ill-feeling among the subject peoples of the empire. In this essay, you will focus on four particular episodes of mass provincial insurrection from the first and early second centuries AD:

- The revolt of the Iceni people of Britain, led by Queen Boudicca, in AD 60–61;
- The First Jewish Revolt in Judaea, beginning in AD 66;
- The revolt of the Batavians in the Netherlands, as well as neighbouring Gaullish and German peoples, led by Julius Civilis in AD 69;
- The Bar Kokhba Revolt in Judaea, in the reign of Hadrian.

In particular, you should carefully read our ancient accounts of these rebellions and identify the reasons which ancient authors give for the outbreak of these revolts; you should consult modern scholarship on these revolts, which may question some of the claims made by the ancient authors or suggest additional plausible reasons for the revolts which ancient authors overlook or suppress; and you should think about what the outbreaks of the revolt can show us about the nature of Roman provincial rule.

Here are a few things you might like to consider in your answer:

- For the most part (with the exception of the First Jewish Revolt), we are dependent on Roman or Greek literary perspectives on these rebellions. Thus we do not get to hear the “authentic” voices of ancient rebels. When Tacitus explains why Boudicca chose to lead a rebellion, what we are reading is not an ancient rebel perspective on Roman injustice, but a privileged Roman’s attempts to reconstruct and imagine an ancient rebel perspective on Roman injustice. Does this necessarily diminish the plausibility of Tacitus’ account? And, even if Tacitus is wrong about Boudicca’s motivations, might what he writes still tell us something about the nature of Roman provincial rule?
- Do these revolts have causes in common, or are they all solely motivated by specific, local factors? If they do have causes in common, does that suggest that there are broad, structural problems with the Roman system of provincial government which might extend across the whole system and make revolt more likely?
• Who do the literary sources try to blame for the outbreaks of revolts? And, in pinning the blame on those people, might they be (intentionally or otherwise) exonerating others, or the system as a whole?

Remember, we are not looking for a simple narrative of these revolts, or a restatement of what ancient writers say about them. To answer the question well, you will need to critically examine the ancient accounts of these mass movements, identify and discuss the causes which both ancient and modern authors attribute to these revolts, and ask what these narratives can show us about the provincial experience of Roman rule and the aspects of Roman imperialism which may have been problematic for subject populations.

Reading List

Ancient Sources:

Boudicca:
Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 62.1-12. A later account, perhaps based in part on Tacitus, but also mentioning a number of factors not mentioned by Tacitus. Highly rhetorical, Boudicca’s long speech lists many British grievances with Roman rule. Read it in the Loeb translation, which can be accessed online through the library website.

First Jewish Revolt:
Tacitus, *Histories* 5.8-10. A very brief survey of Judaean history under Roman rule, leading up to the outbreak of revolt. Pay special attention to the grievances which Tacitus (in no way sympathetic to the Jews) attributes to the population of Judaea under Roman governors. Read it in Wellesley’s Penguin translation, in the library.
Josephus, *The Jewish War* 2.167-555. A very valuable text, written by a former Jewish rebel who later defected to the Roman side, this text describes Roman rule in the decades leading up to the revolt, in an attempt to explain why the Jews revolted (read the introduction to the Penguin edition for basic biographical information on Josephus). Read it in Williamson’s Penguin translation, in the library (the relevant section is Chapters 7, 8 and 9).

Batavian Revolt
Tacitus, *Histories* 4.12-5.26. This revolt is complicated by the fact that took place, and was intertwined with, a major Roman civil war at the same time, and Tacitus’ narrative hops between the two conflicts. It may help you to read the clear overview of the revolt at [http://www.livius.org/articles/concept/batavian-revolt/](http://www.livius.org/articles/concept/batavian-revolt/) before launching into Tacitus. Read it in Wellesley’s Penguin translation, in the library.
Bar Kokhba Revolt

Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 69.12-14: a very brief survey of what was clearly a major revolt. Read it in the Loeb edition, which can be accessed online through the library website, or at http://www.livius.org/sources/content/cassius-dio/cassius-dio-on-bar-kochba/

Historia Augusta, *Life of Hadrian* 14: a very short notice on the Revolt, but one which adds a significant new claim to what is stated by Dio. Read it here: http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Historia_Augusta/Hadrian/1*.html

Secondary Reading:

**General treatments of provincial revolts:**

S. Dyson (1971), “Native revolts in the Roman Empire”, in *Historia* 20(2), 239-274 (available online through the library website). A comparative examination of a number of Roman provincial revolts, including the case studies for this assignment, which attempts to apply modern sociological models to these events.


**Boudicca:**

E. Adler (2011), *Valorizing the Barbarians: Enemy Speeches in Roman Historiography* (Austin, TX) (available online through the library website). Read Part 3, pp. 117-162, on Boudicca’s speech in Tacitus and Cassius Dio. A helpful discussion of how literary factors may shape ancient authors’ presentation of the causes of revolts.


D. Mattingly (2006), *An Imperial Possession: Britain in the Roman Empire* (London), pages 101-113, “Continued resistance and rebellions”. Surveys a number of episodes of anti-Roman insurrection or resistance, including the Boudiccan revolt, and is primarily concerned with the extent to which it is possible to reconstruct a British perspective on these events.

**First Jewish Revolt:**


An interesting discussion of whether or not Jewish religious ideologies connected with Messianic expectations contributed to the outbreak of the First Revolt.


**Batavian Revolt:**

P. A. Brunt (1960), “Tacitus on the Batavian Revolt”, in Latomus 19(3), pp. 494-517. (Available online through the library website). A classic survey and critical examination of Tacitus’ account, particularly good on the question of whether or not the rebels aimed at the creation of a “Gallic Empire”.

H. Haynes (2003), A History of Make-Believe: Tacitus on Imperial Rome (Austin, TX). (Available online through the library website). Read Chapter 5 (pp. 148-178), on the Batavian leader Civilis. A difficult read, but a very rewarding and suggestive examination of Tacitus’ portrayal of the Batavian Revolt as both a “barbarian” rising and a Roman civil war, with Civilis setting himself up as a rival emperor to Vespasian.

M. Aldhouse-Green (2010), Caesar’s Druids: The Story of an Ancient Priesthood (New Haven). (Available online through the library website). Read chapter 12, pp. 231-250, “Druids Underground”, which considers the role of religion in Celtic rebellions against Rome, including the Batavian Revolt (note the importance of Druids at several points in Tacitus’ narrative).

**Bar Kokhba Revolt:**


M. Mor (2016), The Second Jewish Revolt: The Bar Kokhba War, 132-136 CE (Leiden and Boston) (Available online through the library website). Read Chapter 1, on the causes of the revolt. A good modern survey.

Discuss the significance of Odysseus in the Iliad

The hero of the Odyssey, Odysseus is clearly a central presence in the Iliad also, even though this epic revolves around Achilles, a very different kind of hero. Odysseus appears in many roles throughout the Iliad—as an advisor, king and proxy for Agamemnon, diplomat, warrior. His character is bound up with the story of the Trojan War more generally, as the “sacker of cities” by whose cunning scheme the city of Troy was finally taken: here the Iliad may make more indirect reference to Odysseus’ role in events which it does not directly narrate and which are taken up more explicitly in the Odyssey (e.g. Trojan Horse). This question invites you to explore the figure of Odysseus in the Iliad and by extension its treatment of the Trojan War: what role does he play, and how significant is he in the poem? You should focus primarily on the Iliad, though supplementary references to the Odyssey are welcome.

Some questions that you could address include the following:

1. What are the general characteristics of Odysseus in the Iliad? Is he brave? A good fighter as in his aristeia? Or is he sometimes a coward, a shirker? Is he honest, honourable, noble? Or duplicitous, dishonourable? Kingly? Plebeian? Is he the same many-sided (polytropos) figure that one meets in the Odyssey? Or is he depicted in a different way?
2. How is Odysseus brought into juxtaposition with other figures—Achilles, Agamemnon, Diomede, Thersites, for example? How do such juxtapositions affect our view of him? Here you would do well to concentrate on one such comparison: do not overextend yourself.
3. What kinds of epithets and similes does Homer use to describe Odysseus? How many does he use? Are they significant in context, or do they tend to be formulaic? Are they the same as those used in the Odyssey?
4. What stories about Odysseus does Homer choose to tell, selecting them from the larger mythological tradition? How much is told about the “history” of Odysseus? His past and future lives in Ithaca? His involvement in the wooing of Helen, or the recruitment for the war? Do you agree with the suggestion that Homer had “an Odyssey in mind while composing the Iliad” (Scott).
5. How significant is the relationship of Athena and Odysseus in the Iliad? Does Athena show the same favour to him as she does in the Odyssey? How do such divine epiphanies happen?
6. What kind of language does Odysseus use? Is his manner of speaking peculiar to him (as Achilles’ is special to him), and if so does it reinforce his more general characterization? What “classic” patterns and exemplars might later orators find in Odysseus’ speeches (such as the Embassy speech in Iliad 9)?
You won’t be able to address all the themes here, so you should make a selection that you would like to pursue, and build a coherent interpretation or argument around this.

**Select bibliography**

Your main “source” will be Homer’s *Iliad*, and you should work primarily from this, using secondary works as secondary—for background, further discussion, corroborating or contrasting views, and further inspiration. The most helpful place to begin would be the analytic index of names at the end of several translations, particularly that of Rieu (Penguin): these will help you to jump straight to passages relevant to your essay. Use this to your advantage, while not forgetting that individual passages need to be interpreted in their immediate contexts, and in the context of the epic as a whole. Here is Rieu’s entry for “Odysseus”—for your convenience! He gives the book (e.g. 2) and starting line number (e.g. 173) in his references (e.g. 2.173). In citing line numbers yourself, if you are using a verse translation, give the translator’s line numbers (e.g. Fagles 3.15-20); if using a prose translation, then make your best estimate given the lines that the translator cites on each page. You might note that Lattimore’s verse translation follows the Greek original fairly closely, and the Loeb Classics translation (with facing Greek) is available on the Library website.

“ATHENE: advised by ATHENE 2.173, 5.676; closeness to ATHENE 10.278; helped by ATHENE 2.279, 11.438, 23.770; offers spoils to ATHENE 10.460.


“Other: attacks Thersites 2.246; brings men to order 2.188; complimented by Diomedes 10.243; described by Priam and Helen 3.191; father of Telemachus 2.260, 4.354; foot-race 23.755; has prize threatened 1.138, 145; old 23.790; insulted by Agamemnon 4.338; leads expedition to Chryse 1.311, 430; lectures Agamemmon 19.182; proposed for embassy to Achilles 9.169; recruits for the Trojan War 11.767; reflects on heroic duty 11.408; speech to Achilles 9.225; volunteers to challenge Hector 7.168; wrestling 23.709.”

The following are all in the Library, but depending on your choice of themes, you should search JSTOR and *L’Année Philologique* for relevant articles and books.


Franco, G.F. 2005. The Trojan Horse at the Close of the *Iliad,*” *Classical Journal* 101.2: 121-23. Short article how the sack of Troy is evoked in the *Iliad*.


Rutherford, R.B. 1996. *Homer*


Stanford, W.B. *The Ulysses Theme*. Classic work on the character: see Chapters I-V, especially III (“The Favourite of Athena”).

and the Tradition”) with its claim that “The Odysseus of the Iliad is quite the same man in essence [as that in the Odyssey], but viewed differently” (p. 176).

I recommend beginning with the following works (in the order given), and moving onto a selection of others, depending on the focus you eventually chose to take:

1. Coleman-Norton 1927
2. Haft, 1990a, 1990b
The burning of Xerxes’ palace at Persepolis marks a turning point in the story of Alexander the Great. His subsequent march into Afghanistan, and then India, involved a series of incidents, which brought a clear change both in his personality and to his ideology.

Identify and discuss the incidents in this eastern campaign that you think best explain this change in Alexander detailing how this change manifested itself in his subsequent conduct and assessing its impact.

Alexander’s behaviour after the burning of the palace of Xerxes at Persepolis has aroused much discussion in both the sources and the secondary literature. The vulgate tradition has, in particular, made much of a series of incidents which occurred in the wake of the burning of the palace, which it suggests points both to a deterioration in Alexander’s character and a change in his personality. Your first task will be to identify any incidents, which might be used to support this view.

You might wish to consider the following incidents as significant: Paying off the League of Corinth’s troops at Ecbatana; the trial and execution of Philotas, and the subsequent murder of his father, Parmenio; the episode of the Branchidae; the murder of Cleitus; the attempt to introduce proskynesis; the Pages conspiracy (the Hermolaus affair) and the subsequent imprisonment of Callisthenes. You will need to explain the importance of these incidents in relation to the essay title. What do these incidents tell us about Alexander’s state of mind? What do they tell us about Alexander’s ideology at this stage? Equally important, what do they tell us about the attitude of the Macedonians and Persians? How was Alexander’s behaviour here different, if indeed it was, to that before Persepolis? Were there other incidents in Iran or Afghanistan that speak to a change in Alexander? What did his marriage to Roxanne represent?

After a guerrilla campaign in Afghanistan, Alexander marched east into India. He fought one more major engagement against whom? Why might the outcome of this battle be described as a Pyrrhic victory? What happened at the Hyphasis River (Beas) and why is this significant in terms of our understanding of the Macedonians’ attitude to Alexander at this point in the campaign? You should examine the significance of what happened at the Hyphasis in relation to Alexander’s journey down the Indus to the Indian Ocean, and his subsequent disastrous march through Gedrosia. What happened when he arrived back in Carmania? What do his actions at this point tell us about his state of mind? What other major incidents took place before Alexander’s death in Babylon in 323 BC and what do they suggest about his mentalité in the period before his death? Issues that ought to concern you include: Mixed Marriages; the mutiny at Opis; the Epigoni; the Exiles’ Decree and request for deification.
READING:

Biographies


You should read the relevant chapters in one of the above to refresh your memory of the events that you will have to discuss. Then you can tackle the sources.

Primary Sources

The most complete extant primary literary sources for Alexander are:


General


Bosworth and Holt are monographs covering a large part of Alexander’s journey after Persepolis. You might want to consider at least reading reviews of both of these.
Iraq/Iran


Afghanistan


India


Return


All the above are either in the NUIM Library or on JSTOR

The above bibliography will provide further bibliographies, which will provide further reference to the topic given. The areas touched on above are central to this essay but they are not exhaustive of what you might include.
‘In Sappho we hear for the first time in the Western world the direct words of an individual woman’ (Barnstone: 2009, page 249). Discuss the ways Sappho’s ‘direct words’ speak to us about the lives of women in ancient Greece.

Due Date: Tuesday 23 April 2019
Word count: c. 5,000 words

READING

Where can I read Sappho’s poetry? On Sappho, WLGR DOCUMENT No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, & 6A. On other women writers and artists and intellectuals, Rhodopis, WLGR 228, compare 275E; Erinna WLGR 10, 11; Nossis, WLGR 16-21; Anyte WLGR 12-15; Praxilla, WLGR 9; Aristarete, WLGR 307; Hipparchia, WLGR 217, 218; Phintys, WLGR 208; Axiothea, WLGR 216. Online in the library database Loeb Classical Library https://www.loebclassics.com/view/LCL142/1982/volume.xml.

Barnard, Mary. 1986. Sappho: a New Translation Berkeley. University of California Press 888.01 SAP A little book! Good translation of the poems. These hundred poems and fragments constitute virtually all of Sappho that survives and effectively bring to life the woman whom the Greeks consider to be their greatest lyric poet. There is a Forward by D. Fitts – the Latin quotation he uses at the start translates as ‘Not all of me will die: a great part of me will avoid Death’. Note that Barnard uses her own system of numeration for the poems. You can also read Sappho’s poetry in Barnstone, W. 2009. Ancient Greek Lyrics (second edition). Bloomington. Indiana University Press (Electronic resource). Read the forty or so full poems (as opposed to fragments) of Sappho’s extant output, here. Also Barnstone, W. 1988. Sappho and the Greek Lyric Poets. Shocken Books. New York MAIN 884.01 BAR (very similar to Barnstone (2009) above, e.g. quotation in essay title is page 249 in the electronic copy). The story of the precarious transmission of Sappho’s poetry is illustrated by Mulroy, D. 1992. Early Greek Lyric Poetry Translated with an Introduction and Commentary University of Michigan Press, pages 87-98 MAIN 884.01 MUL. Sappho’s poetry can be read in Diane Rayor’s book (details below), pages 51-81 and notes on pages 159-169; Chapter 5 of Margaret Williamson’s book (see below for full details) has a selection of the poems with accompanying critical interpretations. If you are interested in women’s poetry, not only Sappho’s, read Jo Gill, Halliwell, M. & Mousley, A. 2007. Women’s Poetry Edinburgh University Press. E-book, pages 51-55, and printed book page numbers pp.33-38.

What do others think? While all below are helpful, * marks texts that MIGHT be more helpful


duBois, Page. 1995. Sappho is Burning. Chicago. University of Chicago Press. 888.01 SAPc Chapter 1 ‘Fragmentary Introduction’ 1-30 on the reactions of feminist critics, including herself, who encounter Sappho. To know all we know about Sappho is to know little (duBois). Her poetry, dating from the seventh century B.C.E., comes to us in fragments, her biography as speculation. How is it then, Page duBois asks, that this poet has come to signify so much? Sappho Is Burning offers a new reading of Sappho that acknowledges the poet’s distance and difference from us. She is named as the tenth muse, yet the
nine books of her poetry survive only in fragments. She disorients, troubles, undoes many certitudes in the history of poetry, the history of philosophy, the history of sexuality. DuBois argues that we need to read Sappho again.

Greene, Ellen. 2002. ‘Subjects, Objects, and Erotic Symmetry in Sappho's Fragments’, 82-105, in Rabinowitz and Auanger (eds.) Among Women: from the Homosocial to the Homoerotic in the Ancient World. MAIN 305.489664 RAB New interpretations of the evidence offered by the literary works of Sappho are offered here by Greene.

Hauser, Emily. 2016. ‘In her own words: the semantics of female authorship in ancient Greece, from Sappho to Nossis’, Ruman 45 (2), 133–164 Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Maynooth University, on 18 Dec 2018 at 16:13:51, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/rmu.2016.8 This interesting and lengthy paper looks at how Sappho, and Nossis in particular, ‘adopt the mask of a male poet to explore the connection between gender, authorship and voice.’


*Lardinois, A. ‘Keening Sappho: Female Speech Genres in Sappho’s Poetry’, Chapter 5 pages 75-92 in Lardinois, A. & L. McClure (eds.). 2001. Making Silence Speak: Women’s Voices in Greek Literature and Society. Princeton. DAY LOAN 880.9352 LAR This collection attempts to recover the voices of women in antiquity from a variety of perspectives: how they spoke, where they could be heard, and how their speech was adopted in literature and public discourse. Lardinois’ essay maintains that Sappho modelled her poetry on women’s public speech genres: i.e. prayers to goddesses, laments, praise of young brides.


*McIntosh Snyder, J. 1989. The Woman and the Lyre: Women Writers in Classical Greece and Rome, Bristol Classical Press and Illinois University Press. MAIN 870.9001 SNY Chapter 1 ‘Sappho of Lesbos’, 1-37. Note map of where the poets lived. ‘Faint though the voices of the women of Greek and Roman antiquity may be in some cases, their sound, if we listen carefully enough, can fill many of the gaps and silences of women’s past’, from the ‘Conclusion’. The author studies the available fragments of Sappho, ranging from poems on mythological themes to traditional wedding songs and love poems, and demonstrates her considerable influence on Western thought and literature.


Rayor, Diane J. 1991. Sappho’s lyre: archaic lyric and women poets of ancient Greece, translations, with introduction and notes; ‘Foreword’ ix-xix by W.R. Johnson. Berkeley: University of California Press 888.01 SAP Sappho sang her poetry to the accompaniment of the lyre on the Greek island of Lesbos over 2500 years ago. This book has the complete surviving works of the ancient Greek women poets. Note especially here the ‘Foreword’, xvi-xix, and ‘Sappho’, i.e. poems on pages 51-81 with notes on
Note the numeration here, No. 8 = Barnard’s 39 = traditional LP 31. Make clear from the start the numeration you are using.

Segal, C. 1998. *Aglaia: The Poetry of Alcman, Sappho, Pindar, Bacchylides, and Corinna*. Lanham, Md. Rowman & Littlefield 880.01 SEG Chapter 3 ‘Eros and Incantation: Sappho and Oral Poetry’, pages 43-61. In this book Segal provides close readings of the texts, and then studies the literary form and language of early Greek lyric, the poets’ conception of their aims and their art, the use of mythical paradigms, and the relation of the poems to their social context.


Williamson, Margaret. 1995. Sappho’s Immortal daughters. Harvard University Press. 888.01 SAP *Read ‘Poetry and Politics, pages 60-89. ‘Legend’ pages 5-33, is an account of Sappho’s ‘voice’ in the ancient world from images of her on vase painting, fictions about her (e.g. her obsessive love for Phaon) to her appearance in Ovid’s *Heroides* 15, where Ovid writes her imagined letter to Phaon.

*Wilson, Lyn H. 1996. *Sappho’s Sweet-bitter Songs: Configurations of Female and Male in Ancient Greek Lyric*. London; New York. Routledge.888.01 SAPc Read ‘Introduction’ pp.1-20 This is a good overview of Sappho’s work as a ‘site of difference’ (p.14) where distinctive ‘feminine’ values attain prominence. Of interest too is Chapter 1 ‘Aphrodite’ pages 21-42. Late 20th-century theories of feminism, psychoanalysis and literary criticism are applied to Sappho’s lyrics. In the ‘Introduction’ the author states that her investigation centres on sexual difference, and her method is to compare Sappho’s poems/songs with the lyric poetry of other male authors composing songs between the seventh and the fifth centuries B.C.


**How do I make a start?**

Read the poems and decide what you think first. Consult the Bibliography above for texts of the poems (please do not use the internet), background information, and critical approaches. Keep in mind that literary representations of women may be viewed as male constructs appropriated by men for the purpose of speaking about male concerns rather than as simple reflections of social reality. When a woman, Sappho, uses lyric form she is a poet composing in a predominantly male tradition (see Eva Stehle: 1981), so how can her literary representations of women be viewed? How does her poetic voice gain purchase in such a tradition (see Wilson:1996)? In what ways is her poetry different from a male poet working according to the same poetic conventions? If she is not a ‘historian documenting her own life’ (see Winkler:2002), what can the performative contexts of her poetry (see Lardinois: 2001) and the social world they describe (see Parker:1993) tell us about the attitudes of, and the lives of women, including female poets, in ancient Greece? Sappho and Alcaeus. Brygos Painter. Side A of an Attic red-figure kalathos, ca. 470BC. From Akragas (Sicily). Dr Maeve O’Brien maeve.obrien@mu.ie
Compare and contrast the treatments of the story of Orestes’ and Electra’s revenge for the murder of Agamemnon in the *Electra* plays of Sophocles and Euripides, and show how each treatment relates to that of Aeschylus in the *Libation Bearers*.

GUIDELINES

In the *Libation Bearers* (or *Choephori*, to give it its Greek name, sometimes Latinized as *Choephori*), the second play in Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* trilogy of 458 BC, Orestes returns home to Argos after many years to take vengeance on his mother Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisthus for the murder of his father Agamemnon. He is first reunited with his sister Electra, and in the great *kommos* in the first half of the play Orestes, Electra, and the chorus of slave-women engage in lament for Agamemnon and call on his spirit to assist them in the revenge. Orestes then sets the vengeance plot in motion, and succeeds in killing both Aegisthus and Clytemnestra, before having to flee from the scene. Electra is not directly involved in the killings, and indeed does not appear at all in the second half of the play.

Some forty years or so later, both Sophocles and Euripides wrote plays on the same story. We do not know the exact dates of these plays, or even which of them was written first, but in both *Electra* is a much more prominent character than in the *Libation Bearers*, as their titles (both are called *Electra*) reflect. Your task is to compare and contrast these two tragedies, and to explore what relationship each of them might be considered to bear to the *Libation Bearers*. Though all three plays are based on the same myth, you will find striking differences in the ways in which the dramatists handled the material, as well as obvious similarities.

The first thing you should do to get started on this topic is to read the plays with care and attention: however much secondary material you may read, it is essential that your essay be based firmly on the texts of the plays themselves. I would begin with some very basic, factual questions about each play, such as:

- Where is the play set? What does the skēnē represent? What characters are represented in the play? What does the chorus consist of?

As you answer questions such as these, ask yourself additionally what the effect/s might be of setting the play in one location rather than another, including this character but omitting that character, and so on: this is a good route into interpretation of the play, which is a very important part of the exercise. After confronting these basic questions, you should consider wider issues, such as how the plot develops and how the main figures are characterized. For example, if the key events of the story are the plotting and carrying out of the revenge against Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, you might usefully ask questions such as:
Who is the main motivating force behind the revenge? How is it effected, by whom, and in what circumstances? What can be said about these things in terms of interpretation of the play as a whole?

On characterization, you might get your bearings by considering how far and in what ways the figures of Orestes, Electra, Clytemnestra, and Aegisthus in the Sophoclean and Euripidean plays resemble their Aeschylean counterparts (in the other plays of the Oresteia trilogy as well as the Libation Bearers: although the action of the Electra plays maps on to the Libation Bearers specifically, the whole Oresteia is relevant). For example, are Clytemnestral/Aegisthus configured as strong/weak (masculine/feminized) as they are in Aeschylus? How sure of himself is Orestes? Does he find himself in the same kind of dilemma as in the Oresteia? How do the main characteristics of Electra compare with her Aeschylean incarnation? What characters do Sophocles and Euripides foreground the most, and what are the consequences of this for our understanding of the play?

Going beyond plot and characterization, you need to consider the Sophoclean and Euripidean dramas in terms of that key question of the Oresteia, justice. In the Oresteia, in addition to other reasons for avenging his father, Orestes is under divine orders from Apollo to do so; but in order to avenge his father he has to kill his mother, and in consequence of her death is pursued by the Furies, themselves divine agents of vengeance. The matricide is both right and required and wrong, and the issue is not resolved until Orestes’ trial in the Eumenides, when the closeness of the conflict is reflected by the tied vote of the jurors. The question for you is: how far is the question of justice implicated in Sophocles’ and Euripides’ plays? Is the moral issue much simpler than in the Oresteia – or not? Is any kind of sequel to the action of the play implied, or does the revenge produce complete closure? What actually happens in consequence, and how can that be understood?

What is suggested above is, of course, intended only to give you an idea of how you might proceed with the work for the essay: a jumping-off point, in other words. It is only by reading and thinking about the plays themselves and engaging thoughtfully and critically with the secondary material that you will be able to build up a good essay with a personal ‘take’ on the question, which should be your aim.

This module is worth 5 ECTS credits, which means that it carries a notional workload of about 100 hours. Your essay will be expected to reflect an input of time and effort of that order.

**Prescribed Texts**

The recommended translations of the three plays which are the essential texts for this topic are:


The Aeschylus translation is the one prescribed for the Greek Tragedy module in 2017-2018 (and again this year). The translation of Sophocles’ *Electra* is in the same volume as the translation of *Oedipus the King* also prescribed for the Greek Tragedy module in 2017-2018 (and this year). Copies of the Euripides translation may be purchased from the University Bookshop, and are in any case widely available.

You should use these specific translations if at all possible. If you use a different translation, you must be sure to supply its bibliographic details in the bibliography at the end of your essay.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

All the items listed in this bibliography are either available on the Library bookshelves or accessible electronically through the Library catalogue or via the ‘eBooks and eJournals’ link on the Library home page. Items marked with an asterisk (*) are those which seem to me especially helpful or important, but that is a very rough judgement call and you should on no account think that if an item is not asterisked it is therefore not worth reading: that is simply not the case. Equally, do not be lazy and confine your reading to material accessible electronically; many good things are available only in hard copy.

Using the index of a book is a very good way to track down further helpful material: try it in the case of Easterling (1997) or Hall (2010), for example.

Please do not under any circumstances be tempted to lift material from ‘cheat sites’ on the internet and pass it off as your own. I mention this because (and only because) in recent years one or two students who have written a GC350 essay for me have done exactly this. Such ‘borrowings’ are normally very easy to spot and even easier to verify, and a student who submits an essay which includes such material risks serious consequences (see the University’s policy document on plagiarism, which may be found under ‘Policies & Regulations’ at https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/exams/information-students).

N.B. Most of the bibliography is organized text by text, but you should bear in mind that discussions of one of the Electra plays often have things to say about the other play too, and about Aeschylus’ Libation Bearers.

Greek tragedy: general

P. E. Easterling (ed.), The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy (Cambridge, 1997). [Very good; chapters by various scholars on a range of different topics.]

S. Goldhill, Reading Greek Tragedy (Cambridge, 1986). [Excellent general study by a lively and influential critic; see further below.]

E. Hall, Greek Tragedy: Suffering under the Sun (Oxford, 2010). [Recent introduction, engagingly written and with plenty of useful detail; contains brief summary-discussions of all the surviving Greek tragedies.]

R. Scodel, An Introduction to Greek Tragedy (Cambridge, 2010). [A shorter introduction to the subject than Hall; has a chapter on the Oresteia and a few pages briefly comparing the Libation Bearers with the Electra plays.]


O. Taplin, Greek Tragedy in Action (London, 1978). [Outstanding on the visual dimension of Greek tragedy; the Oresteia is among the texts on which the author focuses.]

Aeschylus: Oresteia

On the Libation Bearers specifically, the best starting-point is:

See also the following, bearing in mind that (as I said above) the whole *Oresteia* is relevant:


*S. Goldhill, *Reading Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge, 1986), 1-56.


**Sophocles: Electra**


*J. Jones, On Aristotle and Greek Tragedy* (London, 1962), 141-159. [Focuses on comparison with *Libation Bearers*.]


*M. Lloyd, Sophocles: Electra* (London, 2005). [A very good, reader-friendly discussion of the play, synthesizing a lot of current scholarship. But a **warning**: when a book of this type is available it can be very tempting to rely on it and not to bother with other material. **That would be a serious mistake**: you need to formulate your own views on the basis of the play itself and of a good range of secondary reading, and an essay that shows over-dependence on this or any other single book will be marked down.]

L. MacLeod, *Dolos and Dike in Sophokles’ Elektra* (Leiden, 2001). [Pp. *1-20 are particularly valuable for their account of previous scholars’ views on the play’s main issues.]


*P. T. Stevens, ‘Sophocles: Electra, Doom or Triumph?’, *Greece and Rome* 25 (1978), 111-120.


**Euripides: Electra**

There is much less good material available on Euripides’ play than on Sophocles’, but you should not on that account pay less attention to the Euripidean version – in fact you may find that when it comes to writing the essay you have more to say about Euripides’ *Electra*.


*S. Goldhill, *Reading Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge, 1986), 162-165, 244-259. [Particularly helpful on some Aeschylean connections.]


*M. Lloyd, ‘Realism and Character in Euripides’ Electra’, *Phoenix* 40 (1986), 1-19. [Accessible via the Library’s ‘eBooks and eJournals’ link; N.B. this is not the social-science journal Phoenix published in Dublin and listed in the Library catalogue, but a Classics journal published in Toronto, Canada.]


**TECHNICALITIES**

Essays in this module should be around **5000 words** in length. They should be submitted in **typed form**, with good margins all around and double (or 1.5) spacing between lines. **Only one copy** need be submitted. Please provide a full word-count at the end.

The **due date** for submission of the essay is Tuesday 23 April 2019 (by 17:00). Please note the Departmental regulations on the late submission of essays, as set out in the Student Handbook for third-year Greek and Roman Civilization (which you should also consult for other regulations relating to essays, and for information and guidance on how essays should be presented).

**David Scourfield**

**January 2019**