

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



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23 *The Lyra Greek Dancers in performance. The women wear Kato Panagia (Asia Minor and Euboia), and the men Vraka (Greek islands)*

The first piece of research I ever undertook was on an animal known as the Babomousse. I was six years old and confident that, if only I read enough books, I would discover everything my teacher wanted to know about this mysterious creature: its size, colour, habitat and favourite food. I read and read, only to be told at the end of the week that there was no such thing as a Babomousse; it was an invention, part of an exercise intended to test our reading. It certainly tested my patience.

I had formed pictures in my mind of a tortoise crossed with a duck-billed platypus, living in the silt beside Scottish riverbanks and feeding on freshwater fish. Not so far-fetched, I now realize, given the stories which spread in the ancient world of gold-digging ants the size of foxes and savage manticores (part-man, part-lion, part-scorpion) in India. These beasts, as Matthew Cobb explains in his fascinating article in this issue of *ARGO* (pp. 6–8), were natural products of the early Greek imagination. Places which feel remote and liminal, Cobb shows, will often inspire the most fantastical ideas and images. Clearly, Scotland was to my six-year-old self what India was to Herodotus and others.

Closer to home in this issue, Amy Coker reveals in her witty piece on ‘bad language’ in Greek (pp. 4–5) the word that unites humans and horses (NB this is not an article to digest over lunch). In

our cover story (pp. 16–17), meanwhile, Evelien Bracke looks at the Trojan Horse, one of many myths adopted by and for Donald Trump in recent months. ‘Classicists’, heralds Bracke, ‘are no longer irrelevant’. The sudden surge of classical references and comparisons between antiquity and contemporary politics in the media is indeed to be celebrated – regardless of how accurate some of the references seem to be. At the very least, they provide fruit for discussion in the classroom and beyond. The sheer variety of ways in which antiquity is interpreted, reconfigured and mis-remembered, after all, forms the bedrock of contemporary reception studies.

On a more sprightly note, you will also find exciting articles in this issue on the fashion designers using classical art on the catwalk (pp. 21–22), Greek dancing (pp. 23–24) (who knew there was a Greek dance dedicated to sufferers of decompression sickness?), the thrilling discovery of ‘The Griffin Warrior’ at Pylos (pp. 9–11) and a typically broad range of book reviews – from the Oxyrhynchus papyri and Hellenistic bronzes, to 18th-century Euboea and the history of Istanbul.

I hope you enjoy the issue,

DAISY DUNN
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