**Douglas Kelly Australian Essay Competition Reports**

(Formerly the ASCS Australian Essay Competition)

## The Douglas Kelly Australian Essay Competition 2016

In 2016 the Douglas Kelly Australian Essay Competition attracted a field of twenty entries, drawn from six Australian universities. The quality of entries was very high and the scope of subject matter admirably diverse: the judging panel of Dr Graeme Miles (University of Tasmania) and Dr Michael Champion (Australian Catholic University), was required to adjudicate on submissions ranging from Bronze Age Crete to the later Roman Empire, and from Homer to Petronius.

The winner of the 2016 competition was Konstantine Panegyres (University of Melbourne), with an essay entitled ‘“Like a Snowy Mountain”: *Iliad* 13.754-755 Reconsidered’. The essay was well written and clearly argued. It showed an impressive command of a wide range of ancient texts (not only classical, but also Indian and Near Eastern), demonstrated an ability to work from original languages, and engaged intelligently and critically with relevant secondary literature.

Aileen Westbrook’s essay ‘The Handprints of Herodotus’ (Macquarie University) came second, while Rodney Harvey’s essay ‘Childhood in Roman Greece: the Story of Daphnis and Chloe’ (The Australian National University) came third.

One issue which arose was the length of submissions. The rules of the competition state that ‘the length should be between 2000-3000 words’. The judges decided, rightly in my view, to exclude one overly long essay from consideration. The author of this essay stated the word count as follows: ‘3698 (excludes bibliography, indented text and footnotes)’. Leaving aside the fact that 3698 is a substantially higher figure than 3000, I take the view that indented text (i.e. quotations) and footnotes should count towards the total. But perhaps that is not a matter for me to decide.

As competition co-ordinator, I would like to commend all the entrants on the quality of their work and give warm thanks to Graeme Miles and Michael Champion for generously giving of their time and for supporting this competition.

Peter Davis

23 January 2017

## The Doug Kelly Australian Essay Competition 2015

In 2015 the Douglas Kelly Australian Essay Competition attracted a field of twenty-nine entries, drawn from nine Australian universities. The quality of entries was very high and the scope of subject matter admirably diverse: the judging panel of Dr Graeme Bourke (University of New England) and Dr Graeme Miles (University of Tasmania) was required to adjudicate on submissions ranging from Aegean Crete to the later Roman Empire, and from Homer to Senecan tragedy.

The winner of the 2015 competition was Grant Kynaston (University of Sydney), with an essay entitled ‘ΓΗΡΑΣ: The “New Sappho” and the Mimnerman Tradition’. This essay was particularly impressive because of its critical use of ancient texts and modern works, and its effective presentation of the writer’s original thoughts.

The runners-up were:

Daniel Hanigan, ᾽Τὸ γὰρ γέρας ἐστὶ γερόντων’: On the Paradox of Gerontocracy in Homer’s *Iliad*’ (University of Sydney)

Nicola Bodill, ‘Will these hands ne’er be clean? - The Furor in Hercules Furens’ (University of Sydney).

The competition co-ordinator, Peter Davis, would like to commend all the entrants on the quality of their work and encourage all those still eligible to consider submitting an essay again in 2016. He also extends his warm thanks to the two judges for generously giving of their time and for supporting this competition.

Peter Davis

28 February 2016

**2014 ASCS AUSTRALIAN ESSAY REPORT**

In 2014, the ASCS Australian Essay Competition attracted a field of fourteen entries, drawn from four Australian tertiary institutions. The quality of entries was consistently high. The judging panel of Dr Graeme Miles (University of Tasmania) and Dr Graeme Bourke (University of New England) was required to adjudicate on submissions ranging in subject from Greek pederasty to the *Res Gestae* of Augustus. The judges were delighted to nominate as the winner Brennan Nicholson (of the University of Sydney) for his essay ‘The sight of sound: on the punctuation of the prologue of Euripides' *Electra* in Laurentianus 32.2’. This year’s runners-up were Miranda Gronow (University of Melbourne), for her essay on ‘Patchworks and Patroclus: understanding the Homeric centos of Eudocia Augusta’, and Natalie Mendes (University of Sydney), for her paper entitled ‘*Quisquis faber suae fortunae est*: Livy's Servius Tullius’. The competition co-ordinator, Lara O'Sullivan, extends her congratulations to all of the entrants for quality of their submissions, and her thanks to the academic staff across the country who have supported and encouraged their students to participate; she would like thank too the ‘two Graemes’, Drs Miles and Bourke, for the generosity and good humour with which they discharged their duties as judges.

**2013 ASCS AUSTRALIAN ESSAY REPORT**

The judges of the ASCS Australian Essay Competition in 2013 were kept busy with an impressive field of twenty-five essays. The submissions, which engaged with a diversity of subjects on historical, literary and cultural themes, were lodged from four Australian tertiary institutions. The judges’ decision was, as so often, a difficult one, thanks to the scope and quality of the offerings.

The overall winner was Jennifer McFarland from the University of Melbourne, with a thoughtful essay entitled ‘Athenian Autochthony: Democratic Discrimination?’ Worthy runners-up were Cameron MacBeth (University of Sydney) for his essay ‘Is Vergil's Aeneas an ideal Roman hero?’, and Hugo Branley (of the Australian National University), for his ‘Straight from the horse's mouth: persuasion and frank speech in the *Apology*’. The competition co-ordinator, Lara O'Sullivan, wishes to extend her thanks to the judging panels both past and present. In 2013 Dr Paul Burton stepped aside from the role of judge after many years of generous service, and his position has been taken up by Dr Graeme Miles (of the University of Tasmania). Also serving as judge in 2013 has been Dr Bronwyn Hopwood (University of New England), who similarly has given many years of devoted service to the competition. The support that all three have extended to Australian Essay Competition is much appreciated.

**ASCS Australian Essay Competition 2012**

In 2012, the ASCS Australian Essay Competition attracted a field of fourteen entries, drawn from seven Australian tertiary institutions. The quality of entries was high indeed, and the scope of subject matter admirably diverse: the judging panel of Dr Bronwyn Hopwood (University of New England) and Dr Paul Burton (Australian National University) was required to adjudicate on submissions ranging from Philistines to the Roman Republic, and from Presocratic formulations of divinity to Greek pederasty. The worthy winner of the 2012 competition was Thomas Wilson (University of Sydney), with an essay entitled “The Subordination of Tragedy to Comedy in Aristophanes' Thesmophoriazousai and Frogs”. The competition co-ordinator, Lara O'Sullivan, would like to commend all the entrants on the quality of their work and encourage all those still eligible to consider submitting an essay again in 2013. She also extends her warm thanks to the two judges for generously giving of their time and supporting this competition.

Dr Lara O’Sullivan

Competition Co-Ordinator

February 2013

**ASCS Australian Essay Competition 2010**

There was a total of 55 entries, thanks largely to the University of Sydney with 33 entries. The number of entries from other universities were: Macquarie: 7, UQ: 6, UWA: 4, and one each from UNewc, UNSW, UMelb, UTas, and ANU. It is a shame that some universities had no entrants. The spread of years was interesting: more second year students submitted (22) than third (19) or first years (14).

The subjects were very widely spread out:

Egypt: papyri; Greece: democracy (2), Thucydides (4), Iliad, Odyssey, Hesiod, Aristotle, Epicureanism, Herodotos (2), centaurs, Attic sanctuaries, Hercules, oikist cults, Hellenistic bliss, Euripides, religion, women, homosexuality, hoplites, Isokrates and Obama (should he be sent a copy ?), Xenophon, Alexander, and vases. Rome: Iron Age Latium, the Flavians (2), Statius, Caesar (2), Eusebius, Aeneid (3), Seneca, Agrippa, Nero, Messalina, Spartacus, Plautus, ruler cult, decline of the aristocracy, state and religion (2), Livy, Hannibalic War, and Daphnis and Chloe.

In view of the large numbers which the adjudicators were asked to look at for this competition. the Executive Committee reviewed the guidelines and agreed that in future lecturers should be encouraged to look out for the really outstanding essays and encourage the students to submit only those: certainly as a minimum they should be of High Distinction standard.

The placegetters for the 2010 competition are:

First Prize: Harrison Jones (2nd year, USyd)

 (“Oikist cults at Cyrene, Delos and Eretria”)

Runners-Up:

 Geetanjali Arora (3rd year, UWA)

 (“Lamentation, war and family life: a critical analysis of the lament

 in books 6, 22 and 24 of the *Iliad*”)

 Kimberley Webb (2nd year, UWA)

 (“Thucydides’ treatment of Nicias and Alcibiades”)

Ron Ridley

Competition Co-Ordinator

17th December 2010

**ASCS Essay Competition 2008**

Twenty-six entries were received, divided by subject as follows:

 Bronze age archaeology 1 Satyrs and centaurs 1

 Homeric gods 2 Roman republic 2

 Euripides, *Troades* 2 Roman empire 2

 Lysias vii 1 *Res gestae* 1

 Thucydides 2 Livy 1

 Socrates 2 Ovid, *Heroides* 1

 Philip and Alexander 1 Seneca, *Apocolocyntosis*  1

 Plutarch, *Alexander* 1 Suetonius 1

 Procopius, *Secret History* 1 Roman art 1

 Athenian gravestones 1 Katabasis theme in film 1

Overall, the standard of this year’s entries was rather higher than last year’s: there were more essays with impressive strengths in both the knowledge marshalled and the levels of argument deployed. The standard of presentation was also somewhat better, but it is disturbing that mistakes in spelling and grammar as well as on matters of fact pass through whatever processes of correction and revision that these essays have been through.

A few examples: to ‘zone in’ on a subject; repeatedly citing a source as *Athenaia Politeia*; assigning a speech in Sparta recorded in Thucydides i to ‘King Alkibiades’; making Isocrates a pupil of Socrates; glossing the ‘Thirty Year Truce’ [of 446/5 B.C.] with the enigmatic *scholion* ‘(anarchy)’. Last, it will gratify those on the right side of the fence to know that, to one student, certain views are held by ‘scholars and classicists alike’.

It is worth noting that this year we had two essays on Socrates, which perhaps reflects his importance, and that six of the essays made extensive use (and very good use at that) of archaeological material

In assessing the essays, a short list of seven was arrived at, amongst which only fine discriminations could be made in terms of quality. Then a point is reached at which further pondering seems unproductive, and a winner and a ‘Highly Commended’ can be put forward.

**2008 Winner**

**Essay no. 22: “Satyrs and centaurs. Compare and contrast satyrs and centaurs. Explain the key differences.”**

An essay which assembles a very wide range of material into a lucid argument abundantly documented and which utilizes copious modern scholarship with insight and independence.

**2008 Runner-Up**

**Essay no. 11: “The Poetics of Euripides’s Trojan Women: unity, rhetoric and pathos.”**

A thoughtful exploration of this tragedy and also of the standards of criticism to apply to tragedy as a genre

Douglas Kelly 28.1.09

**ASCS Australian Essay Prize Competition 2007**

30 essays were submitted on the usual wide range of subjects. The subjects covered may be listed as follows, the numbers below not adding up to 29 because some essays straddle two subjects.

Ancient Egypt 1

Minoan Crete 1

Mythology 5

Greek religion 1

Homer 7

Hesiod 1

Tragedy 3

Socrates 1

Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*  3

Pompey 1

Cicero and Tullia 1

Sallust, *Catiline* 1

Ovid, Fasti 1

Tacitus, *Annals*, women in 1

*Res Gestae* 1

Augustus 2

Hadrian 2

Roman women 2

Roman religion 1

Late antiquity 1

Some absences may be noted, such as Greek history, Latin poetry. There is a healthy concentration on interest on Roman women, but a neglect of women elsewhere. Homer and mythology are also well represented.

Most of the essays could have benefited from a final proof reading and there was a disturbing sprinkling of illiteracies across too many essays for comfort. We do not need the verb ‘administrate’ nor the noun ‘apostrophisation’. Nor do we expect to read of ‘a descent into the madness of empirical warfare’ or of ‘*patria potestas* having historical feet in *manus* marriage’ or of the need ‘to collaborate as much evidence as possible from primary sources’ or to ‘tow the party line’. ‘Astrological’ is to kept distinct from ‘astronomical’ and one E.J. Brill was not the author of Jacoby’s *Fragmente der* *griechischen Historiker*. The plain statement that Odysseus arrived back on Ithaka at the time of ‘the festival of the Saturnalia’ may be left to inhabit its own thought world, along with the information that, in comparison with Menelaos, Agamemnon was ‘more given to urbane commercial activities’.

Such muttering over slips and mishaps could be prolonged. May it suffice to say that in a close contest (and the ASCS essay competition is a tight-run race) no essay is helped by blemishes.

On a wider view, the essays show much resolute hunting out of articles from the journals, but only uneven and sporadic signs of scepticism towards the posturing of some scholarly writing. Collections of source material whether in hard copy or on the net give information, to a degree, on specific points, but do not always allow the particular tenor and value of the evidence to be grasped. The manner in which essays cite ancient evidence differs from the systematic to the random, and one essay, on a historical subject, cited only modern writers, misspelling more often than not the name of the chief of them. The upper crust of essays did show some thoughtful handling of ancient sources, but the weaknesses elsewhere in this regard were sometimes irritating and even at times worrying.

Most essays were of the standard 3,000-word length. The shorter essays tended to lack weight and, even on a rough and ready handicapping, system none had the independence of thought or grasp of issues that might carry them past the bulkier, lengthier pieces heading the field. The longest bibliography contained 39 items, the shortest one. All essays were within the academic conventions except for an essay on mythology that created its own imaginative world.

It is respectfully suggested that ASCS consider retaining entries in the Essay Competition in some kind of archive. It is regrettable that hardly any student essays and examination papers are available to document the history of education at the coalface. ASCS could build up a collection of specimens to remedy some of this deficiency in our area. Such an archive would be even more informative if the essays could be accompanied by the marks and he comments of those who appraised them.

Assessing so many different kinds of apples and pears is a sore trial, and the assessor deeply regrets that there is no colleague this year to work with. One head, far from being as good as two, picks out the following four best, not even a short nose being visible between the last two:

First: essay no.2 (Cicero & Tullia: honour, duty, and love: Pietas in late Republican Rome)

Second: essay no 27 (Archaeological, artistic and political evidence for the significance of myth and cult for Theseus in sixth and fifth century Athens)

Third: (equal): essay no.18 (Daphnis and Chloe: erotic novel, bucolic idyll-or a synthesis of both? )

Third: (equal): essay no. 19 (Erotic and Bucolic Elements in Longus’ Daphnis and Chloe)

Douglas Kelly,

Visiting Fellow, Faculty of Arts, ANU

25.01.08

**ASCS Australian Essay Prize Competition 2006**

We had a record (I think) 34 entries, made up of 10 from Melbourne, 6 each from the University of Queensland and the ANU, 4 each from UNE and Monash, 3 from the University of Sydney, and 1 from Macquarie. We can say therefore that we had entries from up and down the country, but not in fact from across it.

The subjects ranged from the Neolithic (animal imagery and identity at Catalhoyuk, cognitive processes through a study of skull treatment) to the Ancient Near east (Egyptian shabtis, building the pyramids, and Mesopotamian historiography), the Late Bronze Age, Homer (themes, Menelaos, Helen, heroism), Thucydides, the Thirty, Euripides (Iphigenia, Medea), Greek homosexuality, and religion at Ephesos, and then in the Roman world from the Gracchi (Tiberius’ methods), to Caesar in Gaul (as an example of aristocratic competition), Sallust and Cicero on Catiline, Nero (especially as actor), Roman society (a popular choice: patriarchy, children, prostitution, sexuality), a variety of authors (Lucan, Statius’ Achilleid, Seneca’s Apocolocyntosis and his Thyestes and gladiators) down to Alaric’s sack of Rome and Michael Psellos, as well as mythology (use and abuse in Greece and Rome), tensions in archaeology and phallocentricity.

The first prize was awarded to Julian McDonald of Sydney: “How Thucydides’ concern with political theory affects his composition”. Second prize went to Dean Smith of Melbourne: “The organisation of maritime trade in the Late Bronze Mediterranean”. Third prize was awarded to Christopher Ransom of ANU: “Size matters: Durus Achilles in drag – masculinity, the body and identity in Statius Achilleid”.

Ron Ridley

ASCS Vice President

**ASCS Australian Essay Prize Competition 2005**

The 2005 ASCS Essay Competition attracted 25 entries, drawn from the following universities:

Adelaide 3

Macquarie 5

Sydney 5

UNE 1

ANU 3

UWA 2

Melbourne 4

Newcastle 2

The essays covered the following topics:

**Latin** and **Greek literature**  Petronius’ Satyricon and Homer’s Odyssey, Catullus, Katabasis in modern cinema, Iliad, Aeneid 11

**Greek history and society** and **Roman history and society:** magic and religion, herbalism, structures of Roman politics, senatorial decree on Piso, Roman witches, the aims of Bruns 10, the Hippocratic oath, principate of Caligula. Finley’s Ancient Economy, Rome before 490 BC, the fifth century Athenian, attitudes to rape in Rome, Olympias, Ptolemies and Egypt, use of pike by Macedonians, family in late Roman law

**Archaeology**  de arte romana

**Late antiquity** Chronicles

# Winners and Highly commended

First Prize: Mark Siford (WA) ('Thirty Years After Finley's Ancient Economy')

Highly commended: Kiera Trepka (Newcastle) ('Herbalism Among the Ancients'), Christopher Ransom (ANU) ('Honour and the Hero: Masculinity, Status, and Rebukes

in the Iliad')

## Assessors’ Report

This year twenty-five essays were submitted for consideration for the annual ASCS prize. This number is slightly down on those submitted in previous years, so perhaps a little more encouragement on the part of lecturers would not go astray. On the whole, the essays were of a high standard, as the judges have come to expect, and we were certainly impressed by the great range of topics. It seems that there are many interesting and inspiring subjects being researched in Australian universities under the rubric of Classics and Ancient History.

Happily, the judges were able to agree independently on the winner, which we knew only as ‘no. 16’. This essay, a rigorous critique of Moses Finley’s view of the Roman economy, stood out for its mature style, wide research, deep understanding, sustained analysis and compelling argument. Ancient evidence and modern opinion were handled comprehensively and with flair. The writer’s capacity for intelligent independence at critical junctures also created a good impression. Other successful essays examined herbalism among the ancients and the interplay between masculinity, status and rebukes in Homer’s *Iliad*. Topics varied in character from the legal (Roman legislation against extortion in the provinces) to the military (the Macedonian sarissa) to the political (Roman political structures and attitudes) to the religious (the distinction between magic and religion in Graeco-Roman antiquity). One interesting and insightful essay examined the depictions of witches in Roman literature. Some writers were seduced by the Julio-Claudian emperors of Rome (Tiberius and Caligula). Others chose subjects of pronounced social interest (Greek women, medical ethics, the late Roman family). Literary essays featured heavily: Homer and Catullus were favourites, but Petronius, Vergil, Ovid and Livy won attention too. Roman art made an appearance, as did a fine essay on chronicles. Olympias and the Ptolemies were well handled, but there was no Alexander this year. Classical influences on modern cinema gave rise to yet another interesting essay.

No particular areas or disciplines dominated among the rich pickings. Greece and Rome were studied by around half the essays each. The same could be said for history and literature. Art and archaeology, on the other hand, were virtually absent – a quite extraordinary development in comparison to last year, when both the winner and third-placed essays examined archaeological topics. Surely this lack can be redressed without too much trouble next year, and perhaps the philosophers among our students will take up the challenge to submit a characteristically thoughtful piece on (e.g.) Aristotle or Seneca.

K.O. Chong-Gossard and Tom Stevenson

**ASCS Australian Essay Competition 2004**

The 2004 ASCS Essay Competition attracted 29 entries, drawn from the following universities:

Adelaide 1

Macquarie 1

Queensland 2

Sydney 12

UNSW 2

ANU 3

Tasmania 3

Melbourne 5

The essays covered the following topics:

**Latin literature** Ovid *Met*., relatioonship of the narrator-lover with the beloved in *Amores*, Analysis of Tacitus *Ann*. 1. 2-3, the Homeric and the Augustan in *Aen*. 6

**Greek literature** madness in *Ajax* and *Hercules Furens*, messenger in Greek tragedy, gender and murder in the *Oresteia*, social contracts in the *Oresteia*,

**Greek history and society** compare and contrast Herodotus and Thuc., myth and history, Mithridates VI and the Greeks in 88 BC, Syracuse and its ‘democratic interlude’, 466-406 BC

**Roman history and society** Livy’s women Bks 1-3, Appian and crisis of 133 BC, Sextus Pompeius and Quintus Labienus, Augustus’ social legislation, Roman commemoration of the dead, *Agricola* – relations Agricola and Domitian, enigma of Sulla, reforms of Gracchi, political role of gladiatorial games, Judaea under Tiberius and Caligula (2),

**Archaeology** Anthropomorphic and Zoomorphic Figurines of the eastern Mediterranean, Anthropomorphic Figurines in Cyprus, Images of monstrosity, transition black to red-figure vase painting,

**Late antiquity** Byzantine defence and diplomacy, private and public conversion of Constantine

Results:

The winner is Leanne Campbell (Uni of Melbourne): ‘Anthropomorphic and Zoomorphic Figurines of the eastern Mediterranean’

Two Highly Commendeds: Helen Slaney (Uni of Melbourne): ‘So far as words can serve’: the messenger in Greek tragedy’

Victor Shaw (Uni of Sydney): ‘Sextus Pompeius and Quintus Labienus’

Comments of the judges (Drs Tom Stevenson, K.O. Chong-Gossard):

'The assessors of this year's ASCS essay competition faced a daunting task, given the number of essays, the variety of disciplines and topics, and the uniformly high standard. The bulk of the entries were from historians, and perhaps the history offerings were not quite as strong overall as those submitted last year. Only a small number of them seemed to approach the superlative qualities of last year's winner, which dealt with Flavian foreign policy. Literary topics were handled well, though the authors and problems studied were rather traditional and perhaps a little unadventurous. On the other hand, it was very pleasing to note a rise in the number of archaeology essays submitted this year, and in fact one of these was awarded the first-prize. The winner - on figurines of the eastern Mediterranean, from the Neolithic period to the early Iron Age - was selected for strong research, thoughtfulness, command of material over a huge chronological and geographical range, and for its informed questions. It seemed an excellent piece of work in a field where much is shrouded in mystery and there is hot disagreement on many matters.

A couple of final impressions: Rome commanded slightly more attention than Greece among this year's entries, and history furnished more entries than the other disciplines. Perhaps there is a challenge in this for the students of 2005.'

**ASCS Essay Competition 2003**

The 2003 ASCS Essay Competition attracted 25 entries, drawn from the following universities:

Adelaide 1 Queensland 2

Macquarie 4 Sydney 5

Newcastle 2 UNE 7

Perth 3 UNSW 1

The essays covered the following topics:

**Latin literature** Alcmena in *Amphitruo*; influence of Virgil on late antique western writers;

**Greek literature** Homer’s gods; the enigma of Sappho; tragic hero in Antigone

**Greek history and society** Alexander’s generalship; Athenian empire 5th cent.; second Athenian confederacy; oligarchic revolutions 411 and 404

**Roman history and society** eastern policy of the Roman emperor Vespasian; Solon, Tiberius Gracchus and Augustus; modes of Romanisation (Cordoba); good and bad women in civil war Rome; women and reconstruction – Augustan Rome; Agrippa and aedileship; conversion of Constantine; Tacitus’s characterization of Agrippina the younger and Germanicus; ‘idea of Rome’ and its ‘fall’; nature of Spartacus’ authority; political roles of women in the late republic; frontiers and barbarian policy of Roman empire (4th cent.); Marius and Roman army; homosexuality in Rome

Results:

The winner is Robert True (Uni of Queensland): “An analysis of the aims and motives behind the eastern policy of the Roman emperor Vespasian”

Comments of the judges (Drs Ted Nixon, Dr K.O. Chong-Gossard):

We found the winning entry the most thoroughly, not to say dauntingly, researched essay of all, both in the primary and secondary sources. It is clear and persuasive; its judgments are very mature. It takes on, with considerable success, the views of influential scholars like Brian Bosworth . . . .

We thought the field as a whole weaker than in previous years, and in particular the literary essays failed to impress as much as in the recent past. Although there were other entries which showed promise, none approached the same level of maturity as no. 2. The field was also narrower (no archaeological entries).