

Over Spring Break, I was able to attend the Classical Association of the Midwest and South (CAMWS) Annual Meeting, this year hosted in Mobile, AL. One of my goals for my senior year was to attend a new conference outside my primary research area, and CAMWS helped me fulfill that goal. I have attended the American Society of Overseas Research three times so far (twice in person, once online; presenting a paper once), and it is very much in my area of study. It is one of the most important conferences for Near Eastern archaeologists to attend. I have also attended the Society of American Archaeology once to present a poster. Both of these conferences had a strong focus on archaeology, so I wanted to attend one that did not. I also wanted to have a chance to use the Ancient Greek skills I have been developing for the past two years and see what research in the Classics could look like.

While at CAMWS, I attended a variety of sessions and met a plethora of people. I was surprised at the number of undergraduates present and presenting; it helped me be less nervous about presenting my own paper. Some of the sessions I attended included Staging Cassandra; Roman Archaeology: Reading, Writing & Orality; and Homeric Studies. I was able to cover a wide variety of topics, most of which I had little background in, allowing me to learn a great deal. Though I have no Latin background, I attended sessions discussing texts in the language. Though I have no plans to be a Roman archaeologist, I attended several papers discussing new findings and practices in the discipline. The whole experience pushed me beyond my academic comfort zone and revealed new opportunities for interdisciplinary research to me. I attended one session about medicine in the Ancient World with an absolutely fascinating paper title *Binding Down the Womb: Uterine Prolapse and Magical Practice* by Miranda Black for OSU. Going in, I knew nothing about uterine prolapse, little about Ancient Greek and Medieval medicine, and very little about the role of magic in both, but by the end of the paper, I had a great understanding of all three. While I have no intentions of switching to medical archaeology or anything, I think the author's use of text and folk medical practices provided interesting insight into my own goals of using folklore and archaeology together to better understand and reconstruct the past. In Black's instance, there was very little evidence of how uterine prolapse was treated in the ancient world within the archaeological record, so much of the evidence had to come from old medical manuscripts and illustrations, especially in the Medieval Ages. What she was able to obtain from the archaeological record, though, was ostrakon - essentially curse tablets often marked on broken pot sherds - that helped demonstrate how the lay person felt about uterine prolapse and other pregnancy scares. By combining both traditions, she was able to create a more holistic understanding of uterine prolapse in the Ancient Greek world.

Beyond simply attending lectures, I also presented a paper myself, *Tricky Tales: Comparing Odysseus and Samson in Greek Narratives*, as part of the Religion Across the Ancient Mediterranean Panel. Overall, the presentation went great, people seemed engaged, and I got some great feedback and questions. By the time I presented again at the Undergraduate Spring Research Symposium here at State, I felt very confident in this paper and my work, with even my advisor remarking that I seemed more comfortable and confident during that presentation than my first one at CAMWS. I was encouraged by one of the members in the audience of the CAMWS presentation to expand upon this work and include passages from the *Telegony*, which follows the story of Odysseus's son with Circe, born of his time on Aeaea and

even includes Odysseus's death at the hands of that son, an perfect example of how the trickster cannot escape the consequences of his actions. I also had another scholar ask if there were any further works I could include concerning Samson, since his narrative is so short compared to Odysseus, which has led me to pursue stories from the Talmud and other Jewish folktales to see if there are any other accounts of Samson's exploits. I think all of these would be welcome additions for an expanded version of this initial research project.

There were also several networking opportunities provided at CAMWS, from cocktail hour-style receptions to a banquet. I mostly met with other undergraduate and graduate students, learning about their experiences applying for graduate school, commiserating together about funding cuts, and gaining a deeper understanding of what Classics looks like as a major rather than the simple minor I have pursued in it. I also got a few ideas for future research ideas, some coming from papers, some coming from general conversations, and some coming from questions about my own work, as I mentioned above. As far as future jobs, internships, or collaborative research opportunities, I did not stumble into any of those during my conversations, but talking to the other students, it does not seem like those are common outcomes for students at events like this. Research opportunities tend to be in-house, and there are simply not a lot of internship opportunities to be had in this field, similar to Near Eastern Archaeology, except that I myself have been offered the chance to go dig from a network connection, and have known the same to happen to my peers and others in the field, so more chances for a summer opportunity.

Overall, I found my experiences at CAMWS to be very enlightening and overall, a great time. The experience was more casual than ASOR, which helped ease my overall nerves. I have a new respect for Classics following CAMWS. I have very much treated it as my fallback option since everyone in Near Eastern Archaeology is told to have somewhere else they can dig and research when it is too dangerous to go to the East, but I got to meet so many people who are so very passionate about what they study regarding Classics. While I have no desire to change my trajectory or anything, I am so grateful for this experience and would like to use what I have learned to inform my future work and allow for even more interdisciplinary work and research in the future, further bringing my interests in Near Eastern Archaeology and the literature of the Classics together.