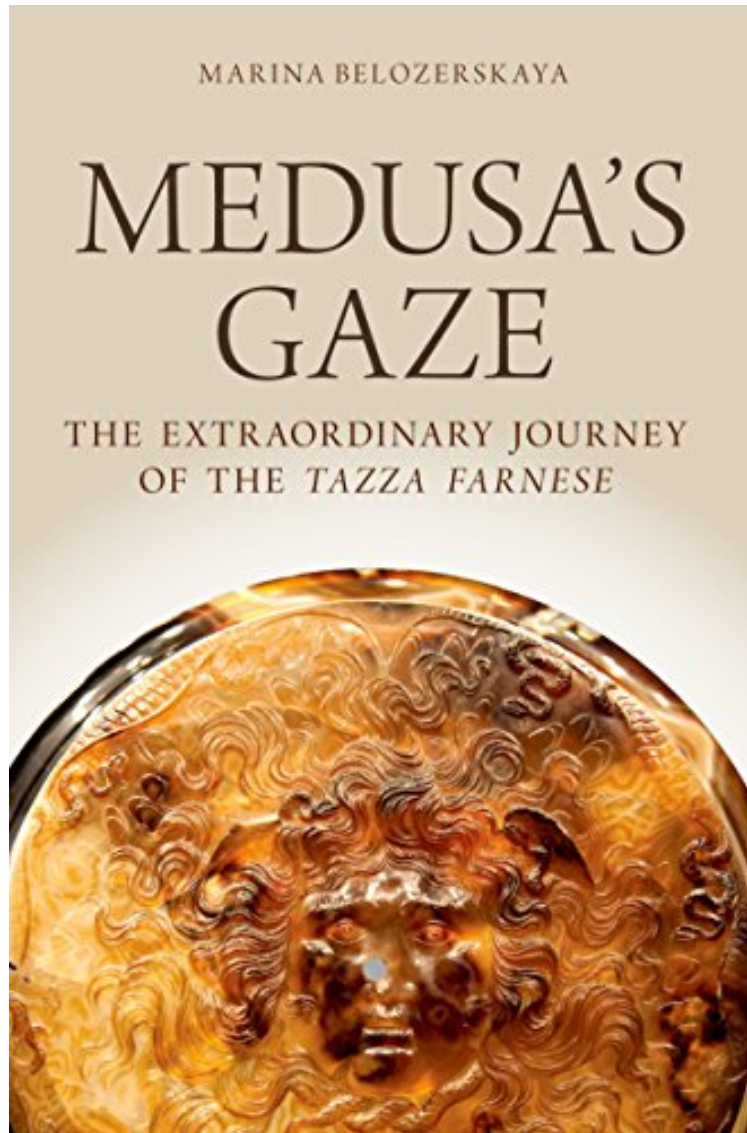


[Free pdf] Medusa's Gaze: The Extraordinary Journey of the Tazza Farnese (Emblems of Antiquity)

Medusa's Gaze: The Extraordinary Journey of the Tazza Farnese (Emblems of Antiquity)

Marina Belozerskaya

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Marina Belozerskaya : Medusa's Gaze: The Extraordinary Journey of the Tazza Farnese (Emblems of Antiquity) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Medusa's Gaze: The Extraordinary Journey of the Tazza Farnese (Emblems of Antiquity):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Engaging journey through timeBy zeisseyContinuing a successful run, M. Belozerskaya's most recent book doesn't disappoint. In her trademark witty, flowing, and engaging prose, she uses the recorded and the probable journeys of this extraordinary object from antiquity until today to reflect on the

development of art, archaeology, warfare, politics - of entire societies. Historical characters come alive, and their deeds and escapades prove again and again that as kingdoms, customs, and religions rise and fall, human nature itself changes very slowly, if at all. The Kindle version has a few formatting issues, but nothing too major to detract from reading. If you have any interest in the history of civilization and art, you should read this book.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Belozerskaya revels in exoticism

By Martina A. Nicolls

The Medusa in Medusa's Gaze: The Extraordinary Journey of the Tazza Farnese (2012) is that of Greek myth, once a beautiful woman punished by Athena who braided snakes into Medusa's hair rendering her hideous. But the image of Medusa is on one of the most beautiful pieces of art in history. Given the book by Belozerskaya herself, having read one of her previous books, *Medici Giraffe* (2006), I found this one more fascinating, focusing solely, intently, and deeply on one piece rather than a collection. Russian-born Belozerskaya is an art historian with a number of books to her credit. This book is richly endowed with black and white photographs, but the ones of most intrigue grace the front and back covers - for their detail, colour, exoticism, and ornamentation. These are the colour photographs of the Tazza Farnese - a libation bowl of banded agate, circa first century BC. Libation is the act of pouring liquid as an offering, as in a religious ritual. The 22cm (8.5 inch) libation bowl is carved on both sides - on the outside is the traditional image of Medusa with her wild hair and snakes, and on the inside is "a radiant vision of luminescent [Egyptian] gods posed against the amber, orange, and brown layers of sardonyx." Belozerskaya not only describes the carvings in detail, but she also suggests several interpretations and connotations of each element and figure in the images. So too does she describe the stone's virtues - to satiate thirst, to foster sight, and to ward off evil. Belozerskaya tracks its origins from Alexandria in Egypt and its actual or possible 2,000 year journey to Rome in Italy, Constantinople (Istanbul) in Turkey, Herat in Afghanistan, Samarqand in Uzbekistan, and back to Rome and Naples (often presenting different scenarios). She writes of places and people - those who admired the bowl and those who may have owned it throughout history, from emperors, cardinals, popes, kings, queens, and a Mongol conqueror, for "it is the Tazza's owners who give it its shifting meanings." It received its modern name, the Tazza Farnese, in 1537 when it came into the hands of Pope Paul the Third, Alessandro Farnese, through the marriage of his grandson, Ottavio Farnese, to Margaret of Parma (also known as Margaret of Austria). When it came into the possession of Elizabetha Farnese, the second wife of King Philip V of Spain, it was publicly displayed for the first time. In the 19th century it was placed in the Museum of Naples. But after surviving 2,000 years almost intact, it is in the safety of the museum that it is broken and shattered into two large and 10 small pieces in 1925. Repaired, it stands in the museum to this day. The bowl's history is beautifully written, easy to read and to imagine its life cycle. Belozerskaya outlines the artwork's amazing journey: who loved it, why it was loved, who fought for it, and how it was hidden from the eyes and hands of others. She brings the exquisite precious bowl to life through her description of every feature, every facet, and every delicate line, groove, rise, shape, and shadow.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Much Speculation on a Fascinating Object

By Brett H

The Tazza Farnese is one of the most incredible items which have survived over the last two thousand years, largely undamaged except for a hole drilled by a previous owner - that is, however, until a deranged guard smashed it at the Naples Museum in 1925. Thankfully it was skilfully restored to its former glory. The Tazza is a bowl, carved from banded agate and decorated with the head of Medusa on one side and a group of Egyptian Gods on the reverse. It is thought to have been manufactured in Egypt, possibly Alexandria, at around 50BC. The problem for the author of this book is that, whilst we know fairly definitively what happened to the tazza from about 1450 onwards, its whereabouts previously is the subject of pure speculation. Hence, we start off in the court of Cleopatra where it is thought that the bowl might have been due to its high quality. There is then speculation that it may have moved to Rome as the possession of emperors and then things are rather hazy, although there is reference to 'a large dish of onyx' which may or may not have been the tazza in the 1200s. The first definitive evidence of the bowl is when it turns up in Uzbekistan at the court of Timor the Lame in the 1400s, since a drawing was made of it. From then onwards, the history of the bowl is clearly documented and we follow it through various collections and ultimately into the hands of the Italian State and Naples Museum. This is by far the most interesting part of the book as we learn about the owners of the bowl and their lives and aspirations. However, this would not have been sufficient content for a full sized book and really the first half is a potted history, starting in Egypt and then Rome, until we get to the court of Frederick in 1239 where the bowl may 'perhaps' have been. This account is interesting in parts, but frankly, a short chapter on where one may have surmised the bowl could have been for its first 1500 years followed by what is definitely known thereafter would have been sufficient, and would have reduced the content by about a half. However, I will certainly be dropping by the Naples Museum to see this fascinating object when I am next in that part of the world.

The Tazza Farnese is one of the most admired objects from classical antiquity. A libation bowl carved from banded agate, it features Medusa's head on its outside and, inside, an assembly of Egyptian gods. For more than two millennia, these radiant figures have mesmerized emperors and artists, popes and thieves, merchants and museum goers. In this, the first book-length account of this renowned masterpiece, Marina Belozerskaya traces its fascinating journey through history. That it has survived at all is a miracle. The Tazza's origins date back to Ptolemaic Egypt where it likely enhanced the power and prestige of Cleopatra. After her defeat by Emperor Augustus, the bowl began an amazing

itinerary along many flashpoints in world history. It likely traveled from Rome to Constantinople. After that city's sack by crusaders in 1204, it returned west to inspire the classical revival at the court of Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II at Palermo. The Tazza next graced Tamerlane's court at Samarqand, before becoming an obsession of Renaissance popes and princes. It witnessed the rediscovery of Pompeii and Herculaneum, the turbulent aftermath of the French Revolution, and the birth of the modern Italian state. Throughout its journey, the Tazza aroused the lust of Greek, Roman, Byzantine, and Mongol rulers, consoled a heart-broken duchess, inspired artists including Botticelli and Raphael, tempted spies and thieves, and drew the ire of a deranged museum guard who nearly destroyed it. More than a biography of the world's most cherished bowl, *Medusa's Gaze* is a vivid and delightful voyage through history.

"This is an exciting book. It is well written, literally hard to put down, with good illustrations and solid notes and bibliography. In many places it is a work of speculation rather than fact, but such is the nature of the Tazza itself, and anyone who reads the book and then sees the object, or has seen it, will never look at it in the same way again."-- Duane W. Roller, *Classical Journal*"Marina Belozerskaya has made a well-researched and welcome contribution to Tazza scholarship. With much direct evidence missing, she has still connected the dots of this artifact's remarkable journey." --Amy Henderson, *The Weekly Standard*"This imaginative narrative is an epic romp through history using the Tazza as connective tissue between empires and collectors over a 2,000-year span...More of a cultural history than an art historical analysis (and more fun to read), the book demonstrates the Christianization of Europe and the West through the reinterpretation of the Tazza's iconography." --Publishers Weekly"Of all the pitfalls to collecting, however, surely none is more treacherous than the sheer changeability of taste, since what is adored by one generation may well be discounted by the next. That is a point that Marina Belozerskaya decisively proves in *Medusa's Gaze: The Extraordinary Journey of the Tazza Farnese*, which purports to be about an 8-inch-wide agate bowl carved with mysterious figures..." --Dan Hofstadter, *The Wall Street Journal* "Thoroughly researched and well documented, written, and illustrated, this book is an engaging read."--Library Journal"The Tazza Farnese is one of the most extraordinary--and beautiful--art objects to have survived from the classical world. *Medusa's Gaze* tells its intriguing and dramatic story from the first century BC to the twentieth AD. A gripping and very surprising book."--Mary Beard, Cambridge University "With a good sense for both the scholarly and the sensational the author takes us through the history of the West's obsession with precious stones and gems, using as a key the probable history of one of the finest examples, from the days of Cleopatra to destruction at the hands of a museum attendant in 1925."--Sir John Boardman, Oxford University "[A]n excellent choice for inspiring nonprofessionals to become excited by the cultural history of ancient objects." --American Journal of Archaeology

About the Author Marina Belozerskaya is a cultural historian whose previous books include *To Wake the Dead*, *The Medici Giraffe*, *The Arts of Tuscany*, *Luxury Arts of the Renaissance*, and *Rethinking the Renaissance: Burgundian Arts Across Europe*.