

WESTERN CLASSICS

Newsletter from staff and students in Classics at the
National University of Ireland, Galway



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Cover image: Detail from the 'Pylos Combat Agate', a remarkable carving on a tiny piece of quartz (3.4 cm), revealed only in 2017. It has been dated to c. 1450 BCE. (Courtesy of the Department of Classics, University of Cincinnati.)

University teaching—the skills agenda

Personal comment by Michael Clarke

HIGHER EDUCATION IN ARTS AND HUMANITIES is always in danger of entering crisis mode: the sense of slippage and under-confidence remains the same. This can be a healthy thing, if only because it keeps us supple. In the past few years we have heard a great deal about *skills*, about the call for a shift away from delivering and assimilating academic content, towards learning and inculcating techniques and methods that can be applied to any area of life beyond the academy. Learning these transferable skills must be a good thing, but many of our peers still find the new focus worrying. Partly, of course, this is because it turns the spotlight on one of the weaknesses of the academic profession—academics, by and large, have *never* transferred whatever skills they learned as students, simply because most of us moved seamlessly from study to research to running the show from an office upstairs. But there is a darker difficulty as well. When there is fire and energy in the work of a university, it is *not* because people are learning skills: it is because we are achieving a new understanding of humanity and the world, whether as students or as researchers, or because we are changing and [cont. overleaf]

growing within ourselves: a dynamic that participates in some tiny way in what Freire called ‘the vocation to become more fully human’.

Very few professions can claim to come close to that ideal, and it is worth preserving at almost any cost. If skills are gained in this process, they come by a sidelong path, as by-products of an engagement with learning and discovering as intrinsic goods, ideals worth pursuing for their own sake. Skills, in a way, are like happiness. Pursue them as goals in themselves, and they melt away; embrace the task in hand, and they follow unlooked-for, maybe recognised for what they are only years afterwards.

Still, there is a truth in the skills agenda, the truth that mastering content is less important than learning a new way to think and learn—in Gilbert Ryle’s words, *learning how* trumps *learning that*. So in this discipline of ours, we weaken our work if we define it by the chunk of space and time, or a particular pile of texts: we strengthen it if we focus on the activity, the science, and apply it to new



case studies again and again. For me, this means that I can and should recalibrate my work in the name of its key

science, the science of *philology*. I mean that word in the sense in which it is used in Continental languages: the science of slow reading, of penetrating texts and languages to understand the thought of our forebears, of drawing on texts and manuscripts to reconstruct the realities of thinkers and makers over the past five millennia of human history. If ancient Greek and Latin are the centre of that science, they are so as foundational reference points, not as dominators; and even the inclusion of the medieval European vernaculars in the ambit of our discipline is only the beginning of a more fundamental change, the change that should make us realise that philology, if pursued with rigour and suppleness, can and should be an eminently transferable skill—precisely because its rigour and its mode of questioning is no longer to be limited to any one of the particular objects of study that we happen to have chosen.

Res gestae

Reports from staff on recent work

JACOPO BISAGNI has been working on connections between Ireland and Francia in the Carolingian period, traced through the evidence of theological and cosmological manuscripts. Case studies and discoveries have led to a special focus on the role of monasteries in Brittany as a pivotal point for the transfer of knowledge and physical books between the Insular world and Continental centres.

MICHAEL CLARKE This past year I turned away temporarily from my usual work on medieval Irish reception of the Classical inheritance, and tried to express myself in a book about the origins of Homeric epic in the Near Eastern literature of the second millennium BCE. I have been working away at this theme with our second-year BA groups for the past ten years: I was in danger of losing touch with the research, and I felt I had to express myself on it in print before moving on. The result is a book called *Achilles Beside Gilgamesh*. I have no way of knowing whether it is worth publishing, so I am waiting in the twilight while a publisher passes judgement on the typescript. This makes for a terrifying time, but the terror is bound up with the fact that for the first time in years this felt like genuinely creative work.

EDWARD HERRING For the past year or so, I have been fortunate to enjoy the privilege of sabbatical leave and to be able to devote my full energies to research. It has been an extremely welcome reminder of why I came into the profession in the first place. I have had two main projects on the go, although there will be a number of other published outputs emerging from the leave period. The first has involved working with our former colleague, Dr Eóin O’Donoghue, to edit the proceedings of the Seventh Conference of Italian Archaeology, which was held at NUI Galway in April 2016. This work is now complete and we are awaiting proofs from the publisher. The second is a book on Apulian red-figure pottery, a topic that I have been working on intermittently for more than fifteen years. At the moment I am still working on the typescript but hope to have it ready for submission by the time I return to teaching in September.

PÁDRAIC MORAN This year I am back to teaching again after a sabbatical in 2016–17. I had been working on an edition of a text entitled *De origine Scoticae linguae* ‘On the origin of the Irish language’, an encyclopaedic dictionary of around 880 entries compiled in Ireland around the beginning of the eighth century. The text (also known, inaccurately, as ‘O’Mulconry’s Glossary’) represents an attempt to transfer the linguistic knowledge of the Classical tradition to the Irish language for the first time, and reveals a lot about the study not only of Latin, but also of Greek and Hebrew (such as it was), in Ireland during the proverbial ‘saints and scholars’ period. This is a knotty text, to say the least. I hope that my new edition, including a first-ever translation and a long commentary, will make this witness to early Irish involvement with the Classical tradition accessible to a broader readership.

By way of light relief from mountains of dictionaries and historical grammars, I also did some research on the history of Classics at UCG/NUIG, and on the career of Margaret Heavey in particular. (See p. 7.)

Although I could never have finished the edition without the long, unbroken focus that the sabbatical gave me, I was glad by the end to return to the hustle and bustle of teaching. This semester I’ve enjoyed developing a new course on Ancient Rhetoric (both theory and practice). The current political scene gives us a lot of material to work with.

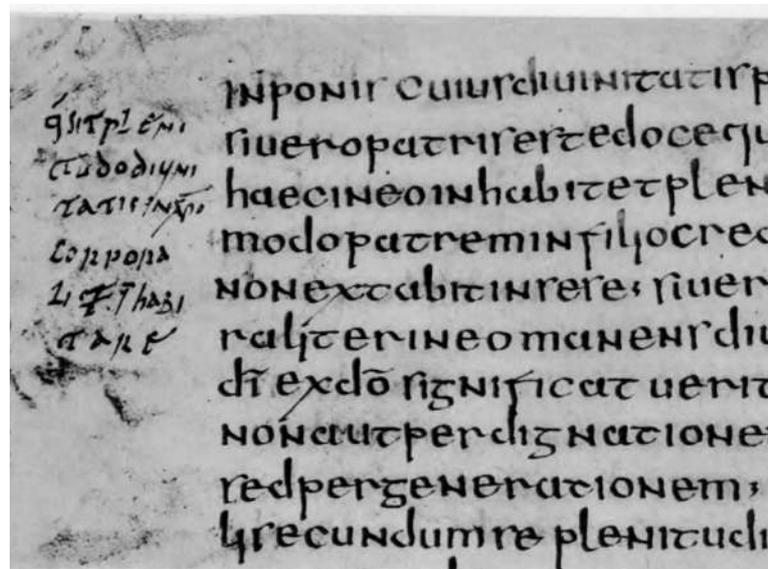
MARK STANSBURY The Earlier Latin Manuscripts website (<https://elmss.nuigalway.ie>) has been online since November 2016 and will be getting an updated Scripts page soon. In the meantime, we can see how people have been using the site. Most users come from the United States (21%), the United Kingdom (12%), and Italy (11%), and are using Chrome (42%), Firefox (20%), or Safari (19%) browsers. The list of most-viewed pages is not too surprising:

- 1.1a, the Half-Uncial part of the Basilican Hilary
- 2.274, the Book of Kells
- 3.299, the Codex Amiatinus
- 1.150, the Gelasian Sacramentary
- 1.11, the Vatican Virgil
- 1.19, the Vergilius Romanus
- 1.13, the Vergilius Augusteus

- 1.1b, the Uncial part of the Basilican Hilary
- 2.273, the Book of Durrow
- 2.266, the Cathach of St Columba

The Basilican Hilary is the first manuscript on the Catalogue page, which is one of the most-viewed, so this probably represents people clicking on an entry to see what the site offers. The remaining manuscripts are not only well-known, but their Wikipedia pages are also linked to the ELM site. On the other hand, we can also see manuscripts on which users are working more intensely. Users spent an average of more than 10 minutes on these pages:

- 9.1234, late-eighth century computistica from Fulda
- 5.553, the late-eighth century *Homiliarium Alani* from Italy
- 8.1173, an eighth-century Homiliary from Germany
- 10.1452, an eighth-century commentary on Donatus from England
- 8.1224, the manuscript of Iordannes’ *Getica* that burned in a fire at Theodor Mommsen’s house. Lowe reproduces a drawing of script.
- 8.1199, an eighth-century miscellany containing legal and computistical texts.



Above: Detail of the Basilican Hilary (Vatican City, Biblioteca del Vaticano, Basilicanus D. 182), a manuscript in half-uncial script written around the beginning of the sixth century. More information on the Earlier Latin Manuscripts website: <https://elmss.nuigalway.ie/catalogue/1>

Current PhD research

Current PhD topics, with some reports on work in progress

GRACE ATWOOD ‘Obscurity has another tale to tell: The reception and modification of Latin literary models in Ireland during the early Middle Ages.’ I am currently engaged in the collection and analysis of relevant primary sources, particularly establishing the corpus of Old Irish texts with stylistic features that allow them to serve as a comparanda to the relevant Hiberno-Latin materials.

MICHAEL DOHERTY ‘The use and representation of Classics themes and imagery in Victorian art as part of a colonial discourse on Empire.’

IOANNIS DOUKAS ‘A Trojan Cycle for Late Antiquity: Towards a digital intertextual commentary.’ At the moment, I am working to combine the philological and digital strands of my research by examining the passages detailing the catalogue of heroes volunteering to enter the Wooden Horse at Troy (Triphiodorus 152–184 and Quintus of Smyrna 12.306–335) and representing them with the use of prosopographical networks.

CHARLES DOYLE ‘The transmission and reception of Pre-Socratic thought in medieval Irish scholarship.’ I’m researching the relationship between the Greek doxographical tradition and second-century Christian heresy catalogues through connections drawn between philosophy and Gnosticism. I will be presenting my findings at the upcoming conference of the International Association of Presocratic Studies in Delphi this June.

NOÉMI FARKAS ‘Intertextuality and ideology in Sedulius Scottus, *De rectoribus Christianis*.’

MICHEÁL GEOGHEGAN ‘Generational tensions in Classical Athens: a problem for the citizen self-image, and an aspect of female suppression within the patriarchy.’ I am studying how the problematic masculine excesses associated with young citizen men helped to shape internal political discourse and class struggle in democratic Athens from Ephialtes’ radical reforms of 461 BCE to the Macedonian conquest by Philip II in 338 BCE.

ANN HURLEY ‘The Anonymous *Excidium Troiae*: Its importance as a didactic question-and-answer text and its reception and intertextuality in later vernacular literature.’ I am currently trying to get to grips with medieval allegory in relation to pagan literature.

ÉRIN MCKINNEY ‘Linguistic code-switching in *Bethu Brigitte*, the Old Irish Life of St Brigit.’



NUIG Classics students on a field trip to the UCD Classical Museum on 7 February 2018. Many thanks to Kaylin Bednarz and Stephen O'Brien for facilitating a very stimulating and enjoyable experience!

Events

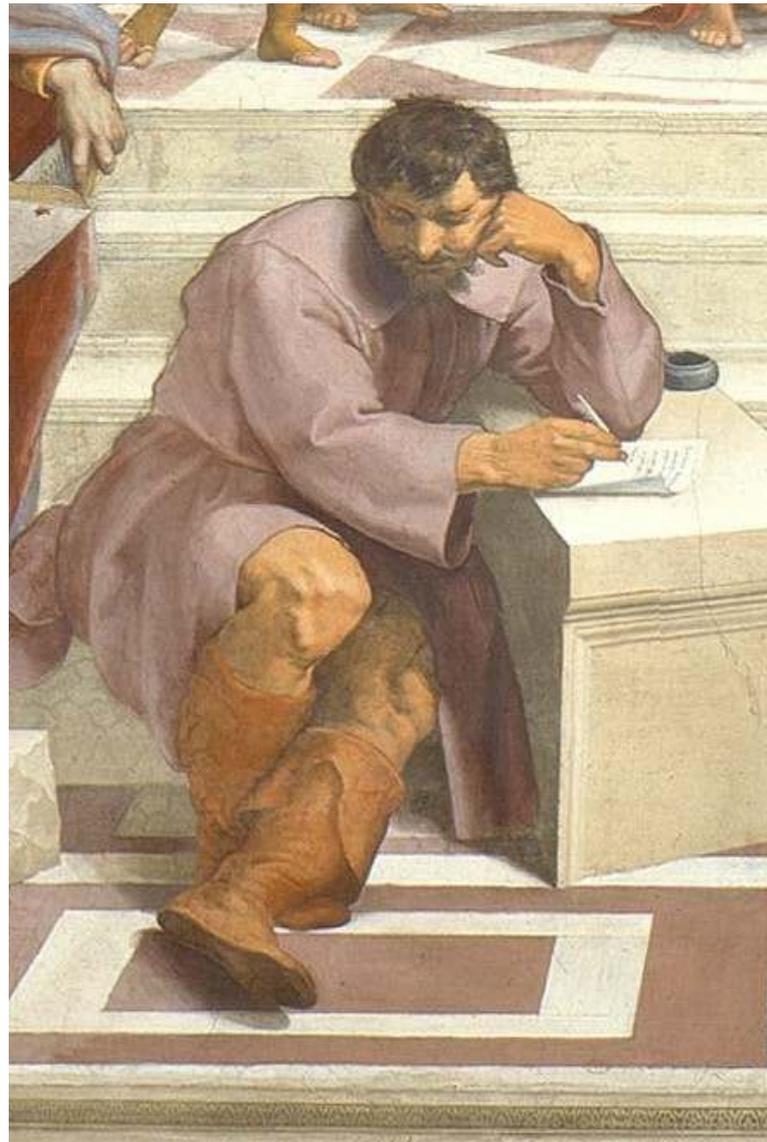
Margaret Heavey Memorial Lecture 2018: Prof. Eleanor Dickey

One of the intellectual adventures of the ancient world was the need for native speakers of languages such as Gaulish or Greek, and later Anglo-Saxon or early Irish, to learn Latin as a foreign language. The surviving documents of this activity are a rich resource for understanding the history of linguistic education and for renewing our understanding of language contact in Antiquity. This year's Margaret Heavey Memorial Lecture (6 March 2018) explores this theme: 'Ancient Latin Textbooks Rediscovered' by Prof. Eleanor Dickey of the University of Reading.

Napping in time

A thought from Peter Kelly (PhD 2017) in the state of Oregon

As I write this morning I sit in the hallway of my apartment with my eight-month-old daughter asleep next to me in her buggy. She is close enough that I can soothe her back to sleep when she momentarily wakes from her morning nap. I have to type quietly and if lucky I might have an hour to work. I have recently finished writing an article on a metaphor from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* comparing the experience of life and the passage of time to the flow of a river. The metaphor recalls the doctrine of flux of the Presocratic philosopher Heraclitus and his saying that you cannot step twice into the same river. Heraclitus' saying has been interpreted and reinterpreted many times over from Plato to Heidegger. These have been largely focused on the nature of being in time and how we experience the world around us, if what we perceive is constantly changing and slipping away. The fragment which we have from Heraclitus contains the following line: ποταμοῖσι τοῖσιν αὐτοῖσιν ἐμβαίνουσιν ἕτερα καὶ ἕτερα ὕδατα ἐπιρρεῖ 'upon those who step into the same rivers different and again different waters flow'. The repetition and echoing in the line beautifully catches the ebbing and flowing of the water, the tonal rising and falling of each word rolling with each passing wave. My daughter's eyes open and I rock the buggy back and forth, back and forth, the line resounding yet all the while fading away.



Raphael's depiction of Heraclitus in 'The School of Athens' (Vatican, Apostolic Palace).

In Pentateuchum commentarii

Research report from Sarah Corrigan (PhD 2017)

Expanding on a case study developed as part of her PhD research, Sarah Corrigan is currently researching an early medieval Latin biblical commentary that deals with the first five books of the Bible (or Pentateuch). This text –referred to as *In Pentateuchum commentarii*, ‘Commentaries on the Pentateuch’ – and other early medieval commentaries of this type draw heavily on existing, primarily patristic, authorities; however, they are highly inventive in the way they adapt, transform and recontextualise the material they borrow. As such, they reflect the interests of new generations of Christian scholars in new cultural contexts. In addition, these commentaries are in turn interpreted and integrated into broader literary traditions, including, for example, narratives recounting the lives of saints and treatises on natural history and cosmology. Using the resources of the Royal Irish Academy’s DMLCS project, Sarah’s aim is to investigate the sources, structure, and function of this

remarkable text, as well as its reception in both exegetical works and other genres of writing. This commentary also sits at the hub of the ongoing debate regarding the complex issue of the nature and identification of early medieval Latin texts produced in Ireland or in Irish-influenced centres on the Continent, and this research will engage with this issue in attempting to locate this ambiguous text more clearly in its literary context. The current phase of the research involves consulting the three relevant manuscripts still in existence. The first (Boulogne-sur-Mer, Bibliothèque municipale 16 bis) has fortunately been digitised by IHRT-CNRS and is available online at Bibliothèque virtuelle des manuscrits médiévaux (<http://bvmm.irht.cnrs.fr/>). The other two are located in Brussels (Bibliothèque Royale, 9327–28) and Oxford (Bodleian Library, e Mus. 36) respectively. Consultation of the Brussels manuscript has already revealed a lively interaction with the manuscript by additional hands, showing continued use of and interest in the commentary. What the Oxford manuscript has to share will soon be seen.

Events

Book launch for Brian Arkins

Brian Arkins had a launch for his new book *Death and Marriage: Greek and Roman Drama* on 12 January 2018 in the O’Donoghue Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance. In attendance were their excellencies Katia Georgiou, Ambassador of Greece (who gave a response to the book), and Costas A. Papademos, Ambassador of Cyprus. NUIG drama students enacted a passage from Euripides’ *Medea*.



Cnámha Naso

Margaret Heavey's teaching notes rediscovered

Margaret Heavey, known affectionately as 'Ma Heavey' to generations of UCG students, was appointed to a lectureship in Latin through Irish in 1931, at the same time as George Thomson (Seoirse Mac Tomás) obtained the corresponding post for Greek. After Thomson left in 1934, Heavey took over the teaching of both Classical languages through Irish, which she continued over her long career spanning almost 50 years. In 1958 she was appointed Professor of Ancient Classics. She served as Dean of Arts from 1970 to 1976, retiring the following year, though continuing to teach right up to her sudden death in 1980.

Heavey is remembered as a kind and gifted teacher. She not only provided students with the intellectual challenge of studying advanced Latin and Greek, but also taught them how to use Irish as a language of precise intellectual discourse. In the words of Proinnsias mac Giollarnáth (professor of Romance languages at UCG, 1959–1987): 'For the first time we found the challenge of expressing abstract concepts with elegance and conciseness in Irish, and of being constantly tested against the touchstone of the original text. It was a humbling but very stimulating experience' (*Irish Times*, 11 April 1968)

Last year we discovered a collection of old photocopies, dating back at least to the 1970s, that contain translations of Classical texts into Irish prepared by Heavey for classroom use. These include Tacitus' *Agricola*, extracts from Virgil's *Georgics* and *Aeneid*, part of Ovid's *Tristia*, and Pindar's *Nemean Odes*. The fragment from *Tristia* includes Ovid's famous self-penned epitaph (book III, poem 3):

'Mise atá i mo luí anseo, file sultmhar an ghrá mhaoith,
Naso file, cailleadh mé de dheasca mo fhéithe féin. Tusa
atá ag gabháil thar bráid agus gur thug tú grá, ná bíodh
doicheall ort paidir a rá: "Go raibh codhladh sámh ag
cnámha Naso."'

hic ego qui iaceo tenerorum lusor amorum

ingenio perii Naso poeta meo;

at tibi qui transis ne sit graue quisquis amasti

dicere 'Nasonis molliter ossa cubent'

Events

Remembering Margaret Heavey

On 28 June 2017 a special 'Remembering Margaret Heavey' event took place, part of the 'Path Breaking Women of NUI Galway: 1912–1922 and Beyond' exhibition organised by Prof. Niamh Reilly (Political Science and Sociology). Pádraic Moran gave a keynote presentation on the life and career of Prof. Heavey, and afterwards a roundtable discussion included her former students and colleagues Brian Arkins (Classics), Nicholas Canny (History), Gearóid Mac Eoin (Old & Middle Irish and Celtic Studies), John Madden (Classics), Séamus Mac Mathúna (formerly Rúnaí um Ghnóthaí Acadúla), Riana O'Dwyer (English) and Tom O'Malley (Law). We were honoured also to have the presence of Vincent Devalley, a family member who lived with Prof. Heavey in the 1970s.



Some of the participants at 'Remembering Margaret Heavey'.
Left to right: Vincent Devalley, Pádraic Moran, Riana O'Dwyer,
John Madden, Niamh Reilly, Séamus Mac Mathúna, Nicholas
Canny.

We would be very interested to hear from anyone with reminiscences of being taught by Prof. Heavey. You can e-mail padraic.moran@nuigalway.ie or call 091 492587.

Databases

New digital resources

The major database Earlier Latin Manuscripts (<https://elmss.nuigalway.ie>) has been live for over a year now. This was developed by Mark Stansbury with the help of student interns and the Moore Institute staff, and is an interactive version of Lowe's *Codices Latini Antiquiores*. (See Mark's report on p. 3 above.)

Pádraic Moran's work on manuscript glosses and glossaries can be seen in three databases:

- (1) The Early Irish Glossaries Database was produced as part of a collaboration at the University of Cambridge: <http://www.asnc.cam.ac.uk/irishglossaries>
- (2) The St Gall Priscian Glosses website contains more than 9,400 manuscript glosses on the sixth-century Latin grammarian Priscian: <http://www.stgallpriscian.ie>
- (3) The Network for the Study of Glossing website represents a research community now extending to 82 members from 20 countries: <http://www.glossing.org>

Nothing in the online world stays still. Each of these databases is ripe for renewal and redevelopment: each of them could become the victim of stagnation, outdated and simple 'link rot' if not maintained. How can we do that? This, the challenge of continuity, is the key question for the future.

In Memoriam Colm Luibhéid

1936–2017

October 2017 saw the passing of our retired colleague, Colm Luibhéid. Colm led Galway Classics through difficult years in the 1990s and early 2000s, when the discipline everywhere was in danger of being left behind by the reorientation of university life towards what was then called the 'business agenda'. Colm was above all a Neoplatonist, and when we look back on his published work we see that focus on the Platonic ideal redirected to the contemplation of the Christian God. Colm's writings on the early Church Fathers, above all Eusebius of Caesarea and the *Celestial Hierarchy* of Dionysius, remain with us now that he has gone to his reward.



The celestial hierarchy

Keep in touch

You can keep in touch in several ways:

- (1) To keep an eye on recent activities, see our website: <http://www.nuigalway.ie/classics>
- (2) If you would like to receive occasional e-mails about news and upcoming events, send a blank e-mail to: nuig-classics+subscribe@groups.google.com
- (3) Social media junkies can also follow us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ClassicsNUIGalway>