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MÉΛΙ NUCESQUE

A Newsletter for Classics at the University of Dallas

Classics Club More Active Than Ever

By Vice President Martin Ellison, in assoc. w/ President Kathleen Flynn

This semester the Classics Club, under the new leadership of Senior Classics and English Major Kathleen Flynn, was more active than ever before. The streak of events began strongly with the annual Ice Cream Social, where students and teachers of all levels and departments gathered to enjoy some sweet, cold, refreshing ice cream on a warm summer day in early September. This year the president introduced the new practice of beginning club socials and parties with the Our Father in Koine Greek.

Not too long after this event, under the organization of Events Manager John Dougherty, the Club sponsored a panel on the historic understanding of Manliness from both a Classical and Catholic perspective, starring Drs. Sweet, Burns, and Fr. Bayer. The event was catered and widely attended, with help from CAB. Then, in honor of our favorite Latin poet, the Club hosted our annual Virgil's Birthday Party, with light refreshments and faculty lectures on his work. This year we were graced by Drs. Cowan, Kenny, and Nussmeier who spoke on Virgil's role in Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

This was not to be the end of events during the Fall. A reception was held for our visiting Art Professor from the Rome Campus, Dr. Elizabeth Robinson, who had come to give a talk on her archaeological contributions at Gabii, an ancient rival city right outside of Rome. Somehow, these copious gatherings were not yet enough to satisfy the Classics Club's Tantalusian hunger for enriching activities: in kahoots with CAB once more, they hosted a student performance of Orestes' trial scene from Aeschylus' *Eumenides* (or was it Euripides' *Eumenides*? Reminds me of a bad joke I once heard…), followed by Dr. Danze lecturing on the nature of justice and its execution in the work. This still may not be the end of things, for I hear there may yet be a Christmas Conventiculum in the works…stay tuned, folks!

As for things to come, next semester there will be no shortage of events planned. While many dates are not yet set, look forward to a seminar on Science Fiction intimations in ancient literature: Plato's Timaeus, Lucan's True Story, book 4 of the Argonautica, and Aeneid Time Travel Theory. After a rousing first success at the Eumenides event, the Tragedy/Comedy series will continue with the court scene from Aristophanes the Frogs with accompanying lectures, put on by Ryan Connor and Liz Kelly, co-chairs of the new Classics Club Drama Committee. The third annual Spring Xenophanes Dinner will be held after Senior Classics thesis presentations are finished. There will be charcuterie and seasonal bevvies for all, and indeed all are invited! Of course these events need planning; with our Events Oficer taking off to Rome in the Spring, the Classics Club is in need of a replacement. If any of you readers enjoy planning and want to help out, please email President Kathleen at kmflynn@udallas.edu. That's all from us, Merry Christmas!

Gabii Project Testimonials

By UD Students Maria Miller and Owen Embree, Guest Contributors

The Gabii Project Roma summer archaeology program was a wonderful way to deepen my knowledge of Classics and also to apply it to something completely different from what I've ever experienced. To romanticize it, we were treasure-finders uncovering coins, bones, statues, ceramics, frescos, metal, ruins, and roads. More realistically, our days consisted of a strict yet fulfilling routine, hikes to and from site through fields of wildflowers, intense digging under the hot sun, many naps, and joy and laughter at the most unexpected times. For the first time in my life, I was surrounded by people who all had a passion for Classics, and for the first time in my life I was able to use my knowledge of Classics for something tangible and observable, something beyond translation and memorization. We were digging up things that had not been seen or touched for nigh on two thousand years, and over the five weeks at Gabii we were able to see an urban complex slowly being uncovered before us. Moving pile after pile of dirt, we trod along the same sidewalks the ancient Gabines once did, uncovered pools and baths that Hadrian himself had used on the way to his villa, and determined the layers of centuries of abandonment and repopulation. In the end, the Gabii Project most definitely tested my physical stamina and dedication, but it also opened me up to the possibilities of exciting careers in the Classics world. It is in fact possible to have an Indiana-Jones-esque life even when studying "pointless dead languages."

- Maria Miller, Senior Classics and English Major

Students meticulously removing dirt and debris to discover hidden treasures.

A short distance to the east of Rome lies Gabii, a town that flourished early in Roman history but was abandoned and became buried, the area turned into

farmland. As a result, there are almost no later structures built over the ancient city, facilitating the work of archaeologists in the area.

This summer I attended the University of Michigan's field school at Gabii. I found out about the project through Dr. Elizabeth Robinson, who has been involved since the early days of the project.

Most days I was out in the field excavating mostly post abandonment debris among older walls. The days were long, but rewarding. Usually about once or twice a week everyone had the opportunity to spend a day in one of the labs, specializing on finds, topography, or biological materials. It was especially exciting to clean off finds from my own area!

The program included weekly evening lectures. I really enjoyed seeing how much different, yet complementary, research is going on at one site, ranging from graffiti to organic material, and even to ancient burial practices. We also had a group tour of the Roman Forum with our instructors and the Etruscan Museum at the Villa Giulia. Over the course of the dig at Gabii, I learned quite a bit about field archaeology, and I believe I now have a much better understanding of the study of archaeology and its various but interconnected areas of research. I enjoyed thinking about persons such as Cicero or Hadrian, possibly passing along the very stretch of road I worked on.

I am so glad that I participated in such a transformative adventure, and I am extremely grateful to the Etruscan Foundation and the UD Classics Department for their generous support in making this possible. It was wonderful to interact with students and faculty from other universities who share my interests and to see how their studies compare with my own. I look forward to sharing my experiences at Gabii with other students and encouraging others interested in participating.

- Owen Embree, Junior Classics and Math Major

Departmental News

Next semester, on January 17th from 12 - 1pm, Dr. Peter Hatlie will be visting campus and giving a talk entitled: "Ancient Bovillae: The Lost Roman City Below Due Santi." Having just retired from his position as the Dean and Director of the Rome Program, which Dr. Rombs has filled this year, Dr. Hatlie is eager to see our campus once more during his Sabbatical, before he returns as a Professor of Classics at UD. Make sure to bring your friends; more to come on this in future!

Faculty Corner

Here members of the Rome Campus faculty tell us what they were up to this summer and what they plan on busying themselves with in the near future. Featuring professors Dr. Hatlie and Dr. Robinson.

Peter Hatlie will busy himself during his sabbatical year (2023-2024) with three research projects. In the first, he will complete (and hopefully see published) an ongoing edited volume called *Bovillae: History, Art, and Archaeology of a Lost City in the Hinterland of Rome* (University of Michigan Press, 2024). Hatlie has an article about cultural-heritage issues in a book that – thirteen chapters strong—is otherwise dedicated to better understanding the area around UD Rome's Due Santi Campus, which long ago lay at the heart of an important suburban city outside Rome. A second research project consists of initial research for a follow-up volume to my *Monks and Monasteries of Constantinople (350-850)* (Cambridge University Press); this book will bring that history up to the Fourth Crusade and year 1204. Third and finally, Hatlie will launch an Italy-centered, public-interest project about the figure of Belisarius (505-565 CE), an important if controversial Byzantine general who under the reigning eastern emperor Justinian nearly succeeded in winning back the West a half-century after the fall of the Roman Empire.

- Dr. Peter Hatlie

Elizabeth Robinson has been working this Fall on a number of projects. She finished revising La Trasformazione Urbana nel Molise Antico: L'integrazione di Larino nello Stato Romano, the Italian translation of her 2021 monograph which will be published in October by Cosmo Iannone Editore in Italy. She also submitted the abstract for her chapter, "Teaching Topography and Physical Landscapes in Antiquity for Classics University Students" that will be part of the volume Teaching and Learning Classics at University Level to be published with Vernon Press in 2024 or 2025. She is also writing a proposal for sabbatical leave in order to investigate 'reusable type' in the Roman Empire. Her sabbatical project will look at various examples of items used for production activities throughout the Empire that bear letters or longer inscriptions meant to be used repeatedly for markings associated with production and ownership. She has submitted an abstract to the Roman Archaeology Conference in London in 2024 to present this research. Most importantly, she is currently teaching "Art and Architecture in Rome" on the Rome Campus to 106 students. She has been enjoying adding new visits in Rome and writing new site lectures for the trip to Greece this Fall.

- Dr. Elizabeth Robinson

Student Scholar: Anand Mangal

Anand Mangal is a first-year Grad Student at UD in the Classics MA Program '25.

Moly Animusque

A non liquet paper by Anand Mangal, guest contributor

In Book X of *The Odyssey*, the Ithacan hero finds himself walking through the forest, alone; half of his men cower behind their anchored ship, while the other half – transformed into swine by the witch Circe – huddle together for comfort in their sty. Hermes alights on this scene of grim desperation, warning Odysseus that if he faces Circe unprepared, he will soon join the unfortunate herd of former sailors. But Hermes offers his help, saying, 'οὐδ᾽ ὣς θέλξαι σε δυνήσεται· οὐ γὰρ ἐάσει / φάρμακον ἐσθλόν, ὅ τοι δώσω.' (X.291-2; 'She will not be able to enchant you; for this noble herb, which I will give you, will not allow it.') Hermes pulls this noble herb from the ground and shows Odysseus its nature (φύσις): the black-rooted, white-flowered plant is difficult for mortals to dig up, and it is called *moly* by the all-powerful gods.

Odysseus takes the moly, eats Circe's poisoned food, and rushes upon her, having retained his human form. Surprisingly, the Homeric account seems to forget about the moly; instead, the witch, amazed at the unprecedented failure of her magic, exclaims, 'σοὶ δέ τις ἐν στήθεσσιν ἀκήλητος νόος ἐστίν.' (X.329; 'The mind in your breast is something unenchantable.') Circe credits Odysseus' mind, not moly, with protecting him from magic; but if this is true, one wonders why Hermes bothered with the moly in the first place. It seems unlikely that Homer has presented two contradictory accounts of this episode: readers must contend with Hermes' account of moly as a protective herb *and* with Circe's account of Odysseus' unenchantable mind. But poets and scholars, in taking up the moly tradition, have simply opted to dismiss Circe's account; this dismissal appears in three distinct forms.

The first dismissal of Circe to be found in the moly tradition simply refuses to acknowledge her account. Moly is held to be a potent source of magical protection and the witch's statements about Odysseus' mind are passed over. This view can be found in ancient sources, such as Ovid's retelling of the episode[1], where the failure of Circe's charms is ascribed to the noble herb. Pliny the Elder[2] asserts that 'contra haec omnia magicasque artes erit primum illud Homericum moly,' ('against all these [poisons] and magical arts, the best [remedy] will be that moly of Homer,') and the same counsel can be found in the work of Theophrastus[3]. Persistent throughout the literary tradition[4,5] is this motif of moly as a magical ward, despite the implicit dismissal of Circe's statement about Odysseus' spell-proof mind; while it is not incorrect to say that moly is reputed to protect one from magic, a fuller understanding of moly must acknowledge both sides of the Homeric account.

The second dismissal of Circe, popular in modern philology, attempts a full treatment. Heubeck & Hoekstra[6] suggest that moly 'appears to be effective simply by being carried about the hero's person,' and Clay[7] calls it 'a talisman which renders harmless Circe's magic.' Circe's words about Odysseus' mind are therefore dismissed as the result of ignorance, as Merry & Riddell[8] explain 'she does not know that he carries an amulet [of moly] to protect him.' This view acknowledges both Circe's and Hermes' accounts of moly; it also requires Circe to be so ignorant that she would fail to notice a man concealing a plant on his person while he eats, and later bathes, in her home. Homer does not characterize Circe as obtuse or gullible; rather, she is able to give detailed counsel and prophecy concerning the remainder of Odysseus's journey home. Though fuller in its treatment of the Homeric account than the previous view, this view's treatment of Circe's character, as well as her words, remains incomplete.

The final dismissal of Circe, despite its ubiquity, is perhaps the most egregious, both in its treatment of Circe and of Homer. This view embraces moly as a φάρμακον, which can be translated 'potion,' 'poison,' or 'herb.' Homer calls Circe πολυφάρμακος (X.276; 'many-herbed', or 'skilled in poisons'); she mixes φάρμακα into food to bewitch Odysseus' crewmen (X.235-6), then anoints them with another φάρμακον to undo the spell (X.392). While the effects of Circe's herbs may be remarkable, their use as consumables or ointments would be decidedly unremarkable to any self-respecting apothecary. Indeed, botanical guides throughout antiquity prescribe numerous methods in which to prepare moly as a treatment for various maladies, most notably in Dioscorides, Galen, Aetius, and Paul of Aegina[9]. Even Apollodorus[10] picks up on this thread, going so far as to alter the Homeric account so that, 'throwing the moly among [Circe's] enchantments, [Odysseus] drank and alone was not enchanted.' But such a narrative addition is necessary to maintain this view; for Homer himself gives his hero no leisure time, in which he might prepare a potion, between his encounters with Hermes and Circe.

The poor treatment extends past Homer to Circe herself: this view requires Circe, the πολυφάρμακος enchantress, to be completely unaware of a φάρμακον which has the power to counteract all enchantment. An herbalist of Circe's ability and position would almost certainly be familiar with the properties of such a potent plant, especially one which is native to her own island; and while moly may be unknown to mortals, Circe is a nymph, the daughter of Helios. In summary, while botanists may relish the opportunity to practice their discipline on mythology, this view invites the most challenges from the source text. Hermes' account holds sway, but Circe is

discredited, and Homer's account is found wanting.

A full understanding of moly must not avoid the text, like the first view; it must not remove from the text,like the second; it must not add to the text, like the third. Yet it remains the case that these views are ubiquitous; nearly all discussions of moly – across botanical, literary, and philological circles – implicitly support one of these three views. Hermes' position in the conflict has been accepted, perhaps uncritically, while Circe's position has been sidelined; but the opinion of a witch in matters of witchcraft ought not be brushed aside so easily.

The timeline of events in the Homeric account is worthy of a closer look. Hermes states that before their conversation, Odysseus would have been defeated by Circe's enchantments. Yet after the conversation, when Odysseus encounters Circe, his mind is said to be unenchantable. It follows that this change has taken place over the course of the conversation, in which Odysseus learns the nature of moly. Benardete[11] finds great significance in this usage of φύσις for 'nature', which is the only instance of the word in Homer. Outside of Benardete's scholarship, however, the interplay between moly and mind has been almost entirely ignored. A complete understanding of moly's effect on Odysseus' mind, building and expanding on Benardete's work, is the subject of a forthcoming article; but for now, the true nature of moly lies hidden beneath the ground, unknown to mortals.

Homer's Moly, according to *Gerard's Herbal Vol. 1*, by John Gerard and Thomas Johnson: "[It] hath very thick leaves, broad toward the bottom, sharp at the point, … Among those leaves riseth up a naked smooth thick stalk, of two cubits high, as strong as a small walking staff: at the top of the stalk standeth a bundle of fair whitish flowers, dashed over with a wash of purple colour, … The root is great and bulbous, covered with a blackish skin … of the bigness of a great Onion." (Ch. 100, Sec. 3)
https://exclassics.com/herbal/herbalintro.htm
- Editor Martin Ellison

Notes

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2. Pliny. Natural History, Volume VII: Books 24-27. Translated by W. H. S. Jones, A. C. Andrews. Loeb Classical Library 393. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956. Book XXV.127
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4. Demetriou, Tania. "'Essentially Circe': Spenser, Homer, and the Homeric Tradition." Translation and Literature 15, no. 2 (2006): 151–2 & 170–1. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40340035.
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7. Clay, Jenny. "The Planktai and Moly: Divine Naming and Knowing in Homer." Hermes 100, no. 2 (1972): 127–131. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4475729
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Alumna Spotlight: Claire Giuntini

I graduated from UD in May 2022 with a BA in Classical Philology Latin and a concentration in Greek. In August 2022, I moved to the isle of Manhattan and I am currently an assistant editor at First Things magazine. In my "free" time, I enjoy reading (especially Tolkien and Dorothy Sayers), crocheting, drawing, and attempting to play guitar. My current favorite Spotify playlists are "Medieval/Renaissance/Baroque" and "Folk, Irish, UD."

Reflections of a Classics BA Two Years Out

By Claire Giuntini, Guest Contributor

When studying Classics, one reads the works of individuals who have stood the test of time; their longevity has vouchsafed and testified to their importance. I, on the other hand, have not stood the test of much time at all. I graduated in May 2022, a distance better measured by months than years, just as a toddler might be described as eighteen months old rather than a year and a half. Even so, this intellectual youngster would like to offer a few thoughts on life as a recent UD Classics graduate.

My decision to major in Classics at UD was the fruit of a subconscious process of elimination. I was going back and forth between Classics and English, but the former often seemed more arbitrary. You can say what you want about Henry Crawford, but circumstantial participles will *never* be gerunds, no matter how you color them.

As the college years passed, I became more convinced that studying the liberal arts equips a student for *any* career by providing a well-rounded education. The liberal arts train one to see "science" as the pursuit of knowledge, and not just distinct bodies of empirically provable facts. This doesn't mean we should neglect study of the material world, but rather that it should be coupled with study of the immaterial world.

So, I was spoiled for four years with an excellent education. But every now and then, someone would come by and ask, "What are you going to do with Latin when you graduate? Teach?" No matter how innocent the interlocutor, this question always rankled under my skin like a splinter. Why did people unfailingly recommend teaching? Perhaps because it is the only ostensibly feasible career that could arise from studying dead languages. The only thing you can "do" with Classics is teach it. It doesn't treat patients, file cases, or invent new drugs.

Consequently, I shunned the idea of teaching like the plague. And yet, as that final year crept onward, I realized I liked school, learning, and people—and teaching includes heaps of all those things! It might be worth risking the scorn of the non–liberal arts majors. Anyhow, I would also apply to some editing jobs.

The fateful May date came and went, the surrounding calendar speckled with interviews and job applications. A few for teaching, a few for other things. A querulous email sent to *First Things* magazine before graduation was answered a few weeks later: It turned out that they had an opening for their junior fellowship—a two-year program designed for recent graduates! I got the job. Junior fellows at *First Things* usually live in housing provided by the Institute that publishes the magazine, a swell deal if you need housing. The rub was that I already had housing and ergo needed to pay rent—and let's just say the junior fellow salary was not designed to accommodate rent. Miraculously, Dr. Sweet sent around a job solicitation for a twice-a-week Latin teacher position at the Classical Learning Resource Center, an online homeschool program. Miraculously, I got the job.

In the end, I had a year of full-time editing and part-time teaching. Teaching Latin was quite the experience. My students were angels, and those who lacked in the correct answers department made up for it with eagerness. I had heard that grading was awful, but I had always thought the rumors were slightly exaggerated. They weren't. I learned that to teach requires an absurd amount of energy, and no small dose of humility. ("So, if this noun isn't nominative, dative, accusative, or ablative—what is it?") I came out of last year understanding Latin better than I ever had, for it's one thing to scrabble down the correct answer on a test and a very different thing to explain it successfully to a bouquet of confused Zoom faces.

For my second year out of college, I have continued working at *First Things*. Every now and then, upon the meadows of proofreading and fact-checking I come across a little Latin or Greek, and I pounce upon it eagerly. But this is a tiny part of my work, and it's not the only "use" (horrid word!) I've gotten out of Classics. On the one hand, I've found that I am very equipped for my job; there's nothing like Latin to deeply enmesh in a person a loathing of bad grammar. Years of hunting for Cicero's verbs or sorting out Virgil's participles teaches one to quickly get to the root of what's wrong with a sentence when it feels off. It gives you x-ray vision—to see through the web of words straight to the necessary structures.

But on the other hand, the study of Classics has helped me to look realistically at humanity. Everyone in my line of work, the intellectual magazine world, has his own grim opinions of reality and enjoys predicting when everything will eventually explode and society will crumble. I greatly admire how *First Things* hosts a wide range of opinions while continually reminding readers that the truth is objective. But I get tired of the occasional griping, because my Classics education has taught me it would be conceited and naive to say *our* age is the worst of all or to be shocked that humans do evil things. Anyone who has spent time learning about Ancient Greece and Rome knows it could be and has been a lot worse. We may have cancel culture, but it's nothing like proscription culture.

When reading the writings of the ancients, you learn you have a lot more in common with their authors than you thought, if both negative and positive. The knowledge that people are capable of doing awful things is not the axis on which a Classics' major's analyses turn. At least, not at UD's Classics department. You don't take a Xenophon class because you want to rail on Xenophon; you do it because you'd like to taste the honey of the Attic Bee.

I think that this measured approach to society, gratuitously earned by studying Classics, is vital for folks today. We ought to be more concerned with seeking and cultivating truth and beauty in our homes and society at large than in pointing out what's off with the world. Anyone could do that. To end with some advice from our dear friend Xenophanes, leave the talk of fractious factions and vicious deeds for never; instead, wash your hands and goblets, breathe in the scent of flowers and wine, enjoy the good bread and cheese before you, and then sing songs of beauty and virtue, doing it all for the glory of God.

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