Welcome to another issue of the Newsletter from UCL Greek and Latin, the annual overview of what has been happening in the Department over the past academic year and what is planned for the year to come. It is a pleasure to see how the study of the ancient world continues to thrive at UCL, with a large number of excellent staff and students, who are also able to inspire and engage with the world outside, as examples in this Newsletter demonstrate, featuring mainly activities undertaken in addition to the day-to-day business of teaching and research.

While the core of the Department is rather stable, there have again been a few staff changes. At the end of the academic year 2017/18 we said farewell to Nicołò Benzi, who had been with us as a Teaching Fellow, teaching modules on Greek philosophy and as well as Greek and Latin language, for two years. We are delighted, however, that he is moving on to the post of Lecturer in Ancient Philosophy at Manchester and will remain associated with UCL as an Honorary Fellow, so that he can organize another successful Summer School in Ancient Philosophy (see report below). As the new Lecturer in Ancient Philosophy we welcomed Elena Cagnoli Fiecconi in September 2018 (see portrait below).

On the administrative front we were joined by a new MA, Finance and Events Administrator, Alex Balciunas, in October 2017: by now he is a key member of the administrative team and has provided excellent support, especially during the period when the Undergraduate Programmes Administrator Stephanie Dutton went on a secondment to another department, which was an eye-opening experience. The entire administrative team has done an admirable job in competently steering the Department through a series of changes of systems and procedures at UCL and in furthering sustainability in the Department, leading to a Green Impact Gold Award.

At present the Department is preparing for the big international FIEC conference, to be held at the UCL Institute of Education in July 2019 and organized by all national subject organizations and London universities teaching Classics (http://www.fiecc2019.org). As an administrator for this project, we were happy to welcome back Dimitra Kokkini after her return from maternity leave. Moreover, permanent staff in the Department are supported by a team of able postgraduate teaching assistants and part-time teaching fellows to cover additional teaching as and when required. Last year several colleagues were again successful in obtaining regrades, promotions and additional increments, a pleasing testament to the fantastic and hard work they are doing for the Department.

Over the past year the Department has continued its various activities in the usual areas. All academic colleagues have been busy with teaching, researching and other projects (see their individual staff pages on the departmental website). Both staff and research students organized conferences and workshops, mainly on Greek literature and reception topics this year (see reports on some events). We have welcomed several academic visitors and visiting students from abroad (see an example below).

The annual Housman lecture was delivered by Bernard O’Donoghue (Oxford), on Seamus Heaney’s interactions with Vergil’s Aeneid, which provided stimulating insights into a particular angle of poetic reception (on the Housman Lectures see https://www.ucl.ac.uk/classics/events/housman-lectures). The Bloomsbury Theatre, the long-standing home of the annual Greek Play, continues to be closed for refurbishment: thus, in spring 2018, the Shaw Theatre (next to the British Library) was again used as venue. There students successfully staged a production of Aristophanes’ Lysistrata, again accompanied by a programme of workshops and lectures (see report below). For 2019 the Bloomsbury Theatre should be open again; preparations for a performance of Sophocles’ Oedipus Rex are under way. For the coming academic year we are also looking forward to another Housman Lecture, to be delivered by Victoria Wohl (Toronto).

Obviously, there will again be a range of open days, summer schools, workshops and conferences, which are open to everyone with an interest in the ancient world (see departmental website for programmes and registration details). For, in addition to its core tasks of teaching and research, the Department regards it as important and as part of its mission to promote Classics by lectures and public events as well as by events for school children, who otherwise may not have the chance to learn about the ancient world and might thus be motivated to study it at university. As reports elsewhere in this Newsletter explain, over the past year the Department hosted several Taster Days and Open Days as well as our now well-established summer schools (Ancient World, Homer, Ancient Philosophy). Moreover, the ‘Living Latin’ initiative, inaugurated last year, is thriving and recruiting more and more participants. We continue to benefit from funding from the A. G. Leventis Foundation to support some of these initiatives, for which we are very grateful.

These projects are testimony to the Department’s keen, engaged and diverse body of staff and students. Over the past year students have been busy studying (we hope), most of them at UCL and some at universities elsewhere in Europe while on their year abroad. Some students at UCL volunteered as transition mentors or student events). We have welcomed several academic visitors and visiting students from abroad (see an example below).
different cohorts of students and passing on of insider information is vital for a good atmosphere among the student body. Finalists again finished with excellent results; several were put on the Dean’s list in recognition of their outstanding results or received departmental prizes. We wish them good luck with the next steps of their lives and are keen to hear back from them once they have settled into new roles. The Classics Society remains active in organizing events for undergraduate students; their officers and the student representatives promote student issues. Each year a number of BA students go on to do an MA (at UCL or elsewhere), and some MA students move on to do a PhD. It is encouraging to see the passion for the subject that drives students to carry on despite numerous challenges. PhD students have made important contributions to the Department’s undergraduate teaching, for instance, by allowing us to run intensive language courses, have run their own research seminar and have organized conferences and workshops, including training on digital tools and contributing to Wikipedia articles on female Classicists. Several research students completed their PhDs, and a considerable number of those managed to secure posts in other universities, which is a remarkable achievement in the current competitive climate.

My experience as an academic visitor at UCL

For me, reading Classics means a thoughtful gaze across time and space. I ran into the classical world as an outsider, with a previous academic background in English literature and applied linguistics. Four years ago, a sweeping teaching reform has been carried out in the university where I work, and I was appointed to develop a brand-new English course for undergraduate students who seemed bored by traditional textbooks and were hungry for more meaningful and intellectually challenging language classes. One of my tasks was to introduce high-quality English versions of Greek classical works to these studious Chinese students. Sponsored by the China Scholarship Council, I came to UCL to produce such a textbook and other relevant academic work. Thankfully, the manuscripts had been satisfactorily finished before I left London and will get published in China next year. Professor Phiroze Vasunia co-authors this textbook and has made important contributions. His generosity in China next year. Professor Phiroze Vasunia co-authors this textbook and has made important contributions. His generosity in China and the intellectual curiosity of researchers themselves, before it can be a sweeping teaching reform — with a group of critics and scholars. From these activities, I have gained far more experience than expected. In those lecture halls, there were many productive discussions and a lot of critical argumentation. Laborious research was not an academic burden but a source of personal joy. Research at UCL nurtures the intellectual curiosity of researchers themselves, before it can be of any use to others.

It was not my first visit London, but this long academic stay enabled me to undertake more explorations. Museums, galleries, theatres, libraries, bookstores, parks and BBC Proms. Seated at the top of Primrose Hill, I was finally aware of what truly and naturally retained Holmes’ book manuscript — Sympathy: the Tissue of the World — with a group of critics and scholars. From these activities, I have gained far more experience than expected. In those lecture halls, there were many productive discussions and a lot of critical argumentation. Laborious research was not an academic burden but a source of personal joy. Research at UCL nurtures the intellectual curiosity of researchers themselves, before it can be of any use to others.

Yesterday one of my students told me that she read Oedipus the King again (translated by David Greene) in the summer vacation, found it incredibly beautiful and was determined to learn ancient Greek in the new term. This Chinese girl majored in Electrical Engineering, and she did want to read Sophocles’ most famous tragedy in its original language. I do not know how far she will go, but I do know that there must be some irreplaceable, universal beauty in Greek Classics, which deserves to be seen by more people in this world — Beauty, in its distinctive forms.

Finally, huge and heartfelt thanks to my new friends I met in London, for all those small talks, coffee breaks, tea times and nice lunches together. To me, such human connection weighed much more than just academic development.

Hong Zhang
Visitor from Chongquing University, China
Review: For an Empty Tunic, for a Helen

If someone was to tell you that they had shot an entire feature-length film on their iPhone, no matter what the subject matter, I think that, despite what some might admit, some prickle of dread would enter the thoughts of most people’s mind. When I first spoke to Dr Antony Makrinos about his upcoming piece on Helen of Troy, I can’t deny that this was one of my worries. Still, he reassured me that it would blow me away, and I can honestly say that after watching the premiere of ‘For an Empty Tunic, for a Helen’, he was absolutely correct.

It was a privilege being able to watch the film in its fully dramatized version, with all the lights and excitement befitting such an electrifying piece. The film started with a dramatic entrance under spotlight by a very talented body painter, Iliana Valsamaki, who had made herself up to look like a ghostly Aphrodite. She walked down the stairs, and when she gestured towards the screen, the opening credits started, in a theatrical, yet so wonderfully fitting beginning to the film depicting one of the most dramatic lives in history: the life of Helen.

When the film started, I must admit, within five minutes I found myself overcome by emotion (and even a couple of tears!). From the get go, the passion that each woman playing Helen had for the part was clear. The way they moved and used their voices to express so many different emotions and sides to their character was so well encapsulated and thoroughly stirring. Each woman brought something unique to the Helen story and made her their own. This was especially prevalent in the second ‘set’ of ancient and modern Helens. The actress and the voiceover were both done by separate women; both, however, managed to completely encapsulate Helen in an incredibly emotional performance which left everyone utterly moved.

The script was cleverly written by Dr Makrinos with the collaboration of some of the actresses playing Helen. It was interesting, funny in places, yet hard-hitting of the reality of the situations being portrayed. A scene with a Helen reading a letter to a poet that the actress herself had written was intimate and touching. A favourite scene of mine was where a modern Helen compared Aphrodite and her meddling with that of a cruel pimp-like figure. It was a comparison that I had not particularly considered before, but I felt captured by the intervention of the Gods, as described by Homer, in a way that was terrifying and poignant.

The mixture of the ancient and modern Helens worked in so many different levels on the screen. For one, it allowed the drama of the Homeric epics to come to life for viewers. When reading ancient texts, we often easily forget that these pieces were not meant simply to be studied, but were made to be lived and breathed through performance. The contemporary twist allowed the audience to relate to it in a way that the film also reminded us of ancient reception of the epics. Although texts such as the Iliad are still relevant in our times due to their entrapment of genuine human emotion that is relatable even in this day, the modern-day retelling allowed another level of relatability, especially for a younger audience. It also encompassed Dr Makrinos’ main aim, which was to highlight that problems faced by Helen and modern women, such as rape, war, violence and abuse, are still prominent issues in our modern society. Seamless switching of the two Helen types in the implied rape scene stitched this together, whilst the credits statistics after the film of sheer numbers of people affected by problems highlighted in the film drove the point home.

The music, direction, production and photography were all stunning, and I came away from the piece feeling mesmerised. The whole production was outstanding, a real piece of art, captivating and thought-provoking. Anyone who is able to watch it should absolutely take the time to do so; there is no better way to spend an hour than admiring the passion of all those who took part in the project and being enthralled by it.

Naomi Miller
BA student, Reading
Summer School in Homer 2018 – celebrating 5 years

Last summer the Summer in School in Homer celebrated 5 years of intense teaching of Homer with a double bill: it was held from Monday 23 to Friday 27 July 2018 at UCL in the UK and from 29 July to 2 August at the Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation in Cyprus. The Summer School had immense success and welcomed 121 participants of various ages (14 to 82 years) from many different parts of the world. The groups included participants from 15 different countries who had enthusiastically come together to celebrate the brilliance of Homer in an intellectually very stimulating academic environment.

This year’s Summer Schools included nine classes: Homer in Translation and his Roman Legacy, Greek for Beginners, Intermediate Greek, Advanced Greek, Linear B and for the first time four new classes Philosophy and Homer, Latin Palaeography and Homer, Papyrology and Homer and Homer and his Legacy. The tutors for the classes on Homer were: Antonio Cartolano and Emily Chow-Kambitsch (Homer in Translation and his Roman Legacy), Ifigeneia Giannadaki (Beginners), Naoko Yamagata (Intermediate), Ita Hilton (Advanced), Ester Salgarella (Linear B), Nicolo Benzi (Philosophy and Homer), Latin Palaeography and Homer (Marigold Norbye), Papyrology and Homer (Federica Micucci) and Homer and his Legacy (Antony Makrinos).

As always, the Summer School also offered many afternoon events, including a screening of the film “Homerokentra: Women Reading the Iliad” with fourteen women reading and performing their favourite passages from the Iliad in their native languages in various landscapes from their home countries. Four lectures were delivered in both the UK and Cyprus: Dr Baukje van den Berg (Vienna) talked about “Helen in Byzantium: the reception of Homer after Antiquity”; Dr Emily Hauser (Exeter) delivered a talk about “Rewriting the women of the Trojan War: From Briseis to Penthesileia”; Dr Georgios Papasavvas (Cyprus) talked about “Homeric heroes and travelling aristocrats: memories and keimelia from distant places and remote pasts as revealed in the epics and in archaeology”; and Dr Antony Makrinos delivered a talk on “Object Based Learning: teaching Homer and Greek in Museums”. All events were free and open to the public.

On the fourth day of both Summer Schools there was a surprise for the participants: the organisers had prepared a screening of an original film under the title: “For an empty tunic, for a Helen”. The film was directed by Dr Antony Makrinos and produced by Rachael Garnett and Beatrice Roberts. It was a film that explored issues that relate to the story of Helen (such as war, domestic abuse, rape, prostitution, old age) in the ancient and modern lives of five women whose life reflected the life of ancient and modern Helens.

In addition, the participants of the Summer School in Cyprus had the opportunity to visit some archaeological sites and follow curated tours organised by the Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation. The students visited the Cyprus Museum in Nicosia, the archaeological site of Kourion in Limassol, and the sites of Kouklia and Kato Paphos.

Feedback from the students of the Summer School in Homer has been as always very positive, and they all appreciated and enjoyed the friendly atmosphere, the organisation of the events and the teaching of the classes. Participants praised the new classes, and they found them intellectually stimulating. They also expressed their interest in attending future classes that would relate to Intermediate-Advanced Greek and Homer and Religion. There were very positive comments on both screenings and a lot of enthusiasm about the Helen film and its future screenings at our outreach events.

Finally, all participants were very appreciative of the high quality of teaching, and they have all praised their teachers and reported that they have learned a lot from them. As the Director of the Summer School, I wish to thank the CA for offering four bursaries and the Hellenic Society for offering two bursaries to the students of the Summer School, the Leventis Foundation for their financial support for the Helen film, our speakers for the engaging talks and discussions, the Secretaries of the Summer School for their support and professionalism, all our committed teachers, the
five amazing women who performed with great resilience under very difficult conditions for our film, our talented composer Belinda É. S. for the music of the film and all those who helped and supported the Summer School in their own way.

Next year we are planning to increase the number of our participants, and we will try to introduce new exciting classes including Homer and Religion and an Intermediate-Advanced class. We are planning to hold the sixth Summer School in Homer (22-26 July 2019) at UCL, for which preparations have already started.

For more details about the Summer School in Homer 2019, please visit our website:
https://www.ucl.ac.uk/classics/outreach/classics/outreach/schools-colleges/summer-schools
or contact Dr Antony Makrinos on a.makrinos@ucl.ac.uk
or ++44 (0)20 7679 4576

Antony Makrinos
Senior Teaching Fellow in Classics (UCL) and Director of the Summer School in Homer

Anne Chmelewsky – MA Student

Anne Chmelewsky, an MA student, who completed her degree in 2018, writes about funding received:

"I started the MA in Classics in 2013. I am a composer, and I wanted to broaden my horizons and find inspiration in the ancient sources: Latin and Greek had always been a passion of mine at school. I opted to do the course on a modular / flexible basis, which enabled me to balance my studies with my work over five years. In my final year, however, I found myself in financial difficulty, and I was unable to meet the rising tuition fees. My only option was to drop out of the course, which would have been a real shame since I only had one module left to complete.

Thankfully I received some help in the form of a scholarship from the UCL Otto Skutsch Fund, and I completed my masters in October 2018. I am incredibly grateful for the funding, without which I would not have completed my degree. My studies at UCL have been enriching in ways I could not have anticipated, and have even inspired my latest opera, which is currently in development to preview around the UK next year.

I sincerely hope to be in a position to contribute to the UCL scholarship fund in the future and help other students experience life and studies in the UCL Department of Greek and Latin (https://www.annechmelewsky.com)."

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This year, for the first time, the Department of Greek and Latin organised an Ancient World Residential Summer School for secondary-school students interested in studying the ancient world. The aim of the Summer School, which is funded by the UCL Widening Participation and Undergraduate Recruitment Office (http://www.ucl.ac.uk/prospective-students/widening-participation/wp-home) and the Sutton Trust, is to give participants a clearer idea of what is involved in studying our subject at university level. It also provides them with a taste of the complex patchwork of the ancient Mediterranean world, from Egypt to the Near East, the Greeks and the Romans, in an environment that is hopefully stress-free, fun and intellectually challenging.

In previous years the Department has successfully run non-residential summer schools with the Widening Participation Office, but this year we decided to trial-run a residential school. The benefit of this is that it enables students from all over the UK, rather than just the London area, to participate, immersively, in a full programme of lectures and activities over 5 days, while also getting a taste of student life at UCL and experiencing some of the cultural amenities of central London. These events are designed to encourage students from more economically deprived backgrounds to apply to university courses and to expand the social range of our undergraduate student intake. Of all the Outreach events run by UCL, residential summer schools have the highest success rate, in that they result in the greatest number of participants’ subsequent applications to study at UCL.

This work is both essential to the health of Classics as a discipline in the modern world and to our Department’s ability to realise the real aims of the university as a place of learning and free enquiry open to all.

The students stayed in UCL student accommodation, with all meals provided, and were looked after attentively by specially selected undergraduate student leaders from our Department: Conor Richardson and Caroline Ingram. Conor and Caroline stayed in UCL accommodation with the students, accompanied them to lectures, museum visits and other activities, answered their questions and helped them with their end-of-week projects.

The programme this year was designed to give a chronological overview of Ancient Mediterranean history and cultures, and a sense of the interdisciplinary nature of studying the ancient world. Beginning with Mesopotamia and Egypt, students were then introduced to Persia, Greece and the Roman empire, and ending with the reception of the ancient world in modern era. Staff and postgraduate students from the departments of Greek and Latin, Archaeology and Ancient History all contributed to the programme. The students received lectures from Egyptologist Professor Stephen Quirke on Egyptian artefacts, Dr Antony Makrinos on Homer’s women, Dr Andrew Gardner on Roman Britain, and Dr Mairéad McAuley on Ovid’s myths of metamorphosis. In addition, postgraduate students gave engaging talks on topics related to their MA and PhD study: Ishaan Sinha on ancient religions, Mateen Arghandepour on Persia, Katie Shields on writing systems, and Manuela Irrazabal Elliot on Greek tragedy and on classical reception in the film Black Orpheus.

As well as lectures and seminars, there were two museum visits, one to the Petrie Museum and the other to the unparalleled collections of the Greek and Roman galleries of the British Museum. At the British Museum the students received a talk from UCL Professor of Classical and Comparative Art, Jeremy Tanner. At the end of the week, students gave group presentations on some topics related to the programme which they prepared during the week. Their presentations were of a very high standard, ranging from Egyptian burial customs to Aristotle’s theory of tragedy in the Poetics. Despite the heatwave in London, the atmosphere was stimulating and fun, and the students made friends and enjoyed their time at UCL.

The Summer School was organised by Manuela Irrazabal Elliot, a PhD student in the Department of Greek and Latin, who is submitting her thesis on Greek tragedy and the emotions soon; her work and that of our student helpers, deserves great thanks from all of us.

Given the overall success of this year’s event, we hope to repeat the Ancient World Residential Summer School again next year. Anyone interested in attending or with ideas for programmes that could encourage more students to study the ancient world can write to Dr Mairéad McAuley, the Department’s Outreach Officer.

Mairéad McAuley
Lecturer in Classics and Departmental Outreach Officer, UCL
The UCL Summer School in Ancient Philosophy ran for its second year from 16 to 20 July 2018. The Summer School offered a five-day intensive programme on the major themes and thinkers of ancient philosophy. We welcomed 50 students who chose among the following four modules: 

*Introduction to Ancient Philosophy: What is Happiness?*

*Ancient Theories on Ethics: What is Reality?*

*Ancient Theories on Metaphysics: What can We Know?*

*Ancient Theories on Epistemology.*

Classes consisted of lectures and close reading of texts, in which students were invited to provide their own arguments and thoughts about the most puzzling philosophical issues examined in class. Special attention was given to the significance that ancient philosophical ideas have in today’s world, especially as a way to promote critical reflection as well as dialogue among people. Students were keen to discuss and reflect on the issues raised by ancient philosophers. They particularly appreciated the friendly and engaging, but always philosophically rigorous teaching style of our tutors, who included some of the most passionate and talented teachers in the London area and beyond.

Students had the opportunity to explore further topics in ancient philosophy through a series of afternoon lectures delivered by leading scholars of the field: John Sellars (Royal Holloway, University of London) talked about ‘The Rise of Modern Stoicism’, and Shaul Tor (King’s College London) examined the intrinsically critical nature of ancient philosophical enterprise by focusing on one of the earliest philosophers, Xenophanes of Colophon (‘What if Cows could Draw Gods and What do We See in a Rainbow? Some Philosophical Questions in Xenophanes’). We also offered a workshop on ‘Love and Knowledge in the Symposium’, run by Rithu Fernando (UCL), in which Plato’s theories on love were examined and discussed through a close reading of selected passages from the dialogue.

As the director of the Summer School, I wish to thank all those who contributed to its success: Pauline Sabrier, Dave Preston, Giulio Di Basilio, and Robert Heller for their passion and excellence in teaching; our administrator Caterina Domeneghini; our speakers; our wonderful students and, last but not least, the staff of the Department of Greek and Latin for their invaluable support.

The Summer School in Ancient Philosophy will run for its third edition in July 2019. We are planning to widen the offer of modules and topics for next year and we hope that, once again, the Summer School will provide a valuable and unique opportunity to continue exploring and thinking about the immense treasure of wisdom we inherited from ancient philosophers. Last year I was glad to say that the dream of the Summer School came true. This year, I am even happier to say that the dream is going on.

Nicolò Benzi
Lecturer in Ancient Philosophy (Manchester) and Director of the Summer School in Ancient Philosophy (UCL)
Roundtable with Professor Brooke Holmes and international seminar on sympathy

Last year was another successful and busy year for the Department, as you can tell from this Newsletter. The roundtable discussion with a visiting scholar has now become an annual feature, and the main speaker in May 2018 was Professor Brooke Holmes of Princeton. The discussion was as fascinating and lively as ever. We talked about Professor Holmes’ forthcoming book on sympathy in classical and Hellenistic writers. The concept of sympathy flourished in pre-modern natural philosophy, medicine, and natural history as a means of explaining relations between natures – plants, animals, stars, stones. The ancient concept far exceeds what we mean by ‘sympathy’ today and makes us re-think our relationship to the animal, plant and material worlds. The respondents were Liba Taub (Cambridge) and Ahuvia Kahane (Royal Holloway), and some 20 other scholars joined us at the discussion.

I was also involved with an international seminar on sympathy, in July 2018. This seminar was co-sponsored by UCL and Princeton and was held in Mumbai at Jnanapravaha, a non-profit centre for the study of the arts and humanities. The seminar was wide-ranging and involved scholars from the UK, USA, Italy, Singapore and India. It was held under the auspices of the Postclassicisms initiative, which is based in Princeton and directed by Professor Holmes. Miriam Leonard and I are members of the core group. The image alongside was used on the poster for the seminar in Mumbai; it is produced by Stefania Strouza and is entitled ‘Anaximander’s Mind’ (2017). The seminar gave us a worthy reminder that there is much to be learned from a global approach to antiquity.

Phiroze Vasunia
Professor of Greek, UCL
Audio / Visual Romans

Cinema from its beginnings offered a radically new way of experiencing ancient Rome. Film brought ancient Rome to life, and gave it colour, movement and sound. Quite unlike a visit to an excavation or a museum, a trip to the cinema offered a communal immersion into the Roman past that was not so much about accruing knowledge as experiencing feelings.

Here I comment on a number of activities in which I was involved in May 2018 in the city of Rome that were designed to explore in particular, and from multiple perspectives, the complex relationship of sound to image in films about Roman antiquity. How does film music provide a profoundly emotional coding for our viewing of Roman history? What conventions lie behind the way in which Romans talk on screen? How has Hollywood tried to dress up contemporary English in order for it to sound authentically Latin?

These events formed part of the Audio / Visual Romans project established by myself and Monika Wozniak (Sapienza, University of Rome) and generously funded by University College London through its Rome Regional Engagement Fund.

On 8 May 2018, we held a roundtable discussion at the British School at Rome on the intersections between sound and image in films about Neronian Rome, specifically the various film adaptations of the Polish novel Quo vadis? released in 1913, 1924 and 1951.

Speakers and audience explored how the music that accompanies these films provides an aural encoding of Nero's Rome. It has to be relevant to the time of the films' production yet evocative of the classical past. It has to be built on earlier musical traditions or devised from scratch. Music is also expected to draw spectators into cinema’s Roman world and invite them to be moved by it.

In sound film, dialogue too must be both comprehensible to audiences and compatible with the epoch represented on screen. Dialogue stakes a claim to history by anchoring protagonists and events in past time, establishing narrative coherence and revealing the personality of characters. The fictionalised ‘Latin’ of Hollywood historical films often follows invented patterns of communication that signal the classical past in a stilted literary style while also being steeped in the vocabulary and ideology of the present day: the voice-over at the start of the Cold-War Quo vadis? proclaims that in summer 64 AD: ‘No man is sure of his life, the individual is at the mercy of the state, murder replaces justice. Rulers of conquered nations surrender their helpless subjects to bondage.’ While Petronius complains of Nero’s singing: ‘Body of Bacchus, I’ve been listening to that since morning!’

We also considered how sometimes art-house cinema and other types of musical accompaniment breach those conventions in order to construct a less comfortable relationship for spectators with the Roman past (just think – Fellini Satyricon, 1969).

On the same evening, we screened the celebrated silent feature film Quo vadis? (1913, dir. Enrico Guazzoni) – a beautifully restored, coloured version loaned to us by EYE, the Netherlands Film Archive. The screening was accompanied on the piano by Michele Sganga, who had composed his own original score to support the dramatic display. Back in 1913, when the film was first exhibited at the Gaumont Palace in Paris, a reviewer expressed amazement at how the orchestra and choir that the Gaumont had engaged brought Neronian Rome to life: ‘Nero sings his verses, his lyre vibrates. Rome is set on fire, the choir sings the hatred of the people … Plaintive and slow, comes the chant of the Christians who go to be tortured’.

Our audience at the BSR commented no less enthusiastically on how much they had learned from the screening about the relationship of visual image to musical score. The performance was an astounding and disturbing success (when the Christians were set alight on screen, Michele stood up to scream). A journalist attending from Rai television interviewed him subsequently about his interest in composing for silent film in this way. You can see and hear the short discussion on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yr8w8nc67Qk.

The following day, we moved location to Sapienza and held a practical and collaborative workshop for about twenty students from my institution and Monika’s (with backgrounds variously in Classics, History, English, and Comparative Literature). The task we set them was to audio-describe a scene from the Hollywood Quo vadis? At first they did wonder quite what the intellectual benefits of a task like that would be.

Audio-description is a mode of narration that provides a verbal version of visual media for blind or visually impaired consumers. It was first developed in the 1970s in the United States but now has global reach. You can access audio-description (AD), for example, on Netflix. Audio-description encompasses the visual aspects of film action: body language, facial expression, props and costumes, movement, even lighting effects. The audio-describers have to ensure they do not extend their commentary beyond the scene in question. Studies have found that trained audio-describers develop excellent observational skills and enhance their visual literacy.

We mixed our UK and Italian students in groups, each working to produce their own audio-description for a brief scene of romance between the soldier hero and Christian heroine of Quo vadis? and then shared and commented on the results with the aid of a number of specialists in this technique from Sapienza, who had also explained in advance what you might include in audio-description for films. The students reported back afterwards that the exercise forced them to think carefully about the filmmaking process (the essentials of mise-en-scène, choreography, gesture and expression) that goes towards the creation of a seemingly authentic Roman world.

Plans are already afoot for further such collaborations between UCL and Sapienza on Audio / Visual Romans.

Maria Wyke
Professor of Latin, UCL
Elena Cagnoli Fiecconi

I am delighted to join this welcoming and intellectually stimulating department and to return to UCL, where I did an MPhil in Philosophy. I completed my undergraduate studies in Italy (University of Pavia) and my graduate studies at UCL and Oxford. After that, I spent a year in Geneva and a year in Jerusalem, working as a postdoc. My research focuses for the most part on Aristotle, with an emphasis on his works on ethics, psychology and biology. In particular, I am interested in questions that lie at the intersection of these disciplines. For example, I look at whether Aristotle’s account of the human happy and virtuous life is influenced by his views on human desire, attention, perception and thought. To find an answer to these questions, I find it very helpful to look beyond Aristotle’s work, ranging from Plato, the Hippocratic Corpus and the Commentators of Aristotle. In addition, I am interested in putting Aristotle’s views in communication with contemporary ethics, moral psychology and philosophy of mind. I am currently working on the plausibility of his views on the limits of self-improvement, from a moral point of view. I am really looking forward to develop these (and other) ideas in my teaching and research at UCL in the coming years.

Elena Cagnoli Fiecconi
Lecturer in Ancient Philosophy, UCL

Living Latin at UCL

Building on the success of the first UCL Living Latin Workshop, undergraduate students Caterina Domeneghini, Abhilash Sivaraman, who both helped to organise last summer’s workshop, and Oliver Clamp, who attended the workshop, took the opportunity to set up a Living Latin group for students and staff to practise speaking Latin. Of course, Latin no longer has native speakers, but our aim was (and still is!) to actively engage with Latin in a way that goes beyond translating English into Latin and in a way that is closer to how one engages with modern foreign languages. In this way, we hope to achieve a greater level of mastery over and develop a deeper appreciation for this beautiful language and its literature.

With such an aim in mind and despite the blow of losing Teaching Fellow Dr Emily Chow-Kambitsch, who led our inaugural workshop, we began the academic year with weekly meetings during which we engaged in the types of activities that had received the most positive feedback from last year’s workshop, such as conversation stations (short role-plays based on various everyday themes).

These weekly meetings soon became biweekly at the request of several students, and, under the guidance of A. Gratius Avitus, a fluent Latin speaker and UCL Senior Teaching Fellow at the CLIE (Centre for Languages and International Education), we began to use the textbook Lingua Latin per se illustrata pars I: Familia Romana (Hans Ørberg), reading two chapters a week and answering questions testing our comprehension, alongside the interactive activities. This new set-up proved to be successful as the size of our group increased, attracting MA students, a teaching fellow at Birkbeck and a secondary school teacher, and as our ability to manipulate Latin improved. Consequently, we are so extremely grateful for Avitus’ help that not even the words maximas gratias tibi agimus can express our gratitude!

During the year, we had contacts with the Oxford Latinitas Project, whose success is an encouragement to us all. Our Oxford colleagues kindly invited us to join them in a week of intensive immersion in spoken Latin at the Academia Vivarium Novum just outside Rome. The Academia is an exceptional institution where only Latin is spoken. Unfortunately, the week was in term time, which precluded most of us going, but our fellow Living Latin participant Dr Marigold Norbye was able to attend from the Department and reported back with great enthusiasm on her experience there.
In light of all the above, on 25 and 26 June 2018 we organised another successful workshop. Our primary aim was to provide a variety of activities for spoken Latin, free from prejudice. Jamie Hardie, one of the organisers of the event, gave an informative guide to pronunciation, and Abhilash Sivaraman led an engaging game whereby participants were asked questions (in Latin) about pieces of Roman art and architecture – this produced a lively stream of spoken Latin conversation. At the end of Day 1 we had a highly rewarding session of songs in which one of our guests (Al-Waleed al-Saggaf, known in Latin circles as Renatus) taught the group the meaning behind Horace’s Rectius Vives (Ode 2.10), which we then sung, before Marigold Norbye led renditions of Bacche Bene Venies (from Carmina Burana) and a Latin version of London’s Burning. Other highlights included a series of role-play scenarios, where participants could play the part of, for example, a centurion trying to encourage his inebriated soldiers to fend off a Pict raid or a tax collector in the provinces.

In addition to designing the workshop with an upbeat and friendly tone, we were keen to demonstrate how far fluency can be achieved in this field of endeavour – with this in mind, our two guests with near-native proficiency, Avitus and Renatus, were very kind in accepting our invitation to give talks and lectures (again, in Latin!) on topics including spoken Latin resources around the world and discussions on Seneca’s Stoic pamphlet De Otiō. It was eye-opening in particular to see the geographical spread of Latin Circles all across the globe. We are very grateful for their involvement in our project, and for being an inspiring example of the potential for Latin fluency, and its applications and opportunities, in the 21st century.

Our project continues in October as UCL Living Latin enters its second full year, and we are keen to recruit as many new faces as possible. There will be the opportunity for complete beginners and those more comfortable with the spoken language to develop their abilities in oral Latin. Floreat lingua Latina!

Oliver Clamp, Caterina Domineghini, Jamie Hardie, Dr Marigold Norbye and Abhilash Sivaraman
UCL Living Latin organisers 2017/18

Lysistrata – February 2018

This year’s classical play again took place at the Shaw Theatre on Euston Road, due to ongoing renovation work at the Bloomsbury Theatre. Needless to say, our students more than coped with the challenge of staging this popular production outside of home territory. Director Richard Sansom and producer George Jibson put on Aristophanes’ Lysistrata in Alan Sommerstein’s much-loved Penguin Classics translation, a play that seems highly topical in light of the Me Too movement. Normal ancient Greek gender power-structures are inverted when Athenian and Spartan women agree to go on sex-strike to force their men to bring the Peloponnesian war to a truce.

Ancient comedy presents particular challenges to modern interpreters: you are never quite sure where the jokes lie, and the plays sometimes make light of topics, such as violence against women, which are recognised from today’s perspective as deadly serious. Sansom and Jibson’s production tackled this challenge admirably. By having largely gender-blind casting – with male actors playing women and female actors playing men – they were able to generate comedy even from the less comfortable aspects of Aristophanes’ script. A particular highlight was the scene where Myrrha us deploys a number of strategies to thwart her husband Cinesias’ attempts to bed her, the couple played by the renowned comic duo Zac Peel and Patrick Mcpherson.

A distinctive aspect of this production was the decision to set the play in Tudor England, a setting which conveyed both the familiarity and the distance of ancient comedy, as well as creating new comic opportunities (think ‘Aristophanes-meets-Blackadder’). Instead of wearing phallos, the male characters wore cod-pieces, which seemed to increase in size as the play went on. The Spartans were Scots, with accents suitably exaggerated for comic effect. The fact that Lysistrata herself was played by a Scottish actor (the excellent Hannah Parker – who some may remember as Ismene from the previous year’s Antigone) with her accent undisguised, added an extra layer to this joke. But the setting also had a contemporary feel that became more apparent as the play progressed towards its conclusion in a rave, complete with club lighting and a pulsing house soundtrack (to get an impression), see the trailer for the production here: https://www.facebook.com/uclgreekplay/videos/1786618334696187/
Overall, this was a daring, colourful, and highly successful interpretation of what is perhaps Aristophanes’ best-known play.

6-8 February 2019 will see our return to the Bloomsbury Theatre with Producer Caterina Domineghini and Director Jamie Hardie’s production of Sophocles’ Oedipus Rex.

Tickets are available to purchase here: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/event-ticketing/booking?ev=18071.

We hope you will be able to join us!

Tom Mackenzie
Leventis Research Fellow, UCL