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# SPRING NEWSLETTER

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Image From: Achilles and Patroclus Go to Therapy

## Note from the Chair

Classics Students (and their professors) have survived our year-long epidemiologically enforced experiment with online university. Trying to adapt our teaching and learning to the online format has been a challenging, humbling, time-consuming task.

It has forced many of us to grapple anew with some basic questions: what are we most fundamentally trying to accomplish in our classes? What is it that students should take away from a class once they have completed it? Why do we think it is of continued importance to study the ancient and medieval worlds?

In my own case, what made these classes work - when they worked - was two things: First, the amazing patience and generous good-will to make the class work on the side of our students, many of whom managed to produce against all odds some of the best work I have read since starting my teaching in Dal Classics; and second, the undeniable power of the texts we were studying - whether it was the twists and turns of Plato's Greek, the majestic poetry of Sophocles' Ajax, or the perplexing profundity of our earliest surviving fragments of pre-socratic philosophy. While we have all discovered some techniques and approaches to teaching that we will profitably integrate into future classes, I think we have also come to appreciate some of the previously invisible ways that the embodied encounter in the lecture hall and seminar room, not to mention studying together in the Classics library and our impromptu conversations and debates in the Classics lounge, operate to make learning happen. Despite being in provincial lockdown as I write this note to you, faculty and returning students alike are looking forward to reuniting in the Classics Department again this Fall - our student society *Res Publica* is already plotting the first Classics Party in almost two years!

Much of this edition of our Newsletter is devoted to those students who will not be returning in the Fall - our Spring 2021 graduates who finished off this last stretch of their time at Dalhousie in their apartments or parental homes rather than the seminar rooms and libraries, physically apart from their teachers and fellow students. To top it all off, our graduating class, for the second year in a row, will have no in-person graduation to ceremonially mark everything they have achieved during their degree. In place of this, Classics, Religious Studies and Arabic Studies faculty have put their newfound home-video expertise to work together to compile a Departmental graduation video with personalized congratulations for each of our graduates. Yet even though some of us donned our gowns to re-create something of that missing pomp, the video comes with a standing invitation to any graduates from the past two years along with their families to join and celebrate with us at any of our upcoming in-person graduation receptions in the Classics library - hopefully there will be one in May 2022.

Before signing off, I wanted to mention a few of our students' awards and distinctions from this past year.

We have two University Medals to announce: The **University Medal in Classics** for 2021 was awarded to **Zainab Syed**, who will be going on to an MA in Classics at the University of Washington, joining Classics alumna Kaitlyn Boulding (MA 2015), currently completing her Ph.D in the same Department. **Zainab Syed** is also the winner of the **Faculty Leadership Award** for the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences as part of the **2021 Dalhousie Impact Awards**.

The **University Medal in Religious Studies** was awarded to **Caroline Jones**, who is going on to take an MA in Religious Studies at McGill University. Congratulations to both our new University Medalists.

**Cristalle Watson** won the **Governor General's Gold Medal in the Humanities and Social Sciences**. This award goes to the most outstanding Master's graduate in the Humanities at Dalhousie University. It is the highest award at Dalhousie at the MA level. This award not only recognizes Cristalle's outstanding and groundbreaking thesis on Boethius, but her remarkable record of scholarly achievement during her time with us. Cristalle is currently in the first year of her Ph.D. in Classical, Near Eastern and Religious Studies at UBC. Amazingly, this is the fourth Gold Medal for a Dal Classics MA student over the past ten years!

**Michéla d'Entremont** is graduating with her MA after completing a superb thesis on "**Gender And Excellence In The Myth Of Atalanta**" under the supervision of Dr. Emily Varto.

**Sarah Sharp**, graduating this year with a BA Honours in Classics and Contemporary Studies, was named **King's Valedictorian** of the 2020-2021 graduating class.

MA student **Aidan Cyr** received a **CGS MA award** from SSHRC to fund the second-year of his MA. Aidan will be writing a thesis on "The Necessity of Cyril of Alexandria's Dyophysite Christology for Retaining Redemption in His Sacramentology," under the supervision of Dr. Alexander Treiger.

**Angus Wilson** won two prizes - the **Nicole Knox Memorial Prize** for outstanding performance in Greek and Latin at the Advanced level, as well as the **Classical Association of Canada Exceptional Student** award. Angus is going into his fourth and final year, and he will serve as President of *Res Publica*.

The **Patrick Atherton Book Prize** for top student in Introductory Latin was awarded to **Brendan Kay**, and the **Donald Hambrick Book Prize** for top student in Introductory Greek was awarded to **Emily MacPherson**.

This year three **Outstanding Student Awards** from the Society of Classical Studies were awarded to three current Dal Classics students: **Kyle Hardy**, **Emma Oliver**, and **Madeleine Merskey**

Finally, the **2021 Pius Aeneas award**, which recognizes a student for exceptional and exemplary services faithfully rendered to fellow students of Classics, has been awarded to **Zainab Syed**, who for the past two years has served as *Res Publica* Co-President, co-organized the past two Pythian games, and worked as Donna Edward's Office Assistant. In fact, much of the newsletter you are currently reading has been prepared by Zainab, who beside all her stellar academic work has worked tirelessly to keep the spirit of Dal Classics alive in countless ways during one of its most challenging periods.

In this edition of the newsletter you can read a certainly incomplete yet nonetheless impressive list of recently published books from Dal Classics alumni, with topics ranging from Thucydides to home gardening and from William Faulkner to Leo Strauss; a report on this year's first (and hopefully last!) online Pythian Games, which saw many performances for the ages, including a Latin cooking show guest hosted by Saint Augustine which two months later I still think about on a daily basis.

It also includes a blockbuster announcement of Dr. Jack Mitchell's *The Odyssey of Star Wars*, forthcoming this Fall from Abrams Books; as well as reports on the student society *Res Publica* and the 2020-21 Departmental Visiting Speaker Seminar. I hope you are all surviving the apocalypse. As always, please keep in touch!

Sincerely,  
Eli Diamond

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eli Diamond". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

## PYTHIAN GAMES X

This year's Pythian Games were particularly challenging since they had to be held virtually. However, our students, alumni, and faculty rose to the challenge in a truly spectacular way and delivered some of our greatest performances to date! The virtual format also meant that we were able to host a much larger audience from all over the country (and beyond). We also introduced a new *demos* prize voted on by our audience. Thank you to our organizers, participants, and audience for making this year's Games memorable and exciting.

For those of you who missed out on our live viewing in March, please click [here](#) to watch the video of all the performances. You can also go on our webpage and read the article for further details on this year's Games.

## WINNERS

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Howard Murray Prize:

*Lost in Translation or Is This an Anachronism?*

Kyle Hardy, Emma Oliver, Brendon Kay, and James Lee

Chair's Prize:

*Seikilos Epitaph*

Joanna Daley and Nigel Burns

Alumni Prize and Demos Prize:

*Coquo Ergo Sum*

Cristalle Watson and Katherine Stratton

King and Queen Prize:

*Achilles and Patroclus Go to Therapy*

Hasana Tombs and Lauren Naccarato

Dr. Atherton Memorial Latin Prize:

*Catullus Carmen II*

Joanna Daley

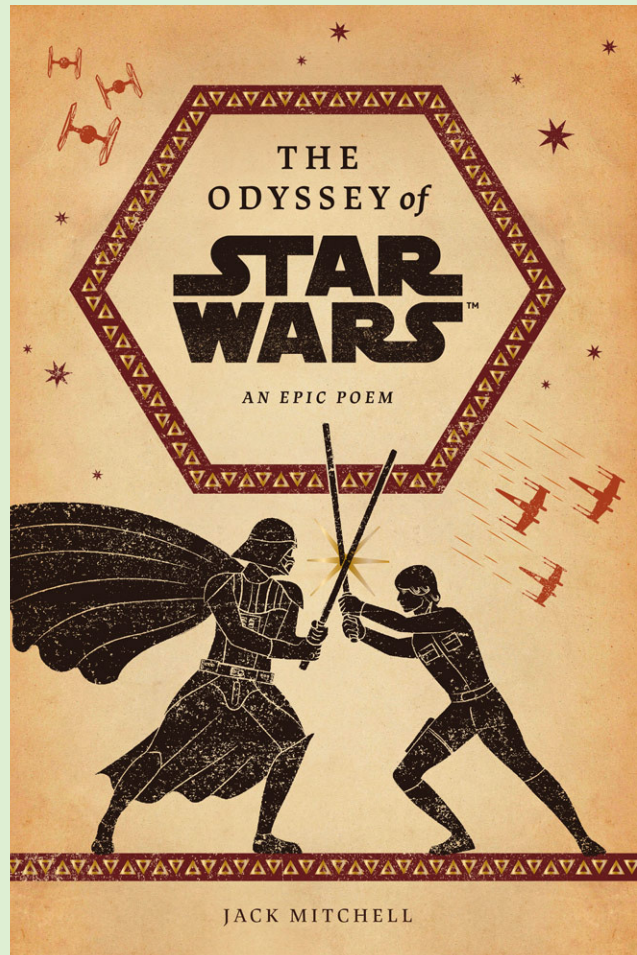


Image From: *Lost in Translation or Is This an Anachronism?*



## A Modern Epic

Professor Jack Mitchell is pleased to report that his adaptation of the original Star Wars film trilogy, *The Odyssey of Star Wars: An Epic Poem*, will be published in late September 2021 by Abrams Image, an imprint of Abrams Books. Pairing the modern mythology of George Lucas' space epic with the literary form of Homer and Virgil. Dr. Mitchell's work was inspired in part by his lifelong engagement with Homeric poetry, in part by the experience of reading Virgil's epic straight through in a Dal Classics summer reading class in 2015 with Torin Vigerstad and Tibet Kara, and in part by reading Star Wars books to his children at night. There seems to be strong interest both from fans of Star Wars and from fans of classical epic; Dr. Mitchell hopes his work may help to introduce new generations to the pleasure of narrative poetry.



### More Info:

Further details about this exciting work can be found through the press release on the official Star Wars website, please click [here](https://www.starwars.com/news/the-odyssey-of-star-wars-an-epic-poem-book-announce) or follow this link:  
<https://www.starwars.com/news/the-odyssey-of-star-wars-an-epic-poem-book-announce>

## *Res Publica* Notice

Hello everyone! This has been an unusual year in a lot of ways, including the way *Res Publica* held events and got people involved. Thanks to all of you for helping us make it happen. As Dal is planning for an in-person fall semester, we're looking forward to hosting society events again. Circumstances permitting, we're doing everything we can to get the Classics party lined up in the fall, the return of Classics Jeopardy, as well as other fun events that we'll announce as they approach. We look forward to seeing all of you there.

We'd also like to congratulate our Co-President Zainab, who is graduating this year. Her work at *Res Publica* for the last two years has been invaluable.

This also means that the executive is looking for new members. Anyone is welcome to get in touch over our social media listed below. We're particularly interested in getting first and second year students involved. Congratulations on finishing the year and have a wonderful summer.

Yours,  
Kyle Hardy and Angus Wilson

Instagram: @respublicadal

Email: respublicadal@gmail.com

Facebook: Res Publica Dalhousie

## Spring Graduates

Congratulations to all our Classics students graduating this Spring! This has been an especially challenging year and we are incredibly proud of our students for their diligence and hard work.

### **Dalhousie:**

Michéla d'Entremont, MA in Classics

Vicky Haines, BSc in Microbiology and Immunology, Minor in Classics

John Marshall, BA in History and Classics

Emily Sawchyn, BA in Classics and History

Zainab Hassan Syed, BA Honors in Classics

### **King's:**

Wanda Hannah Beck, BA Honors in English, Minor in Classics

Faye Hiscock, BA Honors in History of Science and Technology and Classics

Alan Rempel, BA in Classics

Sarah Sharp, BA Honors in Contemporary Studies and Classics

Brenna Thibodeau, BA in Classics and Sociology/Social Anthropology



## Departmental Seminar

The departmental seminar has been disrupted by the coronavirus as much as anything else in the university. It was impossible to meet in person and therefore guest speakers visited virtually via teleconferencing, which unfortunately obviated receptions, dinners, and the usual in-person camaraderie with our visitors. Some of this year's plans had to be postponed until 2021-22.

There was nevertheless good news to report: many past graduates of the department, scattered far afield from Halifax, were regularly present and boosted attendance considerably, sometimes into the thirties and forties, which is almost unheard of when the seminar meetings are held in person. The presentations themselves were as insightful and intellectually stimulating as usual, for which we are grateful to our guests. The department's reputation for collegial enthusiasm and animated discussion arising from questions after the seminars is also entirely intact.

The seminars were as follows:

- Oct 21st, Dr. Sarah Murray from the University of Toronto  
“Early Iron Age origins of ritual practice and athletic nudity at Olympia and Delphi”
- Nov 3rd, Dr. Katya Vogt from Columbia University  
“Pyrrhonian Indeterminacy”
- Nov 24th, Dr. Victoria Perry from the University of Winnipeg  
“Roman gardens as transitional spaces”
- Jan 19th, Dr. Rodica Firanescu from Dalhousie  
“Speech-act theory in Arabic grammarians”
- Feb 23rd, Dr. André Laks from the Universidad Panamericana  
“Parmenides and the anxiety of Platonism: on the articulation of his Poem”
- March 16th, Dr. Dermot Moran from Boston College  
“God as “Non-Other” (Nil Aliud) in Eriugena and Cusanus”

We look forward to celebrating two books written by Dalhousie Classicists: a belated celebration of Dr. Rainer Friedrich's Postoral Homer and a timely celebration of Dr. Jack Mitchell's forthcoming Star Wars epic.



Next year's slate of presenters will probably also include the postponed CAC/ACA Atlantic speaker's tour from the past year, and the long-anticipated-but-twice-annually-pandemically-postponed Dr. Peter Meineck (New York University), for whom we hope the third time will be the charm. Watch for further news in the early autumn!

With best wishes,  
Dr. Christopher Grundke

## What's Next for Spring Graduates?

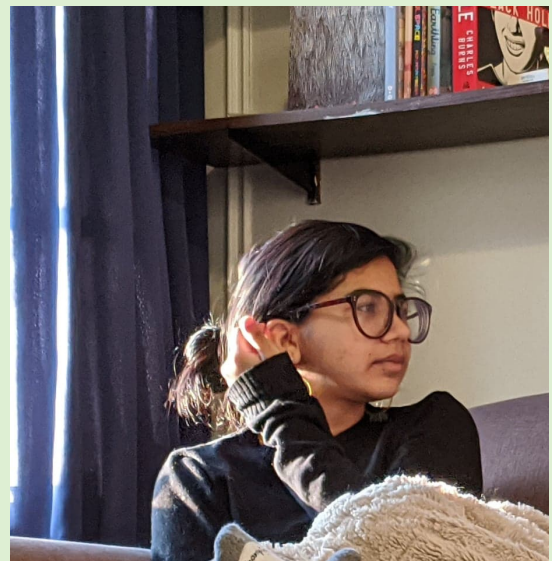
### **Sarah Sharp, BA Honours from King's College in Contemporary Studies and Classics**

Starting this May, after completing her degree in Classics and Contemporary Studies, Sarah will be the new Program Coordinator at St. George's YouthNet. Though she'll miss student life and hopes to go back to school one day, Sarah is absolutely thrilled to be spending more time with the kids and, hopefully, to explore more of Nova Scotia.



### **Zainab Syed, BA Honours from Dalhousie in Classics**

Zainab will begin her Masters in Classics at the University of Washington in Seattle in the fall. She is excited to move to a new city where she will inevitably continue to spend all of her time reading Attic orations and epigraphs. She is incredibly grateful to all of her professors and fellow students in the department. Although she will miss them all, she is looking forward to returning to attend the alumni seminars in the summers!



### **Faye Hiscock, BA Honours from King's College in History of Science and Technology and Classics**

Faye will be continuing her studies at the Atlantic Acting School outside of King's and Dalhousie. She will also be taking on a sales job through Vector Marketing. In the Autumn, she will begin a job through the Odyssey program tutoring kids in a French immersion school.



**Anjali Kapilan, BSc Honours from Dalhousie in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology and a Minor in Religious Studies**

In the fall, Anjali will begin a Masters in Science with a focus in Pharmacology. She is very proud to have finished her degree with a minor in Religious Studies and has enjoyed all of her courses!



**Student Profile:  
Michéla d'Entremont  
(MA in Classics, 2021)**

Michéla will be graduating this Spring with her MA in Classics. She wrote her thesis, "Gender and Excellence in the Myth of Atalanta," about the dynamics between Atalanta's womanhood and her masculine-coded skills. In her thesis, she compared the various treatments by different authors of stories about Atalanta in light of the themes of gender and excellence. Her thesis was supervised by Dr. Emily Varto, who also received her MA from Dalhousie in 2004. During the course of her MA, Michéla received a SSHRC grant.

The last semester of her degree was certainly challenging due to the pandemic. She missed the face-to-face interactions that make graduate studies a fun experience. But despite the pandemic and the general pressures of graduate school, Michéla enjoyed her MA thanks to the quirky and supportive community of the Dal Classics department. She played viola in the Pythian Games in 2019 and sang in the King's Chorus at the University of King's College alongside other members of the department.

Michéla also enjoyed her teaching experience as a TA in Dr. Christopher Grundke's first year mythology classes as well as his introductory Latin courses.

She plans to continue teaching in a different context and is currently training to gain certification in order to teach English as a second language. She intends to teach in Halifax.



## Alumni News

### SSHRC Insight Grant

**Dr. Torrance Kirby (MA 1980)** has recently received a SSHRC Insight Grant. Fellow Dal Classics alumni, **Dr. Evan King (BA 2010, MA 2012)** and **Dr. James Bryson (BA 2005, MA 2007)** are part of the research team.

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) have awarded a four-year Insight Grant to Professor Torrance Kirby of McGill University (PI), with Professor Douglas Hedley, Cambridge Divinity Faculty and Director of the Centre for the Study of Platonism and Professor Garth Green, Director of the McGill School of Religious Studies (co-applicants) for research on 'The Reception of German Mysticism in Early Modern England'.

### Postdoctoral Fellowship at Harvard

Starting this summer, **Will Cochran (MA 2011)** will be taking up a two year Postdoctoral Fellowship in Embedded EthiCS at Harvard. He will be working primarily to integrate ethics into the computer science curriculum.

### Teaching position in Japan

Starting this fall, **Claire McGilvray (BA 2020)** will be teaching elementary school children in Japan through the JET Programme. She is currently a remote English teacher at Kansai Gaidai University in Osaka, Japan.

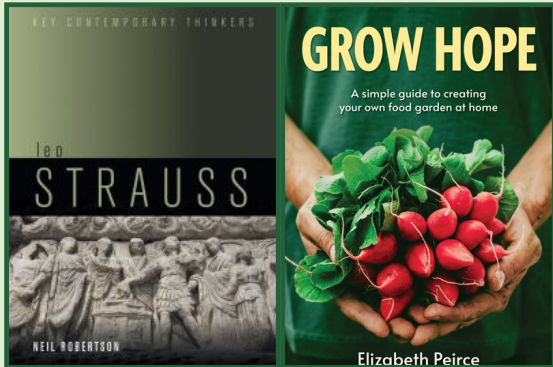
### Upcoming and recent book publications

**Dr. Neil Robertson (MA 1987)**, who is just finishing up several consecutive terms as Director of the Foundation Year Program at King's, has a new book forthcoming in July. The book titled, "Leo Strauss: An Introduction," will be published by Polity. A "non-partisan guide" to Leo Strauss' thought, it promises to be "the essential guide for anyone wishing to fully grasp the contribution of one of the most contentious and intriguing figures in 20th century intellectual history." Further information can found here: <https://politybooks.com/bookdetail/?isbn=9781509516308>

**Elizabeth Peirce (BA 1997)** has also recently published a timely book titled, "Grow Hope: A Simple Guide to Creating Your Own Food Garden at Home."



Published by Aquarium, it "addresses all the practical nuts and bolts of starting and maintaining a food garden while never losing sight of the emotional boost gardening can provide in tough times." More details about this book and her other projects can be found on her website: [elizabethpeirce.ca](http://elizabethpeirce.ca)



In 2020 Bloomsbury Press published **Dr. Vernon Provencal's (MA 1984, PhD 1992)** new book *Faulkner's Reception of Apuleius 'The Golden Ass' in 'The Reivers'*. The book "studies the reception of The Golden Ass in The Reivers as comic novels of moral katabasis (wilful descent into the lawless underworld) and providential anabasis (societal and spiritual redemption)."

More information on the text can be found here:

<https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/faulkners-reception-of-apuleius-the-golden-ass-in-the-reivers-9781350005983/>

**Dr. Nicholas (Nic) Thorne (BA 1999, MA 2001)** has just published a new book on Plato and Thucydides.

Titled "Liberation and Authority, Plato's Gorgias, the First Book of the Republic, and Thucydides," it was published by Lexington Press. The book, according to the publisher's blurb, 'provides a comparative treatment of Plato's Gorgias, the first book of the Republic, and Thucydides' History arguing that they share similarities not only in the oft-noted "natural justice" of Callicles, Thrasymachus, and the Melian Dialogue, but also in a development that runs through the whole of each work.'

Please see this website for more information:

<https://rowman.com/ISBN/9781793639042/Liberation-and-Authority-Plato%27s-Gorgias-the-First-Book-of-the-Republic-and-Thucydides>

