Professor Diana Spencer BA, MA, PhD, PGCLTHE

Professor of Classics
Dean of Liberal Arts and Natural Sciences

Classics, Ancient History and Archaeology (/schools/historycultures/departments/caha/index.aspx)

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About

I'm primarily interested in what we think Romans thought about themselves (as reflected in texts), how they conceptualized themselves as a people, and responded to (and were shaped by) the world they lived in.

Qualifications

BA (Dub. [TCD]), MA (London), PhD (Cambridge)

Biography

Who people think they are, and why this matters, are at the heart of Diana's specialisation in Latin literature and culture in the first centuries BCE/CE. Diana came to the UK, from Ireland, as a postgraduate student. After an MA (University of London), she went on to doctoral study in Classics at the University of Cambridge, where she worked on the still off-centre author Q. Curtius Rufus and his very Roman 'history' of Alexander the Great – elements of this PhD thesis inspired her first book, *The Roman Alexander: Reading a Cultural Myth* (tackling the idea of cultural identity by exploring élite Roman obsession with Alexander). Diana first joined the University of Birmingham in 1998, and enjoys how the Department offers her the opportunity to draw inspiration for new research from her teaching, and vice versa.

Her research and teaching embrace topics such as Latin lyric verse, historiography and hermeneutics, epic, philosophy, epistolography, and rhetoric. Most recently, having had the chance to develop a series of courses focused in different ways on the ancient city, Diana has been writing books and articles on the city of Rome itself as conjured up in texts from antiquity to the present. This has led her to explore the relationship between urban Rome and the literature it inspires, and presently, vocabularies of space and the process of translation.

Teaching

A selection of classes recently taught:

- Fictions of the Late Republic (a seminar class on modern historical fiction about the first century BCE)
- The City of Rome: Literature and Imagination (a lecture/workshop class on literary and imaginative responses to the city of Rome from classical Antiquity to the present)
- Rome: Republican Literature in Context (tackles the fragmentation and self-scrutiny of the individual in the late Republic, looking at authors such as Sallust, Cicero, Lucretius, Catullus and Vergil);
- Dissident Voices (a seminar class exploring ideas of centre and periphery, canon and innovation in terms of cultural politics at Rome, and drawing together authors from the first centuries BCE and CE);
- Advanced Latin (reading group for advanced Latin students – a text might be e.g. Horace

Postgraduate supervision

I welcome proposals dealing with any of the following:

- Latin literature and cultural identity (first centuries BCE/CE)
- The city of Rome in ancient and modern literature and culture
- Translation in ancient Rome, and translation of Latin texts
- Reception of Rome in historical fiction

Research

Diana's work on the city of Rome led to her most recent book, on *Roman Landscape* (2010), and she continues to work on the textual qualities of the world that Romans inhabited (she is contributing a chapter on literary Rome to the forthcoming *Blackwell Companion to the City of Rome,* eds. A. Claridge and C. Holleran).

Diana recently completed a book chapter on Horace as a translator (in S. McElduff and E. Sciarrino (eds.) *A Sea of Languages: Complicating the History of Western Translation*, and is continuing to explore how language shapes and is shaped by experience, memory, and environment.

Her ongoing interest in the relationship between space, place, and identity has helped to guide her current work on Varro, some of which has been previewed in a couple of book chapters in 2011 ('Roman movement in Varro's *de Lingua Latina*', and ''*Ρωμαίζω… ergo sum:* Language and memory in Varro's *de Lingua Latina*'. Both of these feed into her interest in how language, discourse, and topography feature in citizen self-fashioning in the late Roman Republic.

Diana is curretnly completing a book on Varro's De lingua Latina, entitled Varro's Guide to Being Roman, which should appear in 2014.

Other activities

Diana Spencer on academia.edu (http://birmingham.academia.edu/DianaSpencer)

on twitter: @DianaJSpencer

Publications

Books

- 2010. *Roman Landscape: Culture and Identity*. Greece & Rome New Surveys in the Classics 39. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 2007 (ed.), with D. H. J. Larmour. *The Sites of Rome: Time, Space, Memory.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 2006 (ed.), with E. Theodorakopoulos. *Advice and its Rhetoric in Greece and Rome*. Bari: Levante.
- 2002. *The Roman Alexander: Reading a Cultural Myth.* Exeter: University of Exeter Press.

Selected articles and book chapters

- 2011. 'Horace and the con/straints of translation', in S. McElduff and E. Sciarrino (eds.) *Complicating the History of Western Translation.* Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing, 101-116.
- 2011. '`Ρωμαίζω… ergo sum: Becoming Roman in Varro's "de Lingua Latina", in M. Bommas (ed.) *Cultural Memory and Identity in Ancient Societies.* London: Continuum, 43-60.
- 2011. 'Movement and the linguistic turn: Reading Varro's *de Lingua Latina*', in R. Laurence and D. J. Newsome (eds.) *Rome, Ostia, Pompeii: Movement and Space.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 57-80.
- 2010. '"You Should Never Meet Your Heroes...": Growing Up with Alexander, the Valerius Maximus Way', in E. Carney and D. Ogden (eds.) *Philip II and Alexander the Great: Father and Son, Lives and Afterlives.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 175-91.
- 2009. 'Roman Alexanders: Epistemology and Identity', in W. Heckel and L. Tritle (eds.) *Alexander the Great: A New History.* Chichester: Blackwell, 251-74.
- 2008. 'Singing in the garden: Statius' *plein air* lyric (after Horace)', in J. Blevins (ed.) *Dialogism and Lyric Self-Fashioning: Bakhtin and the Voices of a Genre.* Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 66-83.
- 2007. 'Rome at a gallop: Livy, on *not* gazing, jumping or toppling into the void', in D. H. J. Larmour and D. Spencer (eds.) *The Sites of Rome: Time, Space, Memory.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 61-101.
- 2007. '*Roma, recepta*: A Topography of the Imagination', with D. H. J. Larmour, in D. H. J. Larmour and D. Spencer (eds.) *The Sites of Rome: Time, Space, Memory.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1-60.
- 2006. 'Telling it like it is…: Seneca, Alexander and the dynamics of epistolary advice', in D. Spencer and E. Theodorakopoulos (eds.) *Advice and its Rhetoric in Greece and Rome.* Bari: Levante, 79-104.
- 2006. '"Good men who have skill in speaking": Performing Advice in Rome', with E. Theodorakopoulos, in D. Spencer and E. Theodorakopoulos (eds.) *Advice and its Rhetoric in Greece and Rome.* Bari: Levante, 1-29.
- 2006. 'Horace's garden thoughts: Rural retreats and the urban imagination' in R. Rosen and I. Sluiter (eds.) *City and countryside in the ancient imagination*. Brill: Leiden, 239-74.
- 2005. 'Perspective and Poetics in Curtius' Gorgeous East'. *Acta Classica* 48: 121-40.
- 2005. 'Lucan's Follies: Memory and ruin in a civil war landscape'. *Greece & Rome* 52.1: 46-69.
- 2003. 'Horace and the Company of Kings: Art and Artfulness in *Epistle* 2.1'. *Materiali e discussioni per l'analisi dei testi classici*. 51.2: 135-60.
- 2001. 'Propertius, Hercules, and the Dynamics of Roman Mythic Space in *Elegy* 4.9'. *Arethusa* 34.3: 259-84

Expertise

Cultural responses to the fall of the Roman Republic; the development of autocracy at Rome in the wake of Julius Caesar; cultural imperialism in antiquity (including propagandist reception of Alexander the Great in Rome); the city of Rome in antiquity, especially as an ideological vehicle; reception of Rome in western civilisation; Latin authors and texts, first centuries BCE/CE, especially Varro.

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