Maureen Alden 'Michael Longley's *Ceasefire*, the *Iliad*, and its political resonance'

Michael Longley's *Ceasefire* made what the poet Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill described as 'its first electrifying appearance' in *The Irish Times* on Saturday 3rd September 1994, after the Irish Republican Army announced a ceasefire from midnight on 31st August 1994. The poem ‘was dynamic and ripped right through the community, both North and South, having a galvanising effect’ as people struggled with the difficulty of overcoming the past, of trying to break a cycle of violence. *Ceasefire* connects the Trojan War with the worst atrocities of the Northern Irish ‘Troubles’. The Hebrew translation of *Ceasefire* was published in the Israeli newspaper Ha’aretz in summer 2006 in the week of the UN-brokered ceasefire that put an end to the Second Lebanese War. Writing to the Shakespeare Association of America two months after the events of 11th September 2001, its President, Tony Dawson suggested that the complexity of the time might be addressed by reading *Ceasefire* in conjunction with *Troilus and Cressida*: ‘Embattled cities are lined up in my mind: Troy, Yprès, Sarajevo, Belfast, New York, Kabul, attended by the bitter poetry of war, which, remembering the cost, always elegiac, finds both skepticism and hope in the form and sound of words.’

Nicholas Allen 'Classicism, Empire and Ireland'

The Proclamation of the Irish Republic in Easter 1916 was confirmation of the enduringly radical legacy of classical ideas of political thought on the fragile edges of the British Empire. It built on a literary tradition that used Rome and its conquests as metaphors for contemporary imperial domination, a tradition that mutated after Irish independence into a critique of the emergent state. Ranging from Yeats to Heaney, this paper will explore the ways in which writers and radicals interpreted the classics as a source of dissident critique and of cultural revival in the long twentieth century.

Brian Arkins 'Roman History in Irish Authors: Heaney, Friel, McGuinness, Hewitt'

Horace Walpole said ‘the British had become the heir apparents of the Romans’. Several Irish writers make us of this trope: as Rome dominated Carthage, England dominates Ireland. Frank McGuinness’ play *Carthage* takes place in the context of Bloody Sunday in Derry in 1972. Paul makes very explicit the malign effect of Empires: ‘I’m no slave I am Carthaginian. The earth is mine, not Britain’s not Rome’s’. At the end of Brian Friel’s play *Translations*, Hugh quotes Virgil’s *Aeneid* to show that ancient Carthage must reckon Rome ‘ A king of ample realms and arrogant in war’. As Ireland reckons England. John Hewitt’s poem ‘The Colony’ regards Northern Ireland as colonised by the Romans. But the settlers know the legions will leave, that they will become ‘strangers to the Capital’ as to Westminster.

Michael Clarke ‘Primary Epic and Radical Patriotism’

This paper explores the recruitment of ancient and medieval heroic literature as a charter for militant patriotism. In the Irish context this theme is familiar as the ‘Cú Chulainn motif’ in Pearse’s writings and in the subsequent development of heroic imagery in art and commemoration. It is less widely acknowledged that this theme infected the rediscovery and re-packaging of medieval heroic saga in this country from as early as the late eighteenth century, prompted by the Ossianic craze, and that Pearse’s discourse is paralleled in other revived heroic traditions across Europe in the decades up to and including the First World War. The paper will suggest that this filtering process reflected back in turn upon the study of Homeric epic among Classical scholars, for whom it became axiomatic that ‘primary heroic epic’ is a cross-cultural genre whose main concern is with celebrating heroic death.
Arabella Currie 'The Legacy of Synge in Ireland's Reception of Antiquity'

In his unpublished version of Sophocles' *Philoctetes* (1929-31), Piaras Béasláí, a key figure in the Irish Volunteers, and later a Sinn Féin politician, portrays himself as an injured and unacknowledged Greek, a hero cast aside by his country. At the same time, Béasláí's play is haunted by the presence of another writer, J.M. Synge. Here is just one example of an Irish playwright who, looking to classical antiquity, also looks to Synge. This paper will ask what Synge's recurrent presence can reveal to us about the Irish reception of Greece. In particular, it will ask why his version of antiquity becomes, in its reception, so fraught and so difficult: why Béasláí was one of the most vocal opponents of his *Playboy of the Western World* in 1907; why Lady Gregory was so disquieted about its revival in the aftermath of the 1916 Rising. It will argue that this jagged trail of reception must be seen in the light of Synge's pioneering treatment of classical and Irish mythology.

Terry Eagleton 'Ancient Sacrifice, Modern Revolution'

Since the dawn of time, sacrifice has fulfilled a striking diversity of functions. The practice has been seen as gift, tribute, bargain, atonement, adoration, cajolement, restitution, expiation, fellowship, discharge of debt and celestial bribery, as well as in a whole host of other ways. What has been largely overlooked, in an era in which the notion of sacrifice is deeply unfashionable, is that is also signifies a passage from weakness to power. In this respect, there is a crooked path to be traced from the pharmakos to Marx's proletariat. It is this turbulent transition from weakness to power or from death to life, one that has challenging political implications, which my paper shall be examining.

Edith Hall 'Ipsis Hibernis Hiberniores: Sinn Féin according to Professor Robert Mitchell Henry and James Joyce's *Ulysses*

This paper intertwines two seminal literary responses to Sinn Féin, published in 1920 and 1922, which engage deeply with classical texts: *The Evolution of Sinn Féin* (1920) by Robert Mitchell Henry—Belfast Methodist, Livy Expert, and Professor of Latin at Queen's University—and the portrait of the Citizen in episode 12 of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, shouting 'Sinn Féin! Sinn Féin amháin!' in Barney Kiernan's Dublin tavern.

The works of the Latin Professor and the avant-garde Dublin novelist epitomise two divergent strands in the Irish classical tradition, and their accounts of the early years of Sinn Féin, informed by Livy and Homer respectively, could scarcely be more dissimilar. But on the British imperialism which underlay the schisms and crises in Irish identity, and the aching cultural void left by the near-annihilation of the living Irish language, Mitchell and Joyce are ultimately in agreement.

The paper draws on the Mitchell archive at Queen's and a previously unidentified post-Homeric source of Joyce's 'Cyclops' to demonstrate how ancient Greek and Roman experience haunted the consciousness of Irish intellectuals looking back, in the dawn of divided Ireland, on the tragic history of their countrymen between 1904 and 1916.

Siobhán Hargis 'Memory and Commemoration in Republican Rome and in the Irish Republic'

By its nature, memory is personal, subjective and liable to change. As a result the way in which historic events are commemorated and remembered by subsequent generations is difficult to define and predict. No more so is this the case than within societies that have undergone substantial political and social reform. It has long been recognised that the physical monuments of the Roman landscape underwent significant reconstruction and reinterpretation during the transition between Republic and Empire. Equally, the architecture of Dublin has been used to create a physical façade for numerous generations of governments and regimes. One need only look to the centre of Dublin city for an example of the variation of cultural statements of political dominance and subsequent difficulties inherent in interpreting the meaning of built environment. The 1916 Rising re-wrote the meaning of the General Post Office (GPO) in Dublin, divorcing it from its original
meaning and changing its political associations forever. Throughout the city other buildings and monuments were reconstructed, reimagined, and rewritten. This paper will examine how the events of 1916 impacted upon the popular interpretation of the city’s monuments and examine the parallels between how the Romans and the Irish remembered and commemorated political events.

Declan Kiberd ‘Use and Abuse of Classics’

The lecture will consider the ways in which the teaching of Latin and Greek was often employed in schools of the nineteenth century to promote an imperial agenda that was "character-forming" and "instrumental" in its psychology. It will then consider the ways in which modernist authors confirmed or challenged this thinking. In particular, it will contrast the use made of the classics by TS Eliot and James Joyce, before analysing more recent treatments of Greek and Latin themes.

David H. J. Larmour ‘Hibernitatis nulla fides: The Juvenalian Satire of Martin McDonagh’

As I argue in The Arena of Satire: Juvenal’s Search for Rome (Norman, 2016), the Juvenalian mode of satire finds its most potent articulation in a small group of 20th- and 21st-century novelists and dramatists, among whom McDonagh offers a striking example. With particular attention to The Beauty Queen of Leenane, The Lonesome West and The Lieutenant of Inishmore, this paper examines the Juvenalian elements of his plays: a rhetoric of exemplarity and excess, the coincidence of the topographic and the somatic, satiric nausea and (self-)abjection, and the dismembering of the relationship between the signifying talismans of Irish "national identity" and their signifieds. It will also attempt to assess what, if anything, remains for the reader/audience, once we have been brought to “zero point” by the Juvenalian satirist.

Fiachra Mac Góráin ‘Virgil in Irish’

A critical examination of some Irish-language receptions of Virgil in the twentieth century, the paper will have three parts: an overview of what is Irish in Irish-language school editions of Virgil’s poetry; a brief treatment of the view that since Virgil was a Celt, it is more profitable to study his poetry through Irish; and a consideration of the significance of Virgil to the Irish-speaking characters in Brian Friel’s Translations.

Fiona Macintosh ‘The Politics of the Irish Odyssey’

The Oedipal myth has regularly been construed as the founding Graeco-Roman myth of the Irish nation. This paper focuses instead at that other truculent son of Greek myth, Telemachus, not only the Joycean son but also and especially Stephen Dedalus’ literary forebears.

Iarfhlaith Manny ‘Greek Love, Gaelic Love: Irish Sexual Politics and Ancient Greece’

Taking as my starting point the 1895 trials of Ireland’s greatest lover of all things Greek and the first modern gay martyr in homosexual hagiography, Oscar Wilde, I will trace the shadow cast by Wilde and ‘Greek love’—that is, Classically inspired male homoeroticism—on Irish gay liberation in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Three prominent independence and post-independence figures in political and cultural life, as well as the (homo)sexual controversies that surround them, will be my case studies: (1) Senator David Norris, (2) Cathal Ó Searcaigh, and (3) Patrick Pearse.

Siobhán McElduff ‘Dido’s Ireland: looking back from Frank McGuinness’ Carthaginians to the long history of Carthage in the Irish political imagination’

Ruled by an empire which shaped itself on Imperial Rome, Irish authors and scholars have always looked at alternative models of power outside Rome for inspiration: Carthage, the great Punic empire Rome conquered in the 2nd century BCE, provided once such exemplar. ‘Taking its start from Frank McGuinness’ 1988 play Carthaginians this paper will look at the use of Carthage,
Dido, and the Phoenicians in the Irish political imagination as a potential, if doomed, model for Ireland.

Brian McGing ‘Classical Oratory and Irish Politics’

Patrick Pearse’s oration for O’Donovan Rossa could have been written by Gorgias himself, but classical exempla largely disappeared from the rhetoric of nationalism in the early 20th century, when Celtic themes pushed aside classical references. Thermopylae and the Horatii appeared as motifs through the song ‘A Nation Once Again’, but the main actors of 1916 were not thinking along the same lines as Davis half a century earlier, whose works were full of classical references. Greek models were more common than Roman ones although Horace, of course, was referenced in Thomas McDonagh’s speech before the dock. The classical intellectual world surrounded the politicians of the first decades of the 20th century, but while it remained reasonable for literary figures to allude to such models, most obviously Joyce or Yeats, it seems that political rhetoric was steering away from classical models to a certain extent. In the articulation of what was actually said, however, Greek and Roman rhetoric continued to reign supreme.

Eoghan Moloney ‘Classics in the van of the Irish Revolt. Ancient ideals and 1916.’

Before a shot was fired, ideals drawn from the Classical world – and ancient Greece in particular – inspired many key participants in the Easter Rising (e.g. Pearse, McDonagh, Plunkett). And yet that influence was not easily articulated at the time, nor was it always acknowledged afterwards. This paper will examine the fracture lines between ancient and modern that emerged in the build up to this critical rebellion in 1916, and reconsiders this lost legacy.

Christine Morris ‘Images from a usable past: classical influences on Irish coins’

Seamus Heaney wrote A Keen for the Coins, lamenting the loss of the distinctive Irish coinage as Ireland joined the eurozone in 2002. In 1928, W.B. Yeats chaired the committee charged with supervising the design of that coinage. He looked to the classical past as a model for creating the coinage for a modern Irish state that would be ‘beautiful, intelligible and appropriate in meaning for the people of the country and foreigners’. This paper examines the classical origins of this much loved and admired ‘ark’ (Heaney) of animals, and discusses how these images from the past were co-opted, not without controversy, as a means of communicating national interests and identity.

Damien Nelis ‘Fieldwork: Vergil, Heaney and the georgic tradition’

Much has been written about Seamus Heaney and the Greek and Latin Classics. As far as Latin is concerned, scholarship has tended to focus on Heaney’s use of the Aeneid as a key poetic model. In this paper I would like to investigate the relationship between Fieldwork and Vergil’s Georgics, in order to illustrate the ways in which both works link the land, farming and politics.

Cillian O’Hogan ‘Myles na gCopaleen’s Cruiskeen Lawn columns’

For over a quarter of a century Brian O’Nolan wrote a regular column in the Irish Times under the pseudonym Myles na gCopaleen. The recurring topics of linguistic precision, style, and the literary tradition frequently resulted in appeals to classical precedent, and the columns are filled with references to and quotations from classical authors (especially Cicero, Horace, and Virgil). On occasion large parts of the column would be written entirely in Latin. The sheer quantity of classical material included in the columns, combined with regular references to prominent Irish classicists both living (Stanford) and dead (Mahaffy), indicates the continuing significance of the classics, and of a classical education, for the readership of the Times in the middle of the last century. However, this must be set against many other instances in which Irish language and literature are elevated above the Greek and Latin tradition. The Cruiskeen Lawn columns set out
the appropriate use of the classics by an educated Irishman, a model that can best be understood by viewing Myles na gCopaleen as a modern iteration of a medieval scribe.

**Suzanne O’Neill** 'The Stones of Stormont: A Greek Temple to Unionism and Empire'.

The exterior of the parliament building of Stormont in Northern Ireland is designed in the austere Greek Classical tradition with an Ionic temple front entrance. The leading Belfast art historian Paul Larmour, writing in a neutral style and employing the detached language of aesthetics, has also described Stormont as having “a very dignified exterior” and “one of the most outstanding architectural sites in Ireland”. However, since its construction in 1932, Stormont has stood at the apex of contested representational space in the province of Ulster. This paper will examine how the Classical forms of Stormont’s design represented Unionist ideals and show that the building was constructed to fundamentally symbolise the division of ‘Planter’ and ‘Gael’ and to represent visible, permanent and physical proof of Unionist self-determination and their resolute political will to remain within the British Empire at a time when Ireland had gained independence from Britain. The paper will also analyse the recent cultural life of Stormont and demonstrate how, following on from the Good Friday Political Settlement in 1998 it has (notwithstanding initial reservations) become the seat of the new NI political administration; regardless of the fact that on numerous levels it is still historically and symbolically a difficult building for the Nationalist community to accept.

**Donncha O’Rourke** ‘Soul Mates: Longley, Propertius, and the Elegiac Tradition’

The classicism that informs the poetry of Michael Longley is perhaps best known for its connection of the politics of Northern Ireland with the war-torn world of Homeric epic. Since his days as an undergraduate student of Classics at Trinity College Dublin, however, Longley has also visited and revisited the verse of the Roman elegists, Tibullus and, in particular, Sextus Propertius (claimed as an ‘old friend’ in 1973 and confirmed as a ‘soul mate’ in 2000). Longley’s affinity with the elegists can be sensed in various aspects of their work, including their subjectivity, learnedness, versecraft, and poetic self-awareness. This paper explores as a background to this affinity the poets’ shared experience of living with – and processing through poetry – the consequences of civil conflict. Longley’s homage to Propertius and the other elegists recognizes within Roman elegy a tension with the poetics and politics of epic (a tension that has been the focus of much recent scholarship in Latin literary studies). Longley and the elegists view the world of epic through the prism of lyric verse to meditate on the troubles of their times.

**Geraldine Parsons** ‘Not Ulysses but Oisin: Michael Ireland’s The Return of the Hero’

*The Return of the Hero* (1923) is frequently referred to as a modern, novelised version of *Acallam na Senórach*, the great narrative composed c. 1200 centred on the legendary hero Finn mac Cumail. In fact, this satirical portrait of the fledgling Free State has a much more complicated relationship to its Finn Cycle, or fiannáíocht, sources but it does draw on the medieval tale’s basic premise that ancient pagan warriors survive to meet St Patrick. Published under a pseudonym, its author was Darrell Figgis (1882-1925), who was a notable participant in Irish cultural and political nationalist movements. The work bears witness to the author’s self-conscious insertion of himself into a Gaelic Irish literary continuum; the hero of the title is not he whose return would have been known to the author from his London schooldays but rather is Oisín, back from Tír na nÓg. This paper will consider how the novel presents Ireland’s Gaelic and Latinate inheritances, and how Roman and English influences in Ireland are elided and critiqued. Unrelentingly ironic in tone, the novel is presented as a scholarly work complete with footnotes and discussion of manuscript
witnesses. This is a playful acknowledgement of its place within an Anglophone fiannaíocht tradition initiated by James Macpherson's 'Ossianic' works, but might also indicate an aversion to academic approaches to medieval Irish texts, which were greatly indebted to Classicist models.

Richard Seaford 'George Thomson, the Poetic Speech of Ireland, and the Universal March of History'

George Thomson was, in the summers of his youth, inspired and transformed by the poetic everyday language of the Blasket islanders, and subsequently he found something similar on his trips to Greece. These experiences helped him to bring to life the ancient Greek texts in which he was a leading expert. And yet he was acutely aware of the economic misery that would destroy the Blasket culture. All this inspired him to combine in a single optimistic vision three seemingly disparate perspectives: Marxism, ancient Greece, and the poetic language of a pre-capitalist society.

Isabelle Torrance 'Trojan Women and 95 years of Irish Sexual Politics'

On Sunday the 7th of March 1920, the Dublin Drama League staged Euripides' Trojan Women at the Abbey Theatre, starring the Irish revolutionary Maud Gonne as the devastated matriarch of Troy, Hecuba, and with a cast including at least two of the Abbey Theatre rebels of 1916, Maire Nic Shiubhlaigh and Arthur Shields. The review published the following day in The Independent was remarkably devoid of political response and finds the sexualized role of Helen as one of the performance's only saving graces. This paper will discuss the 1920 production of Trojan Women, Brendan Kennelly's 1993 adaptation, and Marina Carr's 2015 Hecuba to demonstrate how female sexuality is consistently connected with political and social disempowerment within an Irish context.

Mark Williams 'Austin Clarke, Greek Myth, and the Gods of Ireland'

Austin Clarke (1896-1974) was the last major Irish writer to deal seriously with the gods of Ireland's native mythology, across a spread of genres. His attitude towards them modulated significantly during his life, but he persistently showed a desire to make them analogous to the deities of Greece and Rome and to internalise classical protocols. The paper will look at some of his depictions of 'Hiberno-Hellenic' divine beings and examine the political implications of Clarke's method.

Steve Wilmer 'Marina Carr's Hecuba and Irish Politics'

Since the mid 1990s, Marina Carr has been working her way through Greek tragedies to redeem what Slavoj Žižek calls "the excessively destructive women who engage in a horrifying act of revenge...[that] turns them into repulsive monsters". From Medea in the By the Bog of Cats..., to Clytemnestra and Electra in Ariel, to Phaedra in Phaedra Backwards, she has rewritten these women to make them more plausible or acceptable to a modern audience. In her latest project, she has addressed the character of Hecuba about whom she writes, "I always thought Hecuba got an extremely bad press. Rightly or wrongly I never agreed with the verdict on her... No doubt she was as flawed as the rest of us. But to turn a flaw to a monstrosity smacks to me of expedience." In this paper I will discuss Greek tragedies that feature dispossessed and displaced persons as a way of addressing the current refugee crisis, and consider how Marina Carr features this topic in By the Bog of Cats... and Hecuba, contextualising it within other European and Middle East productions.