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Stephen Trzaskoma

Associate Professor of Classics - College of Liberal Arts

Professor Trzaskoma traveled to Edinburgh, Scotland, in July to deliver a paper at the Celtic Conference in Classics.



Professor Stephen Trzaskoma in Edinburgh

This year I was fortunate to be offered associate membership in KYKNOS, an international research group devoted to ancient narrative literatures of the ancient world, which is based at Swansea and Lampeter in Wales. One happy result of this affiliation was an invitation to participate in a KYKNOS-sponsored panel, organized by Professors John Morgan and Ian Repath of Swansea, at this summer's Celtic Conference in Classics (CCC). I was able to accept this invitation because of generous support from the Center for International Education (in the form of an International Development Grant) and other offices at UNH.

The CCC is a biennial event that rotates its venue among Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and Brittany, and I was particularly pleased to learn that this year's meeting was to be in Edinburgh, a city I'd never had an opportunity to visit. Over four days seven panels met in small sessions covering topics as diverse as animals in the Greek and Roman worlds and Presocratic philosophy. The KYKNOS panel set itself the task of exploring the notion of "Untold Narrative" in ancient literature. I found much to my delight that the CCC is ideal for sharing one's own ideas in the usual way, as well as

for receiving feedback that is both learned and productive. Not only do the members of individual panels spend much of their time in discussion, but the panels join together to hear plenary lectures during the course of the meeting, each contributed by one of the panels—a lovely way for cross-fertilization to happen.

The study of the ancient Greek and Roman novels, one of the areas of my own scholarly specialization, has always been a rather international affair, and the KYKNOS panel was no exception, drawing scholars from universities in Switzerland, Italy, Belgium, Poland, France, Greece, the United States, and, of course, the United Kingdom. That diversity of geography was mirrored by an energizing diversity of theoretical approaches, texts analyzed, and even age. With regard to the last, it was both heartening and a bit intimidating to find so many fine, young European scholars giving their elders a run for their money in sophistication and erudition, and truth be told some of us in the latter group were probably surpassed. Another of the useful features of the panel was that its subject was broad enough to bring in papers on subjects aside from the novels, including Latin elegiac poetry, the Roman historian Sallust, and the narrative technique of Herodotus in his Histories. Ample time for discussion in the lovely surroundings of the University of Edinburgh insured our ability to take advantage of each other's views, and I would be lying if I said that these conversations did not continue in the city's vibrant streets and welcoming pubs.

My own paper explored how Chariton, the author of *Callirhoe*, the earliest ancient Greek novel that survives complete, uses the narrative technique of frequent recapitulation to bring into sharp contrast those instances when a character refuses to offer a recapitulation of what has earlier happened to him or her. In other words, I looked at the moments in which narratives are expected to be told but are not. In the end, as I see it, Chariton, colludes with his main character, Callirhoe, in allowing her not to tell her own story in full despite the many demands on her by other characters to do just that. This narrative suppression allows her both to shape the main narrative around her and allows readers to have a textured reading experience in which we feel uniquely positioned to understand the heroine in terms of her internal psychology—a viewpoint with which readers of modern novels are well familiar, but which is quite rare in the traditional narrative genres of ancient Greek literature such as epic and history.

The publication that I hope to produce from the kernel of this paper will be stronger because of the useful feedback I received from my fellow panelists and also more interesting because from their papers I left Edinburgh with a wider and more complex view of the issues at stake. But to concentrate on this as the main benefit of the trip is to underestimate its real value. Thanks to the support of CIE, in years to come I expect to reap many rewards from my continuing affiliation with KYKNOS and from the professional links within the world of classics that were strengthened or made in the city nicknamed the "Athens of the North."

I should also note one curious coincidence. Professor Martin McKinsey reported that during his own CIE-supported trip to Scotland last year, he crossed paths with colleagues and students from UNH's Cambridge Summer Program. At one point during my own sojourn in Edinburgh, as I stood outside St. Leonard's Hall, admiring its Scottish Baronial architecture and chatting with a fellow panelist about a paper we'd just heard, I looked along the sidewalk and spotted Lisa MacFarlane, UNH Professor of English and Senior Vice Provost—and director of this year's Cambridge Program —, coming toward me. We didn't have the chance to share a dinner of mussels and oysters, as Professor McKinsey and last year's Cambridge Program director Professor Andy Merton did, but we did catch up the following morning at the University of Edinburgh's refectory, where she delicately and virtuously breakfasted on authentic Scottish porridge while I crammed down as much haggis, bacon, and black pudding as I could.

But perhaps all of this is no coincidence after all. Perhaps it is merely confirmation of how global a university UNH has become and what an important role CIE has played in that development.

