

NEH Application Cover Sheet

Fellowships

PROJECT DIRECTOR

Stephen E Hinds

Home Address:

(b) (6)

UNITED STATES

E-mail: shinds@uw.edu

Phone: (b) (6)

Fax:

Field of Expertise: Classics

INSTITUTION

University of Washington, Department of Classics

Seattle, WA

APPLICATION INFORMATION

Title: *Poetry across languages: literature, literalism and the Latin tradition*

Grant Period: From 9/2013 to 8/2014

Field of Project: Literature - Classical

Description of Project: A book on the cross-linguistic relations of poetic writing in Latin, which will seek to destabilize the usual narratives of Roman literary culture and classical tradition. Latin literature has always been constituted by its relationships with other languages and traditions: for ancient readers by its ever-changing relationship with Greek; for modern readers by no less constitutive relationships with the European vernaculars. I will emphasize cross-linguistic events in which the correspondence between texts in different languages is so close as to approach the condition of translation, without quite being the same thing as translation, and where the very issue of movement between languages is somehow central. This chronologically spacious project involves a significant mid-career redirection of my energy and expertise. A Fellowship can allow me to make a concentrated push on the book after I present its core as three invited Gray Lectures at Cambridge University in May next year.

REFERENCE LETTERS

Denis Feeney
Giger Professor of Latin
Classics
Princeton University
dfeeney@princeton.edu

Alessandro Barchiesi
Spogli Professor of Latin
Classics
Stanford University (also University of Siena at
alessandro.barchiesi@unisi.it)

1 RESEARCH AND CONTRIBUTION. My proposal is for a book on the cross-linguistic relations of poetic writing in Latin, within antiquity, between antiquity and modernity, and even at times within modernity, which will seek to destabilize the usual narratives of Roman literary culture and classical tradition. Discussions will reach back in time to Homer and forward to late antiquity, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and beyond.

In 1998 my NEH-supported book *Allusion and Intertext* built upon some very close-up reading to explore ideas of poetic voice and of literary history in classical Latin poetry; its limitation was that by and large it restricted itself to conversations between poets *within* classical Latin. *A&I* channeled the Latinist's instinctive attraction to patterns of intricate verbal allusion and topos-variation, capable of unlocking no less intricate discussions of difference within a closed system; the book was able to dramatize these issues in an especially concentrated way by, in effect, bracketing out Greek. But Latin literature has always in important ways been constituted by its relationships with *other* languages and traditions: for ancient readers by its ever-changing relationship with Greek; for modern readers (in the most generous sense of 'modern') by no less constitutive relationships with the languages and cultures of European vernaculars. Latin as the language of the *Aeneid* is *not* (and yet is) the language of Homer; Latin as the language of the *Aeneid* is *not* (and yet is) the language of *Paradise Lost*. In other words, when Virgil's Latin marks its undoubted discontinuities with Homer's Greek, linguistically and culturally, the effect is not so much to erase as to augment and enrich a narrative of no less essential continuities; and so too with Milton's English and Virgil's Latin. Such stories are not just ancient-ancient and ancient-modern, but at times also modern-modern. Consider Joachim DuBellay, who in 1549 wrote a literary manifesto on the importance of responding to the classical tradition not in Latin but in French, and then, on a five year 'exile' in Rome, dramatized a series of poetic lapses back into Latin. Consider also Andrew Marvell, less well known for Latin verse than his contemporary Milton, but of especial interest for his composition of Latin and English poems in cross-referential pairs. In a 2011 lecture mentioned below, my reading of Marvell's *Hortus* alongside his famous *Garden* finds a new sense of mutuality between the two pieces, and a point of access to some broader questions about poetic bilingualism.

I will pay particular attention to the kind of cross-linguistic event in which the correspondence between texts in different languages is so close as to approach the condition of translation, without quite being the same thing as translation; and, moreover, where the very issue of movement between languages is somehow central. A key term here is 'translationese', which I will temporarily free from its usually pejorative connotations so as to annex it for my own purposes. This word has been adopted into professional linguistics to describe various functions and malfunctions of translation, whether in the hands of real-world translators or of computer translation programs. In a text afflicted with 'translationese' the individual verbal matches between translation and source text are *too* close: the result is not a harmonious transfer of meaning across languages but something unnatural or at least denatured by hyper-literalism. Part of the effect of all this is that the translation is foregrounded *as* a translation, with its processes exposed and opened to scrutiny; and this is where I find my cue to annex the term to a non-pejorative use. My book will have an especial interest in writers, especially poets, whose investment in communication across languages and cultures sometimes gives them a literary reason to be literal.

For me, a major attraction of the project is its extended chronological reach, which involves a significant mid-career redirection of my energy and expertise: ancient and modern perspectives on poetry and language will be juxtaposed to their mutual benefit. One of my goals is to bring to the post-antique material a level of expertise comparable to that which I can already bring to the ancient texts, so as to offer in my readings more than a partial story in which the ancient texts drive discussion of the modern ones without responsibility to the contexts of the modern texts themselves. My intent to foreground linguistic and metalinguistic issues increases the challenge, but also, I believe, increases the potential rewards of the enterprise.

2 METHODS AND WORK PLAN. With ‘Translationese: adventures in literal Latin’, an invited plenary lecture at the Triennial Meeting of the Greek and Roman Societies in Cambridge, UK, in summer 2011 (audio file at <http://sms.cam.ac.uk/collection/1173950>), I formally launched the project and introduced material prolegomenal to the Intro, Conc, Ia, Id and IIIc below. (Already-published work on my résumé contains some preliminaries for IIa, IIIa, IIIb and Vc.) I have been invited back to Cambridge in May 2013 to deliver the prestigious J.H. Gray Lectures (two formal lectures and a public research seminar). This is the venue in which I will first bring together the core ideas in *Poetry across Languages*. Intellectually, the Grays will represent the turning-point of my book project, the point at which I expect to move decisively from discrete preliminary studies towards synthesis and theorization; the award period of the Fellowship, starting soon after this, would enable (and accelerate) this final write-up phase in 2013-14.

Here is my projected table of contents and work plan, selectively elaborated below:

INTRODUCTION: ‘TRANSLATIONESE’

I (TRANS)LITERAL LATIN: essays between Latin and Latin a. The *cento* b. The Goliardic stanza *cum auctoritate* c. Vegio’s *Aeneid* 13 d. Marvell’s *Ad Regem Carolum Parodia*

II PARALLEL LIVES (1): essays between Latin and Greek a. Plutarch in the mirror b. Claudian between two worlds

III PARALLEL LIVES (2): essays between Latin and vernacular a. Petrarch’s epistolary habit b. DuBellay between France and Rome c. Marvell from translation to transcendence

IV IN THE CONTACT ZONE a. Philhellenes and *semigraeci* b. The go-between c. Greco-Romans on the bay of Naples d. Naturalization e. Greeks reading Latin f. Romans writing Greek g. Bilinguals and code-switchers h. Hybrids and monsters i. Ausonius and the prehistory of macaronics j. Against transculturality

V LOST IN TRANSLATION a. Petrarch’s Greek problem b. Prehomeric *Troilus* c. Friel’s endangered languages

VI COUNTERFACTUAL HISTORY a. Back to the *Oduisia* b. ‘Joycean’ Latin? c. Cicero’s *Letters to Greeks?* d. Pagans as Christians?

VII VERSIONS OF PASTORAL

CONCLUSION

Part I above begins by provocatively including in this study of movement across languages some instances of ‘translation’ in which only one language is in play, *and movement within that language is severely circumscribed*. In the late-antique Latin ‘cento’ (Ia), the poet constructs his (or, as we shall see, her) *entire poem* out of lines and half lines taken verbatim from Virgil, ripped from their original contexts and patched into a new whole which may bear little or no relation to its ‘original’. Thus in the most celebrated example, by the fourth century female poet Proba, about 700 lines cut-and-pasted from the *Eclogues*, *Georgics* and *Aeneid* are ‘translated’ *verbatim* into a summary of the Old and New Testaments. Here the words stay the same, but everything else is different. Other sections will explore other kinds of linguistic alterity rooted in linguistic repetition: e.g. medieval stanzas of rhythmical Latin built around individual verse ‘samples’ from classic Augustan hexameters and elegiacs (Ib); a 17th century Ode in honour of Charles I written not in the style of an Horatian Ode but in the *words* of an Horatian Ode (Id).

Parts II and III treat Latin interaction with Greek in antiquity, and vernacular interaction with Latin and sometimes Greek since antiquity. The focus here will be on (mostly) poetic lives lived out *in a state of self-conscious parallelism* between languages and cultures. The header invokes a famous work by Plutarch, whose own life and work marked him as an indefatigable builder of bridges in the Greek Roman Empire. The *Parallel Lives* (after 96 CE) offered paired biographies of eminent Greeks with eminent Romans from the pages of history, ostensibly to weigh the merits of each pair but more fundamentally to explore common ground between two cultures. In a key passage Plutarch describes his work as a mirror in which to explore his own identity (hence my appropriation of his title to suggest two sides of a single literary self). No less important for Plutarch’s ‘mirror’ are its blind spots. For early modernity (Part III), the paradigm of a life lived across languages and cultures is Petrarch: I take my bearings from the letters, in Latin, to ancient authors, in which the 14th century Italian is at once closest to his ancient Roman forebears and most aware of the gulf which separates him from them.

Part IV will tackle head-on the range of overlaps between Latin and Greek in ancient literary culture. In Horace's famous words, 'Greece, once captured, made a captive of her brute vanquisher and brought the arts into rough and rural Latium...'. But how far did Greco-Roman biculturality go, what were its blind spots, and why? Were there any situations in which Latin and Greek could interact in ways untainted by snobbery, culture cringe, status anxiety and imperial resentment? If Roman *litterati* were steeped in Greek literature (as they were), why did they so rarely write actual poems in Greek, at least ones that survive – in the way that early moderns were accustomed to write poems in Latin? Did Roman-period Greeks ignore Latin literature as fully as is usually thought, and if so should that surprise us more?

Part V will explore cases in which a failure of access to language and literature, say through the loss of Greek, can itself be a driver of literary creativity in the classical tradition. With a little pressure (and a little help from Brian Friel's 1980 play *Translations*) this can become a story about *us*: we ourselves inhabit a kind of period of language loss, in which the classical tradition is learning to live with (and sometimes to make a virtue of) new discontinuities of linguistic and cultural knowledge.

In a closural provocation (VI) I will explore assumptions and blind spots in the classical tradition through a version of the 'counterfactual history' now in vogue: imagining, say, a kind of Hellenization which did not involve a relationship between conqueror and conquered, or a kind of post-antique classicism in which the distinction between pagan and Christian was not operative, even as a substratum. Finally (VII), I test my book's ways of thinking by applying them to one of the richest and most fully worked areas for study of the classical tradition, both ancient and modern, pastoral.

3 COMPETENCIES, SKILLS, AND ACCESS

As one of the two founder-editors of the Cambridge book series 'Roman Literature and its Contexts' (13 volumes since 1993) I have for several years been working to bring some of the energy of literary and cultural work in other fields to bear upon Latin literature, and to assert for a newly retooled Latin literature a position of distinctiveness within the Humanities at large. My 1998 book *Allusion and Intertext* has some claims to be the defining study of intertextuality and literary tradition in the Roman period ('a book essential to anyone interested in understanding Latin literature': Susanna Braund, *Latin Literature*. Classical Foundations. London 2002, p.197). Several of my publications since 2002 have included discussion of topics in the medieval and modern classical tradition. Alongside my professional training (BA, MA, PhD) and 29 years of faculty experience in Latin and Greek, I can claim a solid reading knowledge of French (also spoken and written), Italian and German, three languages professionally required of classicists for scholarly purposes. I have served on the Executive Board of my university's Center for the Humanities, and as an organizer of the first 'Frontiers of the Humanities' conference co-organized by the American Philosophical Society and the Humboldt Foundation.

Most of the research for this project can and will be done from my home and institutional base in Seattle, using the strong collections of the UW Libraries and their efficient interlibrary loan system.

4 FINAL PRODUCT AND DISSEMINATION

Poetry across Languages aims to be a book which will appeal equally to a classical and to a modern (especially early modern) literary readership, and will accelerate current moves to greater dialogue between them. To these latter readers I offer my Latinity as my first (but not, I hope, my only) claim upon their attention. When I borrowed from my own university's research library the standard French edition of DuBellay, the well-thumbed volumes of his works in French contrasted with the two volumes of his Latin poems – whose pages were still, after 25 years on the shelves, uncut. By contributing specific new insights on the Latin writings of early modern authors, I hope to establish my credentials to write about other authors and other periods more broadly. As noted, my medium-term objective is to test my core ideas in the Gray Lectures at Cambridge in May 2013, to an audience of some 150 classicists and humanists (advanced students and faculty). At that point I expect to offer the book to Cambridge UP (the publisher of my two previous sole-author books and of my co-edited book series); CUP offers unsurpassed visibility and worldwide distribution in Classics, and (a reason for my loyalty) has an exemplary record in both UK and US of encouraging and publishing the first research of junior scholars.

Stephen Hinds: BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Stephen Hinds: RESUME shinds@uw.edu

- Employment: 1983-86 Research Fellow of Girton College, Cambridge
1986-91 Assistant Prof. of Greek and Latin, Univ. of Michigan, Ann Arbor
1991-92 Associate Prof. (with tenure), Univ. of Michigan, Ann Arbor
1992-97 Associate Prof. of Classics, University of Washington, Seattle
(1995-97 Graduate Program Coordinator)
1997- (Full) Professor of Classics, University of Washington, Seattle
1997-2002 Chair of Classics; spr 2010 Acting Chair of Classics
- Positions-in-Residence: 1989 St. Catharine's College, Cambridge (Visiting Fellow-Commoner)
1999 University of Texas, Austin (Professorial Visit, short stay)
2000 Invited Participation in Entretiens of Fondation Hardt, Geneva
2006 Florida State University (Langford Professor, short stay)
2008 McMaster University (E.T. Salmon Professor, short stay)
- Undergraduate Education: 1975-79 Trinity College, Dublin
(B.A., First Class, with Gold Medal for 'exceptional merit')
- Postgraduate Education: 1979-83 St. John's College, Cambridge (Ph.D. 1985)
1979-83 Benefactors' External Research Studentship
Diss.: *The Metamorphosis of Persephone*. Adviser, E.J. Kenney
- Major Awards: 1987 Joint winner (with C. Atherton) of Hare Prize
(Awarded every four years for a classical dissertation at Cambridge Univ.)
1994-95 N.E.H. Fellowship for University Teachers: resulted in 1998 book
2003-04 American Philosophical Society Sabbatical Fellowship
2003-12 Byron W. and Alice L. Lockwood Professor of the Humanities, UW
- Teaching Award: 2010 Undergraduate Research Mentor Award, University of Washington
- Books (sole author): *The Metamorphosis of Persephone: Ovid and the Self-conscious Muse*.
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(reprinted 2007)
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Service to Learned Societies:

American Philological Association
Goodwin Award Selection Committee (2004-07; Chair 2006-07)
[this is the major national book prize in Classics]
American Philosophical Society / Humboldt Foundation
Member of Organizing Committee for First 'German-American Frontiers of the Humanities' Symposium 2004

Editorial and Advisory Boards

American Journal of Philology (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins) (since 2000)
Studi Italiani di Filologia Classica (Florence: Le Monnier) (since 2002)
Trends in Classics, journal-monograph series (Berlin: DeGruyter) (since 2007)
Dictynna (electronic journal, University of Lille) (since 2010)
Tesserae project, computer concordance (U. Buffalo) (since 2011)

(b) (6)



(b) (6)



(b) (6)



Reference Letter for FA57324
Alessandro Barchiesi

Stephen Hinds – NEH project 2012
Referee by Alessandro Barchiesi
Professor of Classics, Stanford and University of Siena

May 9, 2012

(b) (6)



Reference Letter for FA57324
Alessandro Barchiesi

(b) (6)



Sincerely

Alessandro Barchiesi