



Melbourne Masterclass

Classical Manuscripts: Survivals, Rediscoveries and Transformations

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Thursday 24, 31 August and 7, 14 September, 6.15-8.15pm

When the Roman Empire collapsed in the early fifth century under uncontrollable external pressure there was a very real possibility that the Classical literary tradition would also come to an abrupt end.

Held over four consecutive weeks, this series of object-based seminars and lectures focuses on the sometimes miraculous survivals of the works of the major Roman authors, their preservation in the early Middle Ages, their rediscovery by the great 'manuscript hunters' of the Renaissance, and their proliferation and dissemination in the Age of Print. It concludes with a demonstration of how digital technology is today being used to refashion our understanding of the nature of a text and the concept of the book now and into the future.

Thursday 24 August

From the beginning: Antique papyri to medieval manuscripts

Thursday 31 August

Materials, techniques and preservation

Thursday 7 September

Rediscoveries, continuities and transformations

Thursday 14 September

Digital analysis and transmissions



Thursday 24 August

From the beginning: Antique Papyri to Medieval manuscripts

Papyri and their dissemination through-out the Roman Empire

Most of our great classical works were written on papyrus, which was relatively cheap and produced on an industrial scale in Egypt. Its fragile nature means that very little has survived, but there have been some spectacular finds over the past 250 years, especially the papyri from Herculaneum carbonized by the eruption of Mt Vesuvius, and the discarded pages from the rubbish heaps of Oxyrhynchus in the Nile Valley. This session looks at how papyrus spread Roman literature throughout the empire, and will look in detail at the University's own collection of Oxyrhynchus papyri.

Presenter: Dr Andrew Turner

Classical book illustrations and their transformation during the early Middle Ages

A small number of deluxe illustrated manuscripts of Classical authors survive today. They contain, in particular, the works of Vergil and Terence, who were two of the most popular and influential authors throughout the Middle Ages. It can be demonstrated that the illustrations in these manuscripts mostly derive from models first devised for papyrus rolls, although there is also strong evidence for the influence of monumental sculpture and consular diptych carving. This session will focus on the development of classical book illustration in the Late Antique period and its transformation during the early Middle Ages.

Presenter: Professor Bernard Muir

Thursday 31 August

Materials, techniques & preservation

Codicology and Paleography: The making of the medieval book

There are surviving examples from the second century onwards of bound manuscript books, codices, the format of most modern printed books; of particular interest are those surviving from the Carolingian period in what has been called a Classical "Renaissance". The codex generally replaced the papyrus roll by the fourth century, primarily because it was made from parchment, which was more durable than papyrus, and also because its format made it easier to read and to consult. This session will demonstrate how a parchment codex was made; it will also discuss the scripts used by scribes to record texts and the materials used in the manufacture of a codex — manuscript means "written by hand" and manufacture means "made by hand".

Presenter: Professor Bernard Muir

The Carolingian Renaissance: The Age of preservation

When Charlemagne conquered Italy in the 780s, his agents plundered the ancient libraries, and took with them back to France nearly all of the great classical works we know today, which were then copied in monasteries on a mass scale and used in elite education. This session examines the role played by anonymous scholars in explaining these works to a new audience, and how a few rarer works, like those of the historian Tacitus, managed to survive.

Presenter: Dr Andrew Turner



Thursday 7 September

Rediscoveries, continuities and transformations

The age of rediscovery in the Renaissance

The Italian Renaissance saw another great revival of the classics, where Italian scholars combed the ancient monastery libraries of the West to find the last surviving witnesses of classical authors such as Catullus. These scholars, often clerics themselves, nevertheless were imbued with the spirit of pagan Rome and Greece, and tried to get rid of what they thought was the cultural baggage of a 1000 years of Christian thought. They also developed a script which was remarkable for its clarity, and this session will examine an Italian fragment of Cicero. It will also look at how the Renaissance ensured that the Classical corpus took the form we know today.

Presenter: Dr Andrew Turner

From Manuscripts to the Early Printed Book: Continuities and transformations

With the development of the mechanical printing press by Gutenberg (ca. 1450) there was a dramatic democratization of knowledge in that people of every class could now afford to own one or more of these cheaply generated books. Among the first books most people would have normally purchased would be a Bible or a prayerbook. These printed liturgical and devotional books drew upon the established manuscript tradition. While they mimicked early models in their design and contents, they also modified and transformed them. In a similar but more secular vein, Classical dramatic works underwent significant modification in the move from manuscript to print. This session will focus on the traditional manuscript Book of Hours and the Latin Comedies of Terence and discuss illustrative innovations in the early years of the Age of Print.

Presenter: Professor Bernard Muir

Thursday 14 September

Digital Analysis and Transmissions

Recent developments in digital technology have made it necessary for researchers, editors and publishers to reconsider how medieval manuscripts are analyzed and how they will be transmitted to future generations of readers. This session will demonstrate the innovations and advantages made possible by digital technology with specific reference to recent editions of Terence's Comedies and MS Junius 11 (the earliest illustrated anthology of poetry in the English Language), and to the increasing availability of images through digitization of major library collections. It will show how these technological developments have started to change how we think about our standard editions of classical texts, and address questions such as whether the traditional printed fine art facsimile is now redundant.

Presenters: Professor Bernard Muir and Dr Andrew Turner



Presenters

Professor Bernard Muir has taught medieval studies at The University of Melbourne for the past 35 years; his principal field is Anglo-Saxon Studies. He also offers specialist training in paleography and codicology, and the transition from manuscript culture to the age of print. He has produced digital facsimile editions of the two earliest surviving anthologies of Old English poetry and in 2000 established the “Bodleian Digital Texts Series” at Oxford University. His digital publishing enterprise, Evellum, produces DVDs focusing on the workings of the medieval scriptorium. He currently teaches the art of the book from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance.

Dr Andrew Turner teaches Latin in the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies. His research has focused increasingly on the use of digital images in the study of classical Latin texts. In 2011, together with Professor Bernard Muir, he produced a digital edition of a famous manuscript of the Roman playwright Terence from the Bodleian Library in Oxford. Andrew has also worked in Belgium and Italy on manuscripts of Terence and the Roman historian Sallust.

Event Details

Cost

Refreshments included

Individual session: 2 hours each

\$55*/\$65

Series pass: 4 doubles sessions, 8 hours

\$200*/\$240

*University of Melbourne alumni, staff and students

Venue

Arts West Building,
The University of Melbourne,
Parkville

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