

## Theories and Practices of Realism in Latin Literature

Corpus Christi College, Seminar Room

Trinity Term, wks. 1 and 3–8. Thursdays, 5-6.30 pm (except week 3, 3pm)

Organised by Marco Gay ([marco.gay@st-annes.ox.ac.uk](mailto:marco.gay@st-annes.ox.ac.uk)) and Giuseppe Pezzini ([giuseppe.pezzini@ccc.ox.ac.uk](mailto:giuseppe.pezzini@ccc.ox.ac.uk))

### Week 1 (May 1st)

Marco Gay (Oxford)

*Fiction, realism and allegory in Servius' commentary on Virgil*

### Week 2 (May 8th)

NO SEMINAR (23rd Fowler Lecture)

### Week 3 (May 15th) [3.00pm]

Sergio Casali (Roma Tor Vergata)

*Realism and the imagined landscapes: Latium and Italy in Virgil's Aeneid*

### Week 4 (May 22nd)

Bobby Xinyue (King's College London)

*Realism in the Appendix Vergiliana?*

### Week 5 (May 29th)

Philip R. Hardie (Cambridge)

*Realisms in late antique Latin literature*

### Week 6 (June 5th)

Karin Schlapbach (Université de Fribourg/Universität Freiburg)

*Realism and embodied understanding in Petronius*

### Week 7 (June 12th)

Ermanno Malaspina (Turin)

*Ekphrasis and 'landscapes' in Latin literature: Realism or typologies of description?*

### Week 8 (June 19th)

Talitha Kearey (St Andrews)

*From blueprint to monument: Utopian realism in Augustan literature*

### Seminar description

*Mimesis*, along with its Latin incarnation *imitatio*, is arguably the most important and elusive concept of Graeco-Roman reflections on literature, which had a crucial impact on later developments of Western aesthetics and approaches to realism. The assumption underpinning the notion of *mimesis* is that some form of reality exists independently of the work of art, and that the work of art represents, in some capacity, that independent reality. But what is 'reality'? And what level of reality should the work of art represent – its outward appearance, its inner structure, its eternal truth? Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Poetics* famously offered very different answers to these questions, but the issue of *mimesis* never was solely a philosophers' business. The problem of the relationship between literature and 'truth' permeates Greek literature from its origins, is a recurrent concern of ancient literary critics, a matter of discussion in rhetorical treatises, and the constant subject of poetic self-reflection.

The problem of realism is also pervasive in Latin literature, whether as a subject of meta-literary discourse or in actual practice, and yet it has received significantly less attention in modern scholarship, for various reasons. This seminar aims to explore realism in Latin literature on its own terms, investigating how different Latin texts and literary genres engage with, put into practice, challenge, and reshape existing definitions of *mimesis/imitatio*. Contributions will examine the interplay between Latin literary theory and practice, tease out elements of continuity and discontinuity between literary realism in Greek and Latin literature, and test the divergences between ancient and modern approaches to realism. The seminar aims to provide fresh insights into literary realism in antiquity, enhancing our understanding of the relationship between literature and 'truth' in the Roman world.