A Note from the Editor

By Tom Van Nortwick

I hope this finds you all well and happy. We are now in the full swing of the fall semester and have been enjoying our usual schedule of classes and guest speakers. This year we are without Drew Wilburn, who is on his junior faculty research leave. We miss him, but are pleased to welcome as his replacement for the year Hilary Becker, who has her PhD in classical archaeology from the University of North Carolina and comes to us from William and Mary. 

Our embarrassment of collegial riches also includes Jennifer Thomas, who is returning from a year at Grinnell to take up a two-year Mellon postdoctoral position with us. Meanwhile, Kirk Ormand, Ben Lee, and I are on duty as usual. Ben was reappointed with tenure last spring, and we are delighted at the prospect of having him as our colleague on a permanent basis.

We saw lots of alumni at commencement last May, pictures of whom are sprinkled through this newsletter. Let them be an example for those of you who haven’t visited in a while! We love our graduates and want to see them.

As the year goes on, we are gearing up for Martin Lectures by Simon Goldhill of Cambridge University. Professor Goldhill will be lecturing on the study of Classics in the Victorian period; as usual we look forward to a splendid set of talks and a thoroughly enjoyable week of conversations.

If we have not heard from you in the past couple of years, please do drop us a note. We promise to put your news in a future newsletter; think of it as Homeric kleos, without all the messy difficulties that Achilles had to go through.
The Department of Classics is delighted to announce that **Ben Lee** has been reappointed to the college with continuous tenure and has been promoted to the rank of associate professor.

**Tom Van Nortwick** writes that he enjoys teaching, as usual. Along with his usual courses on the *Iliad* (in classical civilization and in Greek) and *Oedipus Tyrannus* (in Greek), it was a special treat to be able to offer a first-year seminar called *Tragedy, Comedy, and the Meaning of Life* and an intermediate course on Cicero. The former was his first try at teaching a first-year seminar and was one of the best venues for helping students with their writing he has ever had. The latter is usually taught by more qualified colleagues, but the exigencies of scheduling thrust Tom into the breach. It turned out to be a big class (19 students) and lots of fun (for Tom at least). He spent his summer writing an essay on Sophocles’ *Oedipus at Colonus*, commissioned by Kirk Ormand for a volume of essays on the playwright to be published by Blackwells. He is grateful to Kirk for giving him the assignment, though working with the editor right next door was daunting. He hopes to expand some of the ideas in the essay into a book on the last three plays of Sophocles.

**Jenn Thomas** writes that she is thrilled to return to Oberlin after a year of teaching in the frigid wilds of Iowa. At Grinnell College she went to nearly every basketball game and, in her spare time, taught courses in Greek, Latin, and a humanities survey of Roman and early Christian literature. Back at Oberlin on a Mellon post-doctoral fellowship, she is excited about teaching a new course on ancient geography and ethnography, and even more excited to teach *The Age of Nero* again in the spring. Her research also focuses on the Neronian period, particularly the political ideas of Lucan and Seneca. Her major project this year is the metamorphosis of her dissertation on politically motivated anachronism in Lucan into a book. Jenn’s article on an unusual bull simile in Lucan, which took form during her first year at Oberlin, will be published later this year in the *Classical Journal*, although sadly the editors insisted on deleting the phrase “bovine psychology” and all references to cowboys from the final draft. And, saving the most important for last, she is finally learning to drive.

**Ben Lee** is happily teaching the *Latin Novel* (Petronius and Apuleius), as well as a first-year seminar on poetry and the imagination. Last year he won a Mellon 23 grant to host a major international classics conference at Oberlin, titled Apuleius and Africa, to be held April 29-May 2, 2010. He is currently researching two book projects: a commentary on Apuleius’ Metamorphoses book 11 and a translation into English of *Le Metamorfosi di Apuleio: Letteratura ed identita*, by Luca Gravnerini. Next year he looks forward to a sabbatical leave, during which he hopes to begin work on an edited volume based on the Apuleius and Africa conference proceedings, as well as a commentary with two Italian scholars on the opening books of Apuleius’ novel.

**Kirk Ormand** finished up last spring with the always-popular myth class, and is back this fall to teaching *Elementary Greek* and *Greek Lyric Poetry*. This fall his article “Electra in Exile” came out in *Bound by the City* (a volume of essays from SUNY press), and he has shifted into high gear editing the Blackwell *Companion to Sophocles*, due out in 2010. A couple of other articles are in the works, and he will be presenting bits from the continuously ongoing book on Hesiod’s *Catalogue of Women* at Columbia University and the University of Cincinnati this fall. Kirk continues as assistant coach on his son’s and daughter’s recreation-league soccer teams, neither of which has won a game yet this season. He is trying to learn to lose with grace and style.
Drew Wilburn taught *Roman Historians* (in Latin) and the survey course on Greek history last spring. He and his *Roman Historians* students read the Claudius inscription from Lyon, which Drew saw while in France in the summer of 2008, through the support of the Cooper Research Fund. The summer of 2009 lacked a European research trip, but resulted in Drew’s completion of two articles on ancient magic for Brill’s forthcoming *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic* (eds. Frankfurter and Versnel). Drew is on sabbatical leave this year, with additional funding from a prestigious Loeb Foundation grant, and will be finishing his book on the archaeology of ancient magic, currently planned for publication with the University of Michigan Press.

Joining the Oberlin faculty this year as visiting assistant professor is Hilary Becker, an an Italic archaeologist who received her MA and PhD at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and her AB at Bryn Mawr College. Hilary is thrilled to be here and will teach courses in Roman history, Cicero, the introductory Latin sequence, and a newly developed course on ancient warfare. Hilary arrived in Ohio in August fresh off a stimulating summer of fieldwork in Italy, where she is involved in two new projects. This year she devoted the bulk of her time in Italy to a newly initiated research campaign in the Area Sacra di S. Omobono in the Forum Boarium of Rome. There she plays an instrumental role in the critical assessment and reevaluation of what has proven to be a massive amount of archaeological material excavated in the sanctuary at various points in the 20th century. This reassessment is part of a comprehensive program to publish fully the artifacts and architecture of the sanctuary as a forerunner to new excavations that will begin in 2010. Hilary was very happy to be working in the laboratory of S. Omobono, where she was surrounded by elite dedications from the Archaic period, pigments from an imperial period paint taberna, and ceramics ranging from the early first millennium B.C. to the medieval period. In addition, Hilary was also involved in the first season of excavation at the Latin city of Gabii. She is currently working on publishing an article based on her summer research, an article on property ownership in Etruria, and preparing for publication a monograph based on her dissertation on the Etruscan economy.
Shannon Higley began a master’s degree in French translation at Kent State this fall. • Jonas Wisser is working for CIT at Oberlin College. • Shoshana Silverman is also working at Oberlin as coordinator of student affairs for Hillel. • Eush Tayco began a master’s program in classics at Vanderbilt this fall. • Emelio DiSabato spent the summer in Los Angeles, taking an intensive Greek course at UCLA, and is planning to apply to graduate school for next year. • Matthew Harbert is enrolled in the Graduate Teacher Education Program at Oberlin College. He began this summer and will receive his degree and certification next summer. • Ploy Keener began teaching Latin this fall at Concord Academy in Lexington, Mass. • Chris Motz returned this summer to the Sangro Valley archaeological project, run jointly by Oberlin and Oxford University. He plans to look for work in the Boston area this fall. • Kolleen Nellett starts graduate work in biology this fall at Tufts. • Alice Sharpless took up an internship position this fall at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. • Molly Wheeler is in Nicaragua, running a community resource center on a small island in a large lake. (Sorry about the vague geography.) • No definite news about plans for Ralph Lewis or Alexandra Patent, but we will report whenever we hear!

**Classical Civilization:**
Shannon Higley
Ralph Lewis
Alexandra Patent
Joshua Talbert
Jonas Wisser

**Greek:**
Shoshana Silverman
Eush Tayco

**Latin:**
Emelio DiSabato
Matthew Harbert
Ploy Keener
Christopher Morz
Kollen Nellett, minor
Alice Sharpless
Molly Wheeler

**THIRTEEN STUDENTS GRADUATED** with majors in classics this past May, plus one minor.

*Alice Sharpless ’09*
THANKS TO TOM VAN NORTWICK’S NEPHEW, who convinced him to join Facebook, we have even more alumni news than usual!

We were pleased to hear from Harriet H. Smith (Greek ’40), who writes: “I have resided in a continuing-care retirement community (Havenwood-Heritage Heights) for the past 17 years (following the death of my husband in November 1991). Such a well-rounded life here has contributed to my longevity, I think. I am now 92. Remarks re: Oberlin: I was glad when a woman president was at last chosen; she put Oberlin back on the right track! My last visit to the Oberlin campus was for my 50th class reunion. I have two living grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.”

We were also happy to receive a short note from Dorothea Morgan (Greek ’41): “Although I am sure that I leaned on my classical education, the only visible benefits from my Greek major were: (1) Reading the street signs in Athens and (2) Familiarity with the Greek alphabet letters often used in mathematical notation in scientific computer work.”

Margo Freistadt (Classical Civ. ’78) visited us in the fall of ’08, bringing her daughter, Kenny, and Kenny’s friend, Anabel Hirano, both of whom were looking at colleges. Tom had the pleasure of meeting Kenny and Anabel and of catching up with Margo after 32 (!) years. We decided that neither of us has changed a bit. The even better news is that both Kenny and Anabel loved Oberlin, applied, and were accepted—Kenny in the college, Anabel in the double-degree program. Now we will get to see them all frequently, an excellent prospect.

William Johnson (Latin ’78) accepted a senior position in the classics department at Duke this fall. (Another step in our relentless quest to control the entire profession though Oberlin alumni.) Congratulations to William!

Welling Hall (Greek ’79), professor of politics and international studies at Earlham, was honored twice recently—an appointment to the Fulbright Specialist Roster and an American Political Science Association (APSA) Congressional Fellowship. Here’s the link for the news story about the awards, which includes a nice interview with Welling: http://pressroom.earlham.edu/articles/2009/03/ecs-hall-learn-washington-inside. Congratulations!

Ellen Bauerle (Greek ’80) brought her daughter, Claire, to Oberlin for a tour of the conservatory, and we had a fine visit. We await word as to whether Claire will be coming to Oberlin.

David Friedlander (Latin ’83) wrote a lovely note: “Thanks for the newsletter and the updates. My 12-year-old studied The Iliad this year and awakened the dormant classics major in me. (Of course, the classics major may have been dormant while I was at Oberlin too, but we needn’t go into that.) I’m an entertainment lawyer now, which sometimes gets me back to the classics too; I represented producers of a recent production of Medea on Broadway. Anyway, reading the newsletter reminded me of how much I enjoyed each of your classes. Hope you are all well.” It was great to hear from him after all these years!

Clara Hardy (Latin ’83) has been in touch this past year, once to ask Tom to read an essay she wrote (he forgot, and is filled with slacker shame), and later to alert us to the new classics blog that she and Rob Hardy (Latin ’86) have started. It can be found at http://classicsblogging.wordpress.com/.

Max Teitel-Paule (’06) and Sarah Lindner
Jon Berry (Greek ’84) was back in touch via Facebook: “Sorry that I’ve lost touch with the department. I hope everyone is doing well. I’ve built the Mount Carmel Latin program to over 130 students in grades 9-12. I only teach three classes now, as I have taken on more administrative duties, so we have hired a second Latin teacher. Let me know if you ever have students/alums who want to know more about secondary school teaching—it is a blast, if you are up for the challenges.”

Deborah Fryer (Latin ’84) continues her successful career as an independent filmmaker. Her documentary Shaken: Journey into the Mind of a Parkinson’s Patient, a prizewinner in no less than five different film festivals, was shown nationally by PBS in April 2009.

John Congdon (Greek ’90) returned to Oberlin, as of October 2008, to work in the development office. He, his wife Lisa, and their two children bought a house on the west side of Oberlin. John recently shared this long-awaited update from Kim On Chong-Gossard (Latin ’90): “I’ve lived in Melbourne, Australia, now for over seven years, where I’m a lecturer (a.k.a. assistant professor) at the University of Melbourne in the classics department. I also recently married my partner, Kevin March, whom I’ve been with for over 11 years. We were married in Canada (one of the few countries in the world that performs same-sex marriages) in Edmonton, where Kevin’s uncle lives. I met Kevin when we were in grad school in Ann Arbor at the University of Michigan; he’s a composer. I’m still doing the Latin and ancient Greek thing, but mainly Greek (after all, Greek is better right?). I published a book in 2008 with Brill called Gender and Communication in Euripides’ Plays under my professional name, J. H. Kim On Chong-Gossard. You can even find a copy on amazon.com. I base almost all the things I teach at Melbourne on what I myself learned as an undergraduate at Oberlin. I teach Greek and Roman drama (which I’ve based on Nate Greenberg’s course from 1990, of course!), intermediate ancient Greek (the set texts I’ve used have been Plato’s Apology and Sophocles’ Oedipus Tyrannus, both Oberlin standards), and beginners ancient Greek (and this year I’m using Luschnig’s new second edition! It still has people sailing to islands in order to persuade the gods by means of gifts).”

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Bronwen Wickkiser (Latin ’91) moved to the classics department at Vanderbilt, and is happy to be there. She met Oona O’Leary (Classical Civ. ’05) on a visit to East Lansing, Mich., and will be teaching Eush Tayco (Greek ’09), who started an MA program in classics at Vanderbilt this fall. Actually, Eush will have to wait a year for that pleasure, because Bronwen is on leave for 2009-10 and will be in Greece on an NEH Fellowship in the spring.

We received an excellent 2009 New Year’s note with lots of happy news from David Corey (Greek ’92) and Elizabeth Campbell Corey (Latin ’94). In the spring of 2008 David received tenure in political science at Baylor, and Elizabeth has a tenure-track appointment in the honors program there. They report that their children, Anna Katherine, 4, and John, 1, “enjoy playing in their playroom, running around the yard,...

Don’t Miss Out!
In an effort to curb print, postage, and environmental costs college-wide, Oberlin is moving several of its print publications online. Please make sure we have your email address, so that you don’t miss out on newsletters, invitations to alumni regional events, and more. You can update your e-mail address (and other information) via OBIEWeb at www.oberlin.edu/alumni. Go to the MyOBIEWeb box and click on “register to access the community” (it’s free). Please direct questions to alumni@oberlin.edu or call the Alumni Association at (440) 775-8692.
and torturing the cat.” They have bought a house: 500 N. Park Avenue, Waco, TX 76708.

Mattew Duvall (Classical Civ. ’95) wrote on Tom’s Facebook wall: “Hi Tom, Didn’t realize you were on FB—now to work on that profile picture! Just passed through Oberlin, had a great night in Finney with the CME. Bumped into Jim Helm for a few minutes. A short but very sweet visit. I hope you’re well, Matthew.”

Herica Valladares (Greek ’95) has sent some wonderful news. She and fellow classicist Mike Sullivan were married on June 15, 2009, aboard the Royal Princess, while sailing from Rome to Athens. She has just completed a year as a fellow at the American Academy in Rome. Herica and Mike are both teaching at Johns Hopkins this fall. Warmest good wishes to them from us all!

Jill Zimmerman (Latin ’95) came to the Commencement open house with her husband and new daughter. Jill has been living and working in Ann Arbor, Mich., since graduating. It was a pleasure to see her again!

Noah Pressler (Latin ’96) checked in with a brief but welcome update. He graduated from law school and loves getting Obie updates.

Margaret Marshall (Greek ’98) and her husband, Karl Hillesbrand, welcomed their first child, Soren Hillesbrand, on January 1, 2009. She has been very busy singing, having already appeared in three operas in the California Bay Area this year. She opened recently as Venus in Urban Opera’s production of Purcell’s Dido and Aeneas.

Stacey Carter (Classical Civ. ’99) is pursuing a master’s degree in history at John Carroll University while teaching English and history at the Hawken School in Gates Mills, Ohio. She sent this welcome note recently: “Hi Tom! You’d be proud of me! I just finished teaching The Odyssey for the first time! Doing Oedipus Rex and Medea (hopefully) next quarter” We are proud indeed, and hope to see her soon.

Tico Wolff (Greek ’01) gave a lecture for the archaeology program at Oberlin last spring and stopped by the department for a quick visit, looking well and happy. He is finishing up his PhD in archaeology at Boston University.

Sarah Biber (Greek ’03) sent an excellent update in June with some wonderful news: “I’m a doctoral student at Stony Brook with Colin Carr. I teach an undergrad class of non-major music history there, which has definitely been the highlight of the degree (aside from having such a fabulous teacher.) I married Keith Bradley, an ex-physicist-turned-lawyer, who had the great misfortune of doing his undergrad degree at the University of Chicago but makes up for it by being from Missouri (I am also from Missouri). He will be clerking for Ginsburg on the Supreme Court in 2010, so we’ll move back to D.C. for the year and hopefully return to N.Y. after that. This summer I’m in the semifinals of a competition in July and am a teaching/performance fellow at a new festival in Maine called the Atlantic Music Festival. It’s at Colby College in Waterville for six weeks. That’s the short version. I’ll start applying for cello teaching jobs as soon as I finish the DMA, and if nothing’s advertised, I plan on auditioning for the new baroque performance program at Juilliard. An aside: I have to take language exams as a requirement for the DMA and tried to convince the graduate director to give me a Greek exam instead of the regular German/ Spanish/French. She relented only if my DMA paper/thesis type object had some relevance to the use
of the language. Bending original conception, I’m looking at
the use of a little Greek music theory in Messiaen’s *Quartet for
the End of Time*. Ok, bending it a lot. Hopefully it will work
out, or I should start relearning some German ASAP!”

**Sean Harrigan** (Greek ’03) is progressing through the PhD
program in classics at Yale. Our Martin Lecturer, Christina
Kraus from Yale, gave us a glowing report on Sean’s work
there.

**Elena Krell** (Greek ’03) has begun her second year in the PhD
program in performance studies at Northwestern. She sent us
a new address: 5558 N. Lakewood Ave., Apt. 3K, Chicago, IL
60640. She promises to visit us soon.

**Chelsea Wallis** (Classical Civ. ’04), since graduating, has
worked in business in Chicago, taught English in South
Korea, and backpacked in New Zealand. She is applying to
graduate school in journalism for the academic year 2010-11.
It was a great pleasure to hear from her, and we hope to hear
more!

**Patrick Schwemmer** (Greek & Latin ’04) has been accepted
into the Princeton comparative literature PhD program with
full funding and a Perkins Prize.

Through the miracle of Facebook, Tom was “friended” by
**Carly Machado** (Classical Civ. ’06). She sent us a brief pledge:
“I promise (lest Janene Brunson kill me) a legitimate update is
forthcoming. Cross my heart!”

**Samantha Grace** (Greek ’05) has been in touch via Facebook
since she began graduate work in anthropology at the University
of Arizona. She has finished her first year of coursework,
and intends to continue on to a PhD. Her husband, Guille
Masson (Oberlin ’05), has found a job at the university’s
financial services office. Tom was honored to receive a three-
page, handwritten letter from Sam this June, full of great news
about her work and life. She reports that she loved her first
experience of TAing last fall, and looks forward to doing more
of it. All-in-all, she seems happy and excited about her life.
We’re happy to hear it.

**Sarah Kessler** (Classical Civ. ’05) wrote to Tom this spring
with a welcome update. She has left the chocolate factory
where she was working for a couple of years, declaring it to
be “the worst place on earth.” (Though relieved to hear that
she was no longer working at such a terrible place, Tom had
to admit that the chocolate she sent him after graduation was
sublime.) She is now working at an animal hospital on the
upper east side in Manhattan, a job she likes much more, and
is reading books by Oberlin classics professors (go girl!). She
says she may be able to come to visit in the spring of 2010.
We’ll be delighted to see her.

**Oona O’Leary** (Classical Civ. ’05) dropped by for a visit this
spring. She has been teaching English in South Korea and
is now back in the States. We loved seeing her and hope for
another visit soon.

**Lindsay Baruffa** (Classical Civ. ’06) has been here several
times for Martin lectures and other classics events. She is
about halfway through law school at Case Western Reserve
University and has promised to get Tom out of the slammer
when the need arises.

![Dario McConnie-Said (’07), Ben Lee, and Pablo McConnie-Said](image)
**ALUMNI NEWS, CONT.**

**Todd Foley** (Greek ’06) sent a fine update in June. He finished a master’s degree in comparative literature at Dartmouth, with a thesis on Sappho, then spent a year in France teaching English. He is now in the PhD program in East Asian studies at NYU, specializing in modern Chinese literature. (But he has not entirely forgotten classics: “I take my plaster-cast owl with me everywhere I go.”)

**Mae Gackstetter** (Latin minor ’06) has been working in Boston since graduating. She moved to Chicago last spring to begin an MS program for pathologist assistants in June at Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science.

**Keith Griffith** (Classical Civ. ’06) checked in this spring with a good update. He has been in Beijing and now works in Chicago for *The Reader*: “My first big assignment is a piece following a group of Iraqi archaeologists who are doing training at the Field Museum for six months, so I’m excited about that.”

**Max Teitel Paule** (Latin ’06) was here for commencement with his fiancée, **Sara Lindner** (Oberlin ’06). He is beginning his fourth year in the PhD program in classics at Ohio State. Tom and Kirk had a good visit with him over coffee, including lots of teacher shoptalk. He is, of course, thriving.

**Shannon Andrews** (Greek 2007) dropped in for a brief visit this winter. Tom saw her at the Black River (a place he’s thinking of trying out for lunch), and found her to be in excellent form, happy and enthusiastic about medical school at the University of Rochester.

**Nathan Daniels** (Latin minor ’07) and **Alice Nordquist** (Latin ’07) were married August 1, 2009 in California. Nathan is doing graduate work in medieval studies at San Francisco State, and Alice is teaching music. Warmest good wishes to them both!

**Sara Edmunds** (Classical Civ. ’07) wrote with a welcome update. She is living in Brooklyn with **Sarah Dunn** (Latin ’07), and hopes to begin graduate school this fall.

**Anna Leinberger** (Latin & Greek ’07) was in town for a friend’s wedding in June, and stopped in for a good visit. She was teaching at the King’s School in Jordan this past year, but is now heading for Argentina to live and study dance. She entered the Alumni Hall of Fame by buying Tom and Kirk’s new books at Mindfair.

**Dario McConne-Said** (Greek ’07) was here for Commencement, looking well and happy. He is pursuing a music career in Philadelphia.

**Tom Buck** (Greek ’08) was here for Commencement. He has finished the post-baccalaureate program in classics at Penn and starts a master’s program in classics at the University of Maryland this fall. He was, we are happy to report, his usual irrepressible self.

**Julia Feldman** (Latin ’08) sent Tom a brief but welcome note last Halloween. She is continuing her internship at MOMA in New York.

**Karen Frenchu** (Greek and Classical Civ. ’08) was here for Commencement, and brought yet another load of goodies for TVN’s sweet tooth. She just wrote (8/09) to say that she has completed an MLIS (master’s in library and information science) with a concentration in archives and records management at the University of Pittsburgh. She is on her way to Boston, where she will crash at the apartment of **Allison Choat** (Latin ’07) and look for work. We hope that Karen’s being further away from Oberlin will not have an adverse affect on the flow of chocolate.

**Neville McFerrin** (Greek & Latin ’08) is in her second year in the PhD program in classical archaeology at the University of Michigan. We have not seen her lately, but have had second-hand reports that confirm she is thriving. (Neville, that’s an official nudge.)

**Sarah Thompson** (Classical Civ. ’08) has been back in town since last winter and worked with the Mad Factory this summer. It was a pleasure to be able to see her out and about.