

M. D. USHER

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PERSONAL: Born: February 16, 1966, Bad Kreuznach, Germany (US citizen); Spouse: Caroline (UK citizen); married October 1986; Children: Isaiah (b. 1988), Estlin (b. 1990), Gawain (b. 1996)

EMPLOYMENT: Lyman-Roberts Professor of Classical Languages and Literature and faculty member in The Environmental Program, Food Systems Graduate Program, Gund Institute for Environment, The University of Vermont (2017-); Professor of Classics (2014-2017); Associate Professor of Classics (2004-2014); Assistant Professor of Classics (2000-2004); Assistant Professor of Classics, Willamette University (1997-2000)

EDUCATION: Ph.D. (University of Chicago, 1997) *with distinction*, Classical Languages and Literatures; M.A. (University of Chicago, 1994) Classical Languages and Literatures; B.A. (University of Vermont, 1992) *summa cum laude*, ΦBK, Greek and Latin

PROFILE: For a feature story about me and my work as a scholar, writer, and farmer in *Tableau*, the University of Chicago's Division of Humanities quarterly magazine, see [here](#). For a similar, more recent interview (in French) click [here](#).

PUBLICATIONS

Books:

(8) *Following Nature's Lead: Ancient Ways of Living in a Dying World*. Under contract with Princeton University Press, to be published simultaneously in French as *La Philosophie de Compost* with Presses universitaires de France.

(7) *How to Care about Animals: An Ancient Guide to Creatures Great and Small*, an anthology of passages on said topic, with introduction and notes, forthcoming from Princeton University Press in 2023.

(6) *How to Say No: An Ancient Guide to the Art of Cynicism*, an anthology of passages about the Cynic philosophers, with introduction and notes, Princeton University Press, 2022.

(5) *How to Be a Farmer: An Ancient Guide to Life on the Land*, an anthology of passages about country living from Greek and Roman sources, with introduction, Princeton University Press, 2021.

(4) *Plato's Pigs & Other Ruminations: Ancient Guides to Living with Nature*, Cambridge University Press, 2020 (trace the roots of sustainable systems in Greek and Roman literature, society, philosophy, and myth).

(3) *A Student's Seneca: 10 Letters with Selections from De providentia and De vita beata* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2006)

(2) *Homerocentones Eudociae Augustae* (B. G. Teubner/K. G. Saur, 1999)

(1) *Homeric Stitchings: The Homeric Centos of the Empress Eudocia* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1998)

Papers and Essays:

(20) "The Ecology of Wanking: Cynics and Self-Sufficiency," *Aeon* (forthcoming in 2023)

(19) "Paws for Thought," *Idler*, Issue 86 (Sept/Oct 2022: 'The Art of Living Punkily')

(18) "Un Americain à Paris: Flâneurie," *La Fabrique de Méditerranée* Vol. 4.

(17) "Chancellor College Classics: An Oresteian Retrospective," in *A Monument More Lasting than Bronze: Classics in the University of Malawi 1982–2019*, edited by Paul McKechnie, Samson Kambalu, and Steve Nyamilandu, commissioned, completed, and forthcoming in Fall 2022 from Harvard University Press/Center for Hellenic Studies.

(16) "The Environmental Ethics of Delphi: Back-filling Latour's *Facing Gaia*," completed and forthcoming in *Ancient Environments and Their Legacy: Long-Term Environmental Interactions, Ecological Knowledge, and the Transformative Potential of Myths*, edited by Esther Eidinow and Christopher Schliephake (Bloomsbury).

- (15) "Classics and Complexity in Walden's 'Spring'," *Arion, A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 27.1 (2019) 111-150.
- (14) "(Great) Works & (Long) Days: Hesiod in Reception," *Arion, A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 24.3 (2017) 111-133.
- (13) "Cento, Greek"—entry for the *Oxford Dictionary of Late Antiquity*, edited by Oliver Nicholson, Oxford University Press, 2018.
- (12) "An African Oresteia: Field Notes on Pasolini's *Appunti per un' Orestide Africana*," *Arion, A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 22.1 (2014) 111-149.
- (11) "Teste Galba cum Sibylla: Oracles, Octavia, and the East," *Classical Philology* 108.1 (2013) 21-40.
- (10) "Diogenes' Doggerel: *Chreia* and Quotation in Cynic Performance," *Classical Journal* 104:3 (2009) 207-223.
- (9) "Theomachy, Creation, and the Poetics of Quotation in Longinus Chapter 9," *Classical Philology* 102:3 (2007) 292-303.
- (8) "Carneades' Quip: Orality, Philosophy, Wit, and the Poetics of Impromptu Quotation," *Oral Tradition* 21:1 (2006) 190-209.
- (7) "The Reception of Homer as Oral Poetry," *Oral Tradition* 18:1 (2003) 79-81.
- (6) "Satyr Play in Plato's *Symposium*," *American Journal of Philology* 123.2 (2002) 205-28.
- (5) "Στέλλεται at *Bacchae* 1000: The Emperor's New Clothes?" *Classical Philology* 95.1 (2000) 72-4.
- (4) "Variations: On the Text of Homer," In *Speaking Volumes: Orality and Literacy in the Greek and Roman World*. Ed. by Janet Watson (Leiden: Brill, 2001) 81-91.
- (3) "Prolegomenon to the Homeric Centos," *American Journal of Philology* 118.2 (1997) 307-21.
- (2) "The Strange Case of Dr. Syntax and Mr. Pound," *Classical and Modern Literature* 16.2 (1996) 95-106.

(1) "The Sixth Sibylline Oracle as a Literary Hymn," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 36.1 (1995) 25-49 [Reprinted in *Greek Literature*, Vol. 9, ed. by Gregory Nagy (Routledge, 2001) pp. 55-79].

Books for Children, Young Adults, and Others:

(4) *POEM: A Mashup*. Illustrated by T. Motley. A pastiche introduction to the conventions of poetry that incorporates lines and phrases of famous poems by Donne, Marvell, Shakespeare, Cummings, Whitman, Dickinson, and others to form a new, organic and itself poetic whole (Fomite Press, 2021).

(3) *The Golden Ass of Lucius Apuleius*, a creative reworking of the classic comic novel for young readers of all ages, with illustrations by T. Motley (David R. Godine, 2011). *Kirkus Reviews* (starred); *School Library Journal* (starred); featured in *Seven Days*.

(2) *Diogenes* (about Diogenes the Cynic philosopher, cast literally as a dog), with illustrations by Michael Chesworth (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2009). Honors, awards, reviews: *Kirkus Reviews* (recommended); *School Library Journal* (recommended); *Booklist* (recommended); *Children's Literature* (recommended); Infodad.com; feature articles in *Bark!*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *Amphora*, *Seven Days*, *Burlington Free Press*, *University of Chicago Magazine*; video slideshow in *UVM Today*. Translations: Korean, Modern Greek.

(1) *Wise Guy: The Life and Philosophy of Socrates*, with illustrations by William Bramhall (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2005). Honors, awards, reviews: *Kirkus Reviews* (starred review); *Publisher's Weekly* (starred review); *School Library Journal* (recommended); *Booklist* (recommended); *Wall Street Journal* feature review; "100 Titles for Reading and Sharing," New York Public Library; National Council for Social Studies/Children's Book Council Notable Trade Book in the Social Sciences; International Reading Association Notable Children's Book; feature articles in *Seven Days*, *The View*, *University of Chicago Magazine*; broadcast interview on Vermont Public Radio; reading/appearance on CSPAN's "BookTV." Translations: Korean and Modern Greek.

Poetry and Translations:

7) "Out of Shakespeare: A Villanelle" (a centonized villanelle comprised of lines from the works of Shakespeare), *Arion* 24.2 (Fall 2016)

6) NERON KAISAR: A Poetic Opera in 10 Scenes by John Peel, libretto in ancient Greek, Latin, and English by M. D. Usher. Commissioned, in progress; selections performed March 13, 2013, at Willamette University in Salem, Ore.; Scene 1, "Incipit," for 4 soloists and chorus with harp and piano accompaniment performed at the Jacqueline du Pré Music Hall, St. Hilda's College, Oxford University, September 18, 2014 in conjunction with the Archive for the Performance of Greek and Roman Drama. Recordings and libretto available [here](#); feature stories by [UVM Communications](#) and [Seven Days](#).

(5) "Serenade" (a sonnet, after Theocritus's Polyphemus and Galatea idyll, with parodic commentary in prose) *Vantage Point* (March 2011)

(4) "Fire in the Hole: Intertexts from Archilochus" (imaginative reconstruction and translation of poetic fragments by Archilochus), *New England Classical Journal* 32.4 (2005) 340-341

(3) "'Anthologia Graeca'" (English verse translations of Greek poems by Hesiod, Alcman, Sappho, Anacreon, Theognis, Alcaeus, Archilochus, and others), *New England Classical Journal* 32.3 (2005) 222-227

(2) *Voces Vergilianae*, Latin libretto and English translation for an opera-oratorio by composer John Peel, selected, adapted, and arranged by M. D. Usher from the poetry of Vergil (Performed March 10 and 14, 1999 at the Mary Stuart Rodgers Music Center, Willamette University, by the Willamette Chamber Choir, the Salem Chamber Orchestra and five vocal soloists. Text and music for Scene II available on NERON KAISAR website; CD and libretto of full work available upon request).

(1) Various original poems published in *The Burlington Review* (1989), *The Chicago Literary Review* (1994), *The Brown Classical Journal* (1996), *The Chrysalis* (1999).

Miscellaneous:

(7) (21) "Gurus of Degrowth: Say Hello to the Ancient Cynics" (2022), commissioned essay published on Princeton University Press's "Ideas" page [here](#).

(6) "Plant-based Dietetics in Plato's City for Pigs" (2021) commissioned essay published on Princeton University Press's "Ideas" page [here](#).

(5) "Classics and Crisis" (2020), a piece for Cambridge University Press's blog 'Fifteen Eighty-Four' about the COVID-19 pandemic, available [here](#).

(4) "Why Read Seneca?" *Amphora* (the outreach publication of the American Philological Association) 7.2 (2008) 6; 23

(3) "Dover Books: An Apocalyptic Fantasy," *Moveable Type* 6.1 (1998) 3

(2) Program notes for Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*. Translated by Ranjit Bolt. Directed by Julie Akers. November 11-20, 1999, Willamette University Theatre (reprinted for a Portland State University production in 2005)

(1) *Texts and Their Transformations: Continuity and Change in the Classical Tradition*, the catalogue for an exhibition of rare books and manuscripts that I guest-curated at the Joseph Regenstein Library (University of Chicago, 1995)

WORKS CONTEMPLATED or IN-PROGRESS:

(5) An essay about John Ruskin's Classical sources in *Unto This Last* (1862).

(4) An article, with Lisa Chase of UVM Extension, on the origins of the modern *agriturismo* movement in the agrarian ethos and agrarian laws of ancient Rome, the implications of which are proposed as a model/recommendation for developing Vermont agritourism (in progress for the *Routledge Handbook on Food and Cultural Heritage*, ed. by Michael di Giovine, et al.; video précis available [here](#)).

(3) Opera libretto (in English, Latin, and ancient Greek) for composer John Peel about the emperor Nero (commissioned, ongoing; see above under "Publications: Poetry and Translations").

(2) *Arse Poetica*, a prosimetric creative work of original poems with commentary that is poised somewhere between Dante's confessional *La Vita Nuova* and Nabokov's satirical *Pale Fire* (ongoing; of interest to Fomite Press).

(1) *Un-educated: Unusual Students, Unorthodox Teachers and the Ends of Education*, a book of short biographies of famous persons who have had, or have provided, unusual educations, from, e.g., Marcus Aurelius to, e.g., E. Nesbit—an interest sprung from my wife's and my own experiences in educating all our children at home to the

likes of Princeton, the University of Chicago, and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (ongoing, in early stages).

GRANTS, FELLOWSHIPS, and AWARDS

2021 French Institute for Advanced Studies fellowship/residency at IMéRA, Aix Marseille Université (September 2021-July 2022)

2020 Transdisciplinary Food Systems Grant (\$10K), UVM Graduate College, to hold a workshop with UVM faculty team members for The Roman Villa Project, Mompeo, Italy (see video précis of research [here](#)).

2018 NYU Faculty Resource Network seminar participant on bioarchaeology, Athens, Greece.

UVM Humanities Center Summer Research Award (\$7,000) to support an ongoing research project/internship in sustainable agriculture, food systems, and classical archaeology at Agriturismo Le Mole sul Farfa in Mompeo, Italy (See: <https://www.uvm.edu/uvmnews/news/new-course-helps-students-unearth-ancient-idea-sustainability>),

UVM Engaged Practices Initiative Grant (\$3,000) for work in Mompeo

Ian Worley Award from UVM's Environmental Program (\$5,000) for work in Mompeo

Seed Grant from UVM's Office of the Vice President for Research (\$4,000) for work in Mompeo and Perugia

UVM College of Arts and Sciences Seed Grant Award (\$5,000) for work in Mompeo

Clean Energy Fund Grant from UVM's Socially Responsible Investing Committee (\$30,000) to fund a speakers' series for 2 years

2018 Fellow, Center for Hellenic Studies (Harvard University), Washington, D.C., for the project "Cosmos to Commons" (= one-month residency at the Center, plus stipend and expenses)

- 2017-18 Loeb Classical Library Foundation Fellowship (\$22,282), for the project "Plato's Pigs"
- 2017 Visiting Research Fellow, The Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities (IASH), The University of Edinburgh (March-April) for the project "Sustainability, Complex Systems and the Greeks"
- 2016 National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Stipend Award (\$6,000) for the project "Sustainability, Complex Systems and the Greeks"
- 2016 Visiting Artist, American Academy in Rome (May 9-23) to work with John Peel *in situ* on NERON KAISAR opera
- 2016 Lattie F. Coor Collegial Network participant, University of Vermont
- 2015 Lattie F. Coor Collaborative Fellowship in the Humanities (co-organizer) for "UVM and the Environmental Humanities," University of Vermont (\$2,000)
- 2015 CUPS (Community-University Partnership for Service-Learning) Faculty Fellow for Service-Learning, The University of Vermont
- 2014 Visiting Scholar, Center for Hellenic Studies (Harvard University), Washington, D.C. for the project "Sustainability, Complex Systems and the Greeks" (= residency at the Center December 8-14, 2014, plus expenses)
- 2014 Lattie F. Coor International Travel Award, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Vermont (\$500)
- 2013 Fulbright Specialists Program Award (\$10,888), to design a liberal arts curriculum for the newly formed American University of Mongolia in Ulaanbaatar (July 1- August 5, 2013)
- 2012 Lattie F. Coor Award in the Humanities and Fine Arts, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Vermont (\$2,500), toward my contribution to the opera NERON KAISAR.

- 2012 Lattie F. Coor Award (\$1,500) to support at UVM performance of "Aeschylus Unbound" by Anthropos Theater (April 25, 2012)
- 2011 College of Arts and Sciences Dean's Lecture Award (\$1,000; lecture delivered in Spring 2012)
- 2010 Selected as a Sustainability Faculty Fellow, The University of Vermont
- 2010 Fellow, Center for Hellenic Studies (Harvard University), Washington, D.C. for the projects "An African Oresteia" and "The Octavia and the East" (= two-month residence at Center and \$5,000); traveled to Malawi, Africa as Visiting Professor and offered seminar on *Oresteia* there.
- 2010 Loeb Classical Library Foundation Grant, Harvard University (\$5,000), also for "An African Oresteia" for research conducted in Malawi, Africa
- 2010 Lattie F. Coor Award in the Humanities, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Vermont (\$2,400), a travel grant for "An African Oresteia"
- 2009 Selected to participate in a faculty summer seminar on Food Systems, Honors College, University of Vermont. Our farm's lamb featured at end-of-semester localvore dinner.
- 2005 Selected to participate in the seminar "Global Mythologies" at NYU through the Faculty Resource Network (June 6-12), Joy Connolly, convener.
- 2003 Presidential Distinguished Lecture Series grant (\$5,000), University of Vermont, to bring Prof. Gregory Nagy, Harvard, to campus for a public lecture and graduate seminar.
- 2001 Dean's Fund Grant, University of Vermont (\$1,000) for work on Homeric poetry and performance.
- 2000 Atkinson Foundation Grant, Willamette University (\$2,500) for work on "An African Oresteia" (declined)

- 1999 Rose Tucker Foundation Grant (with Catherine Collins and Ann Nicgorski; \$105,000 over three years to support a university-wide freshman seminar on 5th century Athens)

- 1999 Hewlett Foundation Grant (with Catherine Collins and Ann Nicgorski), Willamette University (\$15,000 for implementation of aforementioned grant)

- 1999 Northwest Academic Computing Consortium Grant (with Catherine Collins and Ann Nicgorski), Willamette University (\$3,000 for the development of a "Virtual Parthenon" Web Page)

- 1997-98 Hewlett Foundation Grant, Willamette University (for developing the course "Oral Art Forms, Old and New")

- 1996-97 Whiting Foundation Fellowship, University of Chicago (dissertation-year fellowship)

- 1995 Blanche B. Boyer Fellowship, University of Chicago (fellowship to travel to Greece to consult manuscripts in the collections on Mount Athos)

- 1993-96 Paul Shorey Fellowship in Classics, University of Chicago (graduate merit fellowship)

- 1992-96 University of Chicago Graduate Fellowship

SERVICE (at the University of Vermont):

Food Systems Graduate Program Membership and Engagement Committee (2020-); Director of LASP (Liberal Arts Scholars Program) Humanities Scholars (2018-2020); Chair, Department of Classics (2006-2016; Academic Program Review self-study and external evaluator site visit in 2014-2016); Acting Chair, Department of Asian Languages and Literatures (Spring 2016); College of Arts and Sciences Dean Search Committee (2015-2016); Lawrence Professor of Speech and Forensics Search Committee (Spring 2016); External Evaluator for the Department of Classics, University of Malawi (2014-2017; site visit in October 2015); Interim Director of the Humanities Center (Spring 2008-AY 2008-2009); Acting Chair, Department of Classics (2004-2005); Chair, College Honors and Individual Studies Committee (2001-2003); departmental representative to the Faculty Senate (2000-2002);

departmental representative to the John Dewey Honors Program (2000-2004); institutional representative to the Managing Committee of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens (2000-); external evaluator for the University of New Hampshire's Department of Classics (2007); external examiner for the University of Malawi's Department of Classics (August 2014-August 2017); referee for *Classical Philology*, *Classical Antiquity*, *Byzantium*, *Gnomon*, *Helios*, *Mnemosyne*, *Ancient Philosophy*, *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, *Amphora*, *Oral Tradition*, *American Journal of Philology*; the American Philological Association Monograph Series, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Hackett Publishing, The National Endowment for the Humanities, Princeton University Press, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, St. Martin's Press, Routledge, Cambridge University Press, and others (ongoing).

OTHER EXPERIENCE:

Sheep farmer/homesteader (See www.worksanddaysfarm.com: we built our own house and outbuildings, and produce market lambs, eggs, and maple syrup for commercial markets; we also homeschooled our children—the eldest a graduate of Princeton, the middle son from the University of Chicago, the youngest from The Lawrence Conservatory/Royal Scottish Conservatoire); Staff writer, University of Chicago Donor Relations (1994-95); Guest curator and catalogue author for "Texts and their Transformations: Continuity and Change in the Classical Tradition," an exhibition of rare books and manuscripts in the University of Chicago's Regenstein Library (1994); Carpenter's Apprentice, Otto Frsch Zimmerei, Holzgerlingen, Germany (1984-86)