

# FROM THE EDITORS

*“It’s a dangerous business, Frodo, going out your door. You step onto the road, and if you don’t keep your feet, there’s no knowing where you might be swept off to.”*

*-Bilbo Baggins, J.R.R. Tolkien’s The Fellowship of the Ring*

This is the second issue of *Discentes* to be published. The magazine has come some distance to arrive at this point. When we set out to create a publication for the Penn classics community almost a year ago, grand ideas filled our minds. Some can be found on the pages of this issue; some can not. As with any human endeavor, the end result is not as we planned it, but in this case, we feel confident in saying it is better.

Our first issue featured a piece by James Levy entitled “Why I’m a Hellenist.” In his casually hilarious prose, James described his passion for the “cultural conquerors of the Mediterranean” and an accompanying distaste for the “jack-booted thugs”<sup>1</sup> (Romans) who succeeded them. James’ piece spoke directly to the classics experience at Penn, revealing a new area to which *Discentes* could contribute. The magazine could be more than a venue for undergraduates to publish research papers; it could also be a means of adding to the Penn classics culture and community. In this second issue, Molly Hutt, Alethea Roe, and Laura Santander build upon James’ example, expressing the angst of thesis-writing, the frustration of dealing with the perceived worthlessness of a classics degree, and the surprising connections between Latin literature and the hip-hop artist Sir Mix-A-Lot. *Discentes* offers undergraduates an opportunity to voice these experiences—the struggles and joys of being a classics

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<sup>1</sup> We thank Professor McInerney for this delightful and—in these editors’ minds—woefully unfair characterization.

student at Penn—and share them with fellow students.

Still, the research papers remain the core of the magazine. In this issue, Alethea Roe discusses the problems in the acquisition and interpretation of mummy portraits in “Not Art But Truth.” Madeleine Brown assesses Livy’s use of spectacles in his history, focusing on the kidnapping of the Faliscan children in Book V. In “Humanity Unbound,” Ben Nicholas examines Prometheus’ dedication to helping humankind and the less apparent but still significant devotion of Zeus. Finally, Allison Letica traces storm imagery through Seneca’s corpus and explores how the author uses these motifs to illustrate the ideals of Stoicism.

In addition to the research and light-hearted fare, our second issue features an interview with Professor Julia Wilker with whom we were honored to sit down to discuss her interests and her perspectives on classical studies and Penn. We are also grateful to post-baccalaureate student Amy Conwell for sharing her own experiences and goals. Professor James Ker and Renee Campbell continue to provide invaluable support and encouragement.

*Discentes* continues to evolve. The form that the magazine will take a year from now is unlikely to be identical to the issue presented here. The road is laid out before our feet, and we must follow the example of the bold and brave hobbit Bilbo Baggins:

*...far ahead the Road has gone,  
And I must follow, if I can,  
Pursuing it with eager feet  
Until it joins some larger way  
Where many paths and errands meet.  
And whither then? I cannot say.*



Carson Woodbury



Laura Santander