

CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT

PRAISE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF CHARACTER IN LATE ANTIQUITY

National University of Ireland, Maynooth, Friday 10–Saturday 11 May 2013

Imperial panegyrics, funeral speeches, liturgical hymns, saints' lives: the act of praise was deeply woven into the literary and cultural fabric of late Antiquity. As these examples suggest, such acts belonged to a wide range of social situations and types of text, and participated in a variety of cultural discourses. Every act, however, was closely concerned with the construction of character, the creation of 'image': the object of praise (male or female, living or dead, human or divine) was formed no less than mirrored by the praise itself.

The aim of this conference is to explore the praise-literature of late Antiquity with particular emphasis on character-construction and image-creation. Questions which we seek to address include the following: To what extent is the character of the *laudandus* shaped by rhetorical traditions? How much is owed to representations of character in earlier texts and to ancient ideas of character? How important are exempla (positive and negative) in the construction of character, and how far is the object of praise him-/herself constructed so as to be exemplary? How significant are generic considerations? To what extent are specific images the product of precise historical circumstances? What kinds of function are served by textually constructed images, and how might such images impact on the behaviour of the *laudandus* or of readers? How important are the relationships between praise-giver, praised, and audience/readership in the construction of image? How far do praise-givers use eulogistic situations for purposes of self-promotion and self-fashioning?

Confirmed speakers:

Christopher Kelly (University of Cambridge), 'The Problem of Praise' (keynote address).

Virginia Burrus (Drew University), 'Gender, Genre, and Biblical Exemplarity in *The Life of Saint Helia*'.

Marco Formisano (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin), 'Reading Boredom: Pliny's Praise of Trajan and the Rhetoric of Sincerity'.

Bruce Gibson (University of Liverpool), 'In Praise of Gratian: Ausonius' *Gratiarum Actio*'.

David Scourfield (NUI Maynooth), 'Undying Praise: Memorialization in the Consolatory Letters of Jerome'.

Michael Trapp (King's College London), 'And I Mean This Very Sincerely: *Encomium* and *Ethos* in Lucian'.

Lieve Van Hoof (Lichtenberg-Kolleg, Universität Göttingen), 'Praise through Characterization through Praise: The Forged Epistolary Exchange between Basil and Libanius'.

Catherine Ware (NUI Maynooth/University of Liverpool), 'The Emperor Constantine and his Virtues'.

Michael Williams (NUI Maynooth), 'How Shall I Praise Thee? Martin of Tours in the Works of Sulpicius Severus'.

A **registration fee of €20** is payable at the conference. However, advance notice of an intention to attend would be welcomed, and should be sent by e-mail to Dr Catherine Ware (catherine.ware@nuim.ie) as soon as possible and in any case no later than a week before the beginning of the conference. **Accommodation** may be arranged, if desired, through Maynooth Campus Conference and Accommodation (www.maynoothcampus.com). Thanks to the generosity of the Classical Association, the organizers are able to offer **three bursaries of up to €125 each** to current postgraduate students, to cover the conference fee, the conference dinner on the Friday night, and, if required, accommodation on campus; they may not be used to fund travel. Bursary applications no more than one page long, stating current academic status and outlining reasons for interest in the conference, should be sent by e-mail attachment to Dr Catherine Ware (catherine.ware@nuim.ie) by **Friday 15 March**. Applicants should ask supervisors to e-mail a very brief statement of support to Dr Ware by the same date.

The National University of Ireland, Maynooth, is situated on an attractive campus in Ireland's only university town, 15 miles west of Dublin. Maynooth is easily accessible from central Dublin by rail, bus, or car, and lies about 30 minutes' drive from Dublin Airport.

Enquiries should be addressed to the organizers:

david.scourfield@nuim.ie

catherine.ware@nuim.ie

michael.williams@nuim.ie