



INTERVIEW WITH  
**CLARA ULRICH  
EGGERS**  
CAND. MAG IN 2018

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**What are you doing now? And what have you been doing since finishing uni?**

(I'll answer those questions in reverse order.) First of all, I was very unemployed for a while. I did a bit of linguistic work here and there and then worked as a (less than part-time) translator for a while, primarily translating technical manuals for agricultural machines (– riveting, I know...). Then in May 2019, almost a year after I'd handed in my thesis, I got offered a job as an NLU Language Specialist for Nuance Communications, an international tech company, where I would be part of a team developing language technology for automotive customers (so, cars). This is technically still the role that I'm in – however, on October 1st 2019 my division (Nuance Automotive) became its own spin-off company (Cerence Inc.) but I'm working on the same project and with the same people as when I was hired back in May. NLU stands for Natural Language Understanding, and this is the subcomponent of speech technology that focuses on understanding and interpreting human

language. I work from home, I am the Danish (one-woman-) team on the project, and I love the freedom that this gives me. In the language tech field, we're rarely offered stability, in the sense that most positions are short-term and project-based, but what's lacking in stability, the companies usually make up for in flexibility. Most days I really enjoy my work and most importantly, I'm learning and have learned so much from this employment, especially because it's so "tech heavy" and all the technical stuff is just learning-by-doing for me. So yeah, it paid off after all, being able to analyze sentences. Who'd have thought.

(Oh, and this spring, I'm running a bit faster than usual as I'm also teaching a BA course (Advanced Syntax, yay) at the university. Good times only.)

**How has your time at uni prepared you for your current job?**

Well, everything linguistics has laid a pretty good (and completely essential) foundation, I would say. Also, patience (– and then crying in fetal position when patience is just too ambitious a strategy). "Self-discipline" should probably be on this list too, seeing that I actively have to choose to sit down in front of my computer and actually work for 7-8 hours-ish every day (instead of, say, just watching Netflix in my PJs all day).

**What is the most important lesson you learned during your time at uni?**

Hard work pays off but never enough to make up for a lack of self-care. There was one semester in particular where the academic situation made me very frustrated but I kept telling myself that I had to make it through, no matter what, and so I just ignored all the physical symptoms of stress that began to appear and quite forcefully so. Although I got out of that situation relatively unscathed, it's evident that the strain has had a long-lasting effect on my nervous system and the way my body reacts to stress today, so self-care first and foremost. Definitely.

**What are your hopes and dreams for the future?**

It would be great to be able to keep paying my bills. Also, Anne Mette Nyvad from the Department of English (is the boss and) has been awarded a Sapere Aude Starting Grant from the Independent Research Fund



Denmark for a research project (“At the Edge of Language – An Investigation into the Limits of Human Grammar”), and as part of this project, she has offered me a PhD position which will begin on September 1st this year. I’m currently walking the fine line between excitement and terror so I would say my ‘hopes and dreams for the future’ currently are 1) to become less terrified, 2) to survive, and 3) to be able to thrive and make the most of a pretty amazing opportunity.

### What is your best memory from your time at the English Department?

At the risk of sounding like a big nerd (perhaps it’s too late for that anyway), one of my best memories is returning to English (after having endured way too much time at my tilvalg) and taking The Psychology of English Syntax with Johannes Kizach. This was by far the most interesting and challenging course throughout my time at the university, and it somehow managed to spark my inner drive again – a drive, which, at this point in time, had weakened to the point of oblivion. I remember spending several days trying to get through a 16-page article, and I almost cried with joy when it finally dawned on me what the words meant. And then, being a tutor. I loved being a student at the Department of English, and the department thrives when the new students feel integrated and engaged, both in the social life, in committees, and in the academic part of the study. I’m very happy that I got a chance to make others feel just as included, just as happy about their choice, as I came to feel during my own first semester when the Department of English became my, at least temporary, home.

Our new Professor of Classical Reception, **Isabelle Torrance**, has not one, not two, but three fully funded PhD positions to offer in relation to her EU project “**Classical Influences and Irish Culture.**” For those who miss student life, the deadline is March 15, and you get the chance to immerse yourself in both the classics and Irish culture (the renowned literary and aesthetic culture, that is, and not whatever it is Stephen gets up to on St. Patrick’s Day).

## NEWS AND EVENTS

**Sara** really should have her own separate newsletter as she continues to be seemingly everywhere at once. Those of you working in education may be interested to get involved in developing Sara’s open-access teaching material on “Borders, Brexit, and British-Irish Relations,” including an EU-funded role-playing game on negotiating the border and Brexit for high schools that will be piloted this autumn. She would be delighted for any former students to get involved and you can find more information on her **website**. Brexit may be done, but Sara’s work on it is only getting started. You can also stay up to date on Irish Studies news and events by following the **CISA podcast**.

This year’s **English Revy** will take place in **Stakladen on March 27 at 19.00**. If you don’t necessarily miss the essay writing but do miss seeing your former professors be made fun of, then save the date!

Thanks to the Revy, we know just how much you all enjoyed having **Dominic** hawk his textbook to you as students. If you’re feeling nostalgic, then you’ll be delighted to know that Dominic is still trying to sell you his book, which is out in a new edition called **Literature in English: How and Why**, complete with new chapters on literary theory and the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals. Expect to be asked if you’ve bought your copy yet if you meet Dominic later this year.

And finally, although the programme for this year’s Literature Festival isn’t set yet, keep an eye out for several members of staff at live events. **Stephen** will be performing at the international storytelling event “Always Burning”; **Tabish** will probably have published another two, maybe three novels by this summer; **Peter** will be telling audiences that he has been trying to save the world since before Greta Thunberg was born; and **Dominic** will be around somewhere with a suitcase full of textbooks, just in case anyone wants to buy a copy of *Literature in English: How and Why*.