

VATES

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Edited by Mark Walker
email: vates@pineapplepubs.co.uk

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Editorial

Aside from the occasional email lamenting an alleged false quantity in someone else's verses I tend to receive little in the way of positive advice for aspiring poets. But one of the founding principles of this journal is to do just that – to give encouragement to beginners, something I feel *Vates* (by which I mean both the journal and its contributors) have not yet paid sufficient attention to. So in this issue I have decided to inaugurate a new and hopefully regular column – *Advice for Beginners* – to which I hope that more experienced Latin poets than myself will consider contributing. Anything from a single pithy sentence to a modest paragraph to a mini-essay will work here – hints, tips, nuggets of advice, anything *helpful*. Perhaps you have something to say about what works best in the last two feet of a hexameter line, perhaps you can suggest sensible ways of using a *Gradus*, perhaps you have advice about how to write rhymed accentual verse... there are no rules about what can be discussed here, other than that any advice be offered in the spirit of passing on what you have discovered (perhaps by painful trial and error) to those who are keen to learn.

To kick things off, my own initial foray is a very basic discussion of the oft-blurred distinction between syllable quantity and vowel length. But I don't mean this to become a template for future contributions – as the song says, anything goes. So Latin poets, please don't neglect an opportunity to pass on your hard-earned wisdom.

Once again I offer my heartfelt thanks to all the contributors to both this and previous editions. If you haven't yet contributed a poem, do please consider having a go. The purpose of this publication is to provide a platform for anyone to try their hand at this ancient art – and I really mean *anyone* – so I encourage you to do so.

Don't forget: if you missed previous issues, please visit the [Vates webpage](#) to download your free copies.

Mark Walker, Editor
vates@pineapplepubs.co.uk

Carmina Latina

(n.b. Latin spellings follow the orthography of the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*. Only proper names are capitalised.)

The Song of the Sirens

Paul Murgatroyd

Paul Murgatroyd writes: Ovid was fond of producing his own version of something in a preceding poet, and would often expand his source. I thought that in the spirit of Ovid I would redo the song of the Sirens at Homer *Odyssey* 12.184ff., trying to make it melodious, stylish and amusing.

*huc ades, huc aures aduerte, illustris Ulixē;
 nam pennata loqui uerba tibi uolumus.
 mox coram te Scylla rapax sociosqueprehendet
 et mandet lente uiscera, corda, genas;
 mox mittet nubemque nigram tibi Iuppiter asper,
 funesto et puppim fulmine percutiet.
 hic permanat pax aeterna quiesque profunda:
 tuto nobiscum tu potius remane.
 accipe quae Troia Troes tulerint et Achiui
 et tua quid coniunx quid faciatque puer.
 Penelope penem diui deserta petebat,
 Panaque Mercurio Penelope peperit;
 nunc centum iuuenes per portas illa patentes*

admittit; centum continueque ineunt.
Telemachus puerique puer iam prauus amator
cum tenero nato Nestoris usque iacet.
quid tibi cum tali puero, cum coniuge tali?
nunc spernens nuptam dic 'mea uita, uale'.
uiuimus hic solae; nos ambas solus habebis;
nos ambas uno fas tenuisse toro.
iungimus et uenerem uolucres per mille figuras;
nequitias nostras uincere nemo potest.
dulce et amare et amore mori. mox tu moriere;
pallebis, cuncto corpore nullus eris.
carmina nostra audis, an cera clauditur auris?
quidni nobiscum carmina participes?
ad numeros nostros laeto pede percute terram
et pulsa palma tympana tenta cita.
segnis inersque fugis pulchras facilesque puellas?
uiuere non gestis? segnis inersque fugis.

* * *

Metre: Elegiacs

Translation: Come here, turn your ears here, illustrious Ulysses; for we want to speak winged words to you. Soon before your eyes rapacious Scylla will seize your companions and slowly chew their entrails, hearts, eyes; and soon angry Jupiter will send a black cloud to you and strike your ship with a deadly thunderbolt. Here

eternal peace and deep repose [of death] are diffused: rather remain safely with us. Hear what the Trojans and Greeks endured at Troy and what your wife and son are doing. When deserted, Penelope sought the penis of a god, and Penelope bore Pan to Mercury; now she takes in a hundred young men through her broad gateway; and a hundred [young men] continually enter. And the boy Telemachus, already the depraved lover of a boy, lies constantly with Nestor's tender son. What do you want with such a boy, with such a wife? Now, rejecting your spouse, say 'Farewell, my darling/life'. We live/survive alone here; you alone will have us both; it is permitted for you to embrace us both in one and the same bed. We couple swiftly/birds in a thousand positions; nobody can outdo our naughtiness/evil. It is sweet to love and to die of love. Soon you will die; you will be pale, and your whole body will have shrunk to nothing. Do you hear our song, or are your ears blocked with wax? Why don't you join in the song with us? In time to our melody pound the ground with happy feet and strike a taut drum with a speedy hand. Are you fleeing beautiful and willing girls, spiritless/impotent and unmanly/impotent? Aren't you keen to enjoy life/live/survive? You are fleeing, spiritless/impotent and unmanly/impotent.

* * *

Saint Mark

Richard Sturch

Richard Sturch writes: On the occasion of the patron saint's Day (25th April) of the editor of this journal, I recalled a hymn in his honour written by Laurence Housman, brother of a celebrated editor of Lucan and Manilius, and published as #220 in *The English Hymnal*. It was obviously written with mediaeval Office Hymns in the back of the mind, so ...

qui primus Dei gratia

saluante scripsit de uita

euangelistae lumine

concelebramus hodie.

accensus igne Spiritus,

desiderauit animus

integra mente auditum

edere uerbum diuinum.

deinde clara deitas

illuminauit litteras

quae morientis etiam

solari possunt animam.

*o sanctum cor, idoneum
scribere Vitam hominum!
praesentes quoque animi
monstrent exemplum Domini.*

*sic errantes inscitia
ducantur Marci doctrina,
ut posthac sint ab angelis
in vitae scripta tabulis.*

*laudate mundi Dominum,
qui nobis misit Filium,
et docuit per Spiritum
euangelistam pristinum.*

* * *

Metre: Rythmic iambic

English original (Laurence Housman, 1865-1959):

The Saint who first found grace to pen
The Life which was the Life of men,
And shed abroad the Gospel's ray,
His fame we celebrate today.

Lo, drawn by Pentecostal fire,
His heart conceived its great desire,
When pure of mind, inspired, he heard

And with his hand set forth the Word.

Then, clearly writ, the Godhead shone
Serene and fair to look upon;
And through that record still comes power
To lighten souls in death's dark hour.

O holy mind, for wisdom fit
Wherein that Life of lives stood writ,
May we through minds of like accord
Show forth the patterns of our Lord.

And so may all whose minds are dark
Be led to truth by good Saint Mark,
And after this our earthly strife
Stand written in the Book of Life.

Praise God Who made the world so fair,
And sent His Son our Savior there,
And by His Holy Spirit wist
To teach the first Evangelist.

* * *

Amor Cordis

Kemar Cummings

Kemar Cummings writes: This poem was written a few years ago while I was trying to teach myself Latin. I love classical poetry and when I saw that other people are still writing Latin verse I thought I might try to write one myself.

*tu, domina mea, flammis passionis incendet. Amor,
arco magno, certe cor celeri sagitta icet.
autem amoris venti in pectore meo flagrant
pro hac, meum cor in ardore movet*

* * *

Metre: Free verse

Translation: *A Love of the Heart.*

You, my lady, ignites the flames of love. Love,
With a great bow, is sure to strike my heart with its arrow.
As the winds of love flame up in my breast
For her, my heart moves in love.

* * *

De Regni Occasu

Irisatus Yokohamensis

Irisatus Yokohamensis writes: In this poem, I tried to write something in pure iambic trimeter. That is to say, I prioritised wordplay over story-telling. Nonetheless, while I was composing these verses, I formed a picture in my mind of a Japanese novel, which describes some kind of beauty created by atrocious acts.

*sagitta regis os statim superbius
celer canente jacta uulnerat choro.
nouus per atrium fluit rubrum cruor.
peruritur palatium ferocibus,
ubi per aeuu musici colunt suam
deam, uenustius deintus ignibus.
puella sed salire pergit aulica
canore fistulae sonante dulciter.
pudica non timens mori per aurea
theatra gressa flagrat innocentia.*

* * *

Metre: Iambic trimeter

Translation: *Overthrow of a Dynasty*

A swift arrow is released and hit the king's prideful face, while the chorus is singing. New blood flows on the floor of the red atrium. From the inside, ferocious fires burn his very beautiful palace, where musicians hone their artistic skills for centuries. But there

is a court girl, who doesn't stop dancing, while a flute melody
sounds sweetly. Never afraid of dying, passing through golden
stages, shy Innocence inflames.

* * *

Reading Ovid

Kyle Gervais

Kyle Gervais writes: Ovid, like all poets, leaves a lot unwritten. Here are a few short poems that fill in (what I see as) gaps in scenes from *Metamorphoses* 8-10.

Met. 8.183-259

Ovid relates, in reverse chronological order, the accidental death of Daedalus' son Icarus and Daedalus' earlier murder of his nephew Perdix (8.250f. *Daedalus invidit sacraque ex arce Mineruae / praecipitem misit, lapsum mentitus*). Somehow, the chronological reordering of the stories made me wonder what *really* happened to Icarus (after all, Daedalus, a convicted child-killer, was the only witness). In any case, the *pater infelix* (8.231) seems to have been unusually unlucky when it came to boys in his care!

Daedalus infelix dum spectat, natus in undas

Icarias cecidit, ceciditque ex arce Mineruae

altera dum spectas, infelix Daedale, proles.

While unlucky Daedalus looked on, his son fell
Into the Icarian waves, and from the citadel of Minerva
Another son fell, unlucky Daedalus, while you looked on.

* * *

Met. 8.260-444

Meleager son of Oeneus gives the spoils of the Calydonian Boar to the Arcadian Atalanta (called 'the Tegean', from the Arcadian town of Tegea). Meleager's two uncles, sons of Thestius, take the spoils from her and Meleager kills them. The issue of women speaking and not speaking is important in Ovidian studies, and it struck me

that throughout the entire episode of the hunt and its aftermath, while male heroes bluster and threaten and brag, the all-important Atalanta never says a word.

Thestiadae uiolant tacitae laudem Tegeaeae:

hos necat Oenides dum Tegeaea tacet.

The sons of Thestius insult the accomplishments of the silent Tegean:

The son of Oeneus kills them, while the Tegean stays silent.

* * *

Met. 9.159-272

As he dies in slow agony, Hercules delivers an improbably long speech to complain of his unending persecution by Juno. The ‘famous son of Jupiter’ (9.229 *Iouis inclita proles*) sums up this divine injustice with a hyperbolically odd bit of atheism: *et sunt, qui credere possint / esse deos?* (9.203-4) Then he is apotheosized. But poor Deinira, whose only crime is not wanting Hercules to leave her for another woman, is left behind anyway by her newly divine husband—and by Ovid, who doesn’t mention her at all during or after Hercules’ death.

‘suntne’, satus Ioue quaesiuit, ‘qui credere possint

esse deos?’ deus est. est Deianira relict.

‘Is there anyone’, asked the son of Jupiter, ‘who could believe That the gods exist?’ Now *he* is a god, but Deianira is abandoned.

* * *

Met. 10.106-219

Metamorphoses 10 is partly a study of all-conquering love, and so when Orpheus, the central figure of the book, tries to get over his love for his dead wife, he fails: *uicit Amor* (10.26). But at the same time, over and over in the book, objects of love fall victim to accidental death—Adonis, Eurydice, Cyparissus' stag, and Hyacinthus (the two young boys, loves of Apollo the god of foresight, get the epithet *imprudens*, which inspired my poem). Love may conquer all like Virgil says but—for Venus, Orpheus, Cyparissus, and Apollo in their grief—I doubt it seemed that way at the time.

perdidit imprudens ceruum Cyparissus amatum,

imprudens ceciditque Hyacinthus Apolline amatus:

omnia qui domuit domat imprudentia amorem.

Cyparissus accidentally killed the stag that he loved,
And Hyacinth, loved by Apollo, died accidentally:
Accidents conquer love, which conquers all.

* * *

Spring and Port Wine

Chris Kelk

Chris Kelk writes: Having already translated John Barry's *A View of Old Oxford* [*Vates* V:21], here is another poem from Barry (written in 1980), preceded by my translation.

*tunc interplexis tibi dixi dulcia dextris
exagerem ut curis lacrima salsa meis,
quamuis sint auersa a me tua terga (locuto
insulsa insulso uerba parente tuo) –
tunc erat ista ἀκμῇ ludī, tunc gaudia summa.
sed tibi (trux fatum!) basia nulla dedi.
non, sponsae partem quae spectatoribus egit
illa, meo cordi qualis adesset erat.
dissimulauimus in uero: non talia uerba
diximus in scaena delineata, nihil
extra. none obseruasti compexibus ultro
nos spatia inter nos ponere multa datis?
illa tamen nostrum perdulcia uerba duorum
me libuere – fui non memor huius agens:
annos te tredecim, sedecim tamen atque uiginti
me uixisse. decem tresque necesse fuit*

sic diuidere agentes nos, ut uerus amator
 essem sex quinis: exteriora tua
 iuuentute ferenda tibi sunt atque tulisti,
 arteque nos poteras praesuperare tua.
 miratum est te tam iuuenem esse, at terror abundans
 me quassit primo tempore (postne tamen?)
 ad teneram tractum iuuenem (ut me filia!?!) siccus
 ut solet ad fluuium praecipitare canis
 in uita station (nunc confiteamur!) iniqua,
 pons uitae mediae quae nominator, inest –
 stat subito ante toras ueluti fur luridus atque
 “cede”, inquit, “iuuenum de malefacta mihi.”
 sint tibi nunc mensae potius quam gaudia amoris:
 alea iactetur sufficiatque tibi.
 et tu – cui iuueni tua mens uolitabat in illo
 tempore. cui? mihi dic, inuidiaque mea
 torquear. actorne? aut pictor qui quattuor annos
 plenos te plures uixerat, ille senex?
 aut iubeas aut frigescas illa caritate
 maturo placitam semisenique tua?
 mox tuus in ludo genitor fortasse uidebor,

auctoritae arcens inuidiaque uetans.
at tu me ridens praedulce iocosa, poetae
uerbis parebis sedula: "carpe diem".
sic solum minimis colorosis forte clamabo
auxiliis; iuueni basia multa dabis.
non solum seniore te sed et esse maritum
me mihi dicendum est. temporibusne nouis
his uni cogitate semper languescere corda
quaeque puella uiro feminea? atque domo
pulchrum auferre ducem se congratulantibus ultro
omnibus indeque se gaudia habere? caca!
"ducite, non flagrate, uiri": sic dixerat ille
tarsius et caelebs, non mala uera sciens.
ducite sed flagrareque nos uideatur, et ille
hos melius crecit quem sibi terra tenet.
(sic papa noster). amor mortalibus in iuga iactis
tum quatiens alas auolat inde leues.
felix qui nupsit! lacrimae, deuoluite, tristes!
quid cum currus equum taedeat atque uiis
praecipitare in bucolicis desiderat ipse
perque altas uelles fluminque aura uelut

et procul a frenis super aequora lata salire.
 suspicio sequitur rixaque certa domi.
 eligat ex mundo praeclaram si quis et empta
 solam constituat semper amare domo
 et non intacti perdulcia sentiat unquam
 gaudia ruris, mox taedeat. adde quod et
 femineum corpus desuescit; forma tibi illa
 tum placuit, sed nunc tristis abiuit, abest.
 pectoral nunc pendent, ruga multa per ora uidetur,
 et maius dominae lingua mouere solet.
 ergo per pulchras (dicantur uera!) puellas
 formosasque uiros saepius ardour init.
 et sic insanite, omnes, climate, maritae,
 flamma quod anterior mortua nunc sit, eum
 appellate caprum putridum, “mensisque uirorum!”
 dicite (caelestes!): lex tamen illa manet
 maturum quoque malle uirum placuisse puellae
 (quae lex Postremum praeerit usque Diem).
 a sed progenies! memorandum est! denique raptant
 errantes fibros huanitate uiri.
 nam compellitur a uitiiis auertere se, cum

in mentem ueniat progenies, et atrox.
et dominae cuicumque est, qui possitque uelitque
ferre diuina domum commode, habere uirum.
ut natos faciat securos, sordida quamuis
sit mens, quoquo sunt omnia agenda uiro.
quomodo possumus irriti reperire catharsin?
tristi furtiuus saepe placebit amor,
(noli, Paule, audire illud), uersusue doloris
plenos scribamus sintue theatra satis.
has egi res, et multo est melior mihi prima,
etsi illis allis saepius utar ego.
ultima, dum non sit mandatis corporis aequa,
tecum, uita, mihi, gaudia multa dedit.
iam solum grauida compono grandia uerba
ex anima atque domum tum uir honestus eo.
omnia tum curae mihi sunt mandata laboris,
et personarum milia uita parat:
uir dominae curans sum uicinusue benignus,
cui media aetas est certius illa prope,
interea annorum tredecim insaltare puellam
ardens (infandum!), lege uetitus amans.

*etsi insana mihi arderes, lex saeua uetaret
tres plures annos; consituere sense
non permittere te mihi te summittere dulce;
indulgere ueils; lex tamen illa negat.
atque tibi proprias Natura parauit amori
et pulchras partes – pectoral, crura, sinus.
inque tuo lecto malim esse ut primus amator
quam superare alios auriga uictor equos
suspiciumque tibi nullum peruenit Hibernum
qui tibi sit uisus proximus esse Stygi,
etsi grauet eum fragilis natura, propulsum
esse, decus numeris laudificare tuum.
non eludere te potuit bona Gloria, siue
permittent leges siue uetare uelint.
in rebus grauior grauiore in corpore fiam
ardebitque tibi flamma minoris. eris
stella, Ioanna, (actrix annon). nunc stamina uitae
carpe, precor, numquam, stantia. finis adest.*

* * *

Metre: Elegiacs**English original** (John Barry, 1980):

Your hand on mine, the gentle words I said
 To comfort you and drive your tears away,
 Behind you, looking down upon your head
 After your boorish father had his say –
 This was the crowning moment of our play,
 Its apogee, its highest point of bliss.
 Pity it wasn't you I had to kiss.

But no! Unluckily the girl who acted
 My fiancée was not my kind of bird.
 An act it was, for neither felt attracted.
 We played our parts and hardly spoke a word
 Off-stage. Perhaps you noticed what occurred –
 We quickly put the maximum of inches
 Between us on emerging from our clinches.

But I looked forward to our touching scene,
 One little thing forgotten in the act:
 That I was thirty-six and you thirteen.
 Our play demanded that the gulf contract,
 So you played six years older than in fact,
 I a young blade of thirty. Which was change
 Enough to put you just within my range.

You represented on the stage a stage
 Of life still not experienced, and outclassed
 Us all. Folks were astonished at your age.
 I was not just astonished but aghast –
 Now the first time (though maybe not the last!)
 Attracted like a thirsty hound to water
 By someone who could really be my daughter.

Yes, it's a nasty moment in our lives,
 That watershed we call the mid-life crisis!
 Like a grim-hooded robber it arrives,
 Says, "Stick 'em up. Hand over young men's vices.
 Console yourself with tea and cake and ices
 For what you're losing underneath the belly.
 Goodbye, the joys of love. Turn on the telly."

And you meanwhile, I wonder who you found
 To fantasize on – tell me, make me green!
 Another actor? The chap who did the sound.
 Prepared the props, or helped to paint the scene

(Boasting the ripe old age of seventeen)?
 Would you be flattered or a little haughty
 At having an admirer touching forty?

Perhaps next time I'll actually play your father
 Jealously urging caution and restraint,
 While you just thumb your nose at me and gather
 Rosebuds, like the poet said, before they faint.
 I'll not require much make-up: a little paint
 To line the brow, powder for extra grey.
 You'll hug your lover while I rant away.

An admirer touching forty, a man with wife!
 Do young girls dream still, in these liberated
 Permissive days that love will last for life?
 That every Sue and Mirabel is fated
 To meet her Mr. Right and then get mated
 To sound of bells and sermons, jokes and laughter,
 The happy ever after? Nothing dafter.

"It's best to marry, not burn", St. Paul opined,
 Who never married, and the truth would sicken him.
 "Marry and burn" is what we mostly find.
 As flowers grow best when we refrain from pickin' 'em
 (Thus said our English Pope whose Rome was Twickenham).
 "Love, free as air, at sight of human tie
 Spreads his light wings and out the window flies."

Ah, the enchantment, ah, the bliss of marriage!
 The thing's enough to bring on tears or stitches.
 What when the horse gets tired of the carriage,
 The trot along suburban lanes, and itches
 To gallop free, jump over gates and ditches,
 Romp on the open fields without constriction?
 It's a sure way to accuse domestic friction.

To choose one comely maid from all the store
 Available, and never look at more.
 Purchase your little house and shut the door.
 Never again, never again explore
 Another's person, feel your spirit soar
 On sighting fields not galloped in before –
 Fine for six months (six years?), then what a bore.

And there's another thing besides monotony,
 That o so very quickly women flag.
 That shape you loved, now look, she hasn't got any.
 Those winsome little tits begin to sag.
 Crows leave their tracks. Add, that wives tend to nag.

Let's admit candidly, girls sweet and luscious
Are far more likely to give fellows crushes.

So face it, ladies, though you rant and curse,
Missing the urgent passion that once was,
Call him "dirty old man" or – even worse –
Make snide remarks on the male menopause,
It's futile! This most basic of life's laws
Will last when we've abolished dukes and earls –
That older men are drawn to younger girls.

Ah, but the children! Society can't function
If men go gallivanting. There's the rub.
The most unfeeling brute must have compulsion
Considering the little ones. A wife needs hub
To earn the wherewithal to buy the grub.
For sake of offspring, though his thoughts lack purity,
A man must do his best to bring security.

Frustrated thus, how can we find catharsis?
A love-affair conducted with discretion
Does wonders for morale, though Paul of Tarsus
To human frailty made no concession.
Or we can try a less direct concession-
Compose lugubrious verse in lonely attics,
Or else resort to amateur dramatics.

I've done all three and much prefer the first.
More often, though, the others must suffice.
The last, although it mightn't slake the thirst,
With sweet thirteen was very very nice.
In this lean time, alas, my only vice
Is the middle one: in rollicking Rhyme Royal
To express my angst – and then be tamely loyal.

And thus "catharsed" I face my daily labour –
The roles I have to follow on life's stage:
Considerate husband, inoffensive neighbour,
The family man approaching middle age;
Smooth words for all, while inwardly I rage
To pounce upon my love-child like an eagle –
A thing not just immoral but illegal,

Illegal, even if you should consent!
Only thirteen, you've three years yet to go.
Your warm responsive answer is not meant,
At least some ancient clerks decided so,
And while you clamour yes, the law says no,
Though for man's pleasure splendidly equipped,

Already so well-breasted, -legged and -hipped.

I'd like to be the first man in your bed
Far more than play for Leeds and get a hat-trick.
There's not the least suspicion in your head
That someone who to you seems geriatric,
Who comes from Ireland (although not called Patrick)
Was moved, despite short breath and creaky joints,
To celebrate in verse your finer points.

Nothing will stop you on your path of glory
Whether or not respecting the law's ban.
While I get bald and fat, become a Tory,
You'll rev the engine of some younger man.
On stage, in life, you'll be a star, Joann.
Now seize the bloom, so fast, so fast it goes.

With that original remark, I'll close.

* * *

Two Quincouplets

Andreas Lovaniensis

Andreas Lovaniensis writes: The haiku-like form of the quincouplet was suggested to me by its creator, the American poet Benjamin C. Krause, about a year ago. At the time he was planning to edit a first anthology of a few dozen quincouplets by an international group of poets, in different languages, and he asked me if I could write a few in Latin. “The rules of a quincouplet, or quin, are simple. There are two lines, with two words on the first line and three words on the second. It need not have a title, but if it does, the title must consist of only one word. The title can be used for any purpose except as the first word of a sentence continued by the poem.” In the following week, I produced what were probably the first two quins in the history of Latin poetry, and I can only hope I have managed to capture the essence of the genre well. Their content was inspired by recent real life events, their titles by two verses of the biblical *Canticum Canticorum* (4:9 and 3:1 respectively), the inclusion of the words *domina* and *amator* by Roman elegiac poetry. I regret to say I never heard from Mr. Krause again.

Vulnerasti

dormiente domina

arcana lustrat versibus.

Quaesiui

nimius amator

dilectae factus oneri.

* * *

Metre: Quincouplets

Translations:

Wounded.

While his lady sleeps, he illuminates the *arcana** by means of verses.

[*I kept *arcana* willingly vague ... Hidden/intimate feelings, private things, secrets ...]

I sought.

An excessive lover becomes a burden to his beloved.

* * *

De Perditis Amoribus

Andreas Lovaniensis

Andreas Lovaniensis writes: *De Alacri puella*, which I wrote in the late spring of 2012 for a fellow Latin student after hearing her sing as a part of the university choir, was my first attempt at writing classical metrical verse. *Ad Floram puellam*, which is of much more recent date, was originally accompanied by an interpretation in Dutch. Firstly because the girl I wrote it for – who had a kind of fuchsia named after her by her grandfather, which explains the flower references – didn't read Latin very well; secondly because *conflavens* (which might mean 'thoroughly and harmoniously exhuming blondness') is not in the dictionary. As the title above this introduction suggests, I look back at the first poem with a slightly stingy feeling of nostalgia, at the second still with sadness.

De Alacri puella

*cantat amata Alacris philomela carmina digna –
corda ardore implens uocula blandula alit.*

Ad Floram puellam

*quam pulchras conflauentis hyacinthea praeter
lumina laeta geris, bellula Flora, comas;
uirgo uenusta, mane, flos florum, floscule, mecum –
quem conflasti in me ne renuas animum!*

* * *

Metre: Elegiac couplets

Translations:

Of Alacris.

My beloved Alacris sings songs worthy of a nightingale – her
sweet little voice nourishes my heart, filling it with ardor.

To Flora.

What beautiful hair of most harmonious bloneness you
have, comely little Flora, besides your hyacinth-blue eyes full
of joy; stay with me, fair maiden, flower of flowers, sweet
flower – may you not refuse the *animus** you sparked in me!

[*I kept have *animus* very vague ... It might mean feeling, courage,
life force or desire. I'm not sure if *spirit* would cover this entire
range of feelings.]

* * *

Aetas Anxietatis

Marco Cristini

Marco Cristini writes: Last year I read with great pleasure the Editor's Latin translation of Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. I appreciated particularly the metric translation of the poems (*frange uitra et catilla* is great). I'm a Tolkien enthusiast and I also like reading latin prose and poetry. Before running into that book, I believed the two activities had nothing in common, but I found out (with great pleasure) I was wrong...

Then I discovered the existence of *Vates* and I read it very gladly. I've been learning Latin for seven years and sometimes I've tried to write an hexameter, but without success. This spring, however, I studied some poems of Walter of Chatillon and I found out a new kind of Latin poetry, which is much closer to modern (from Dante to Foscolo) Italian poetry. So I've written a few poems in 'rhythmical' Latin and this time I managed to go further than two lines. I wrote *Aetas Anxietatis* this summer while thinking about the current political and economical situation of Europe.

haec est aetas anxietatis,

desperamus ciuitatis

de salute crisi magnā.

spem nunc lata occultant stagna

nostrorum desiderorum

tardo passu occisorum.

mundus fit repente grauis,

prodest uiris factis cauis

non iam Atlas, non Augustus.

animus horret angustus,

mox posteritatis metus

*paene amabit homo uetus,
spes quod sunt multae memoriae
nam felicitatum gloriae.
sed nunc quaero, quod futurum,
qui uero aeuum est uenturum?
iuuenes reperientne
opus an aperientne
desperationi portas?
nubes nigras tum exortas
specto magno cum timore
neque credo iis clamorē
qui referunt finem crisis.
rebus publicis diuisis
europea fit mox clades
magna extremas inter Gades
et litteratas Athenas.
non frangemus has catenas
nisi Europa erit unita,
nouae aetati permunita.*

* * *

Metre: Rhythmic

Translation: *The Age of Anxiety*

This is the age of anxiety,
 we despair of the state's fate
 because of the big crisis.
 Now the hope is hidden by
 the wide ponds of our desires
 dead with terrible slowness.
 The world becomes suddenly heavy,
 helps the men turned empty
 not Atlas, not Augustus.
 The narrow soul horrifies,
 soon the old man will almost
 love the future's fear,
 because hopes are lots of memories
 of the happiness' glory.
 But now I ask, what future,
 what age is coming?
 Young people will find
 a job or they'll open
 the doors to despair?
 I look at black clouds recently appeared
 with great worry
 and I don't trust who with outcry
 says the crisis is over.
 Because nations are divided
 there will be soon a big European defeat
 between the extreme Gades
 and the learned Athens.
 We will not break these chains,
 unless Europe is truly united,
 fortified for a new age.

* * *

FEATURES

Who? What? Where? Part II

Barry Baldwin continues his search for Anglo-Latin poetry in the unlikelyst of places

“Writing advertising copy is like writing Latin Verse” (John Freeman, former war hero, BBC interviewer, diplomat, and much more). Yes, John, but does it work the other way round?

When criticising Bradner’s sins of omission, one must remember his 1967 Supplemental List, published by the Bibliographical Society. This has always eluded me (I assume you’d find it in the Bodleian and British Library); Amazon.co.uk reports it as unavailable with no re-printing plans known. So apologies to his shade for any unfair animadversions.

One highly entertaining source is John Aubrey’s (1626-1697) *Brief Lives*, best read in John Buchanan-Brown’s Penguin until Kate Bennett’s long-anticipated edition appears. Not just for Latin poesy. I guarantee you, once you’ve picked Aubrey up, you’ll never want to put him down.

Back to our mutttons. First up is Isaac Barrow (1630-1670, or 1677, depending whom you read). His Latin poems are published as *Opuscula* in volume 9 of the Collected Works edition of A. Napier & W. Whewell (1859, republ. 2010). Bradner (p. 340, not reporting this) dismisses Barrow’s efforts as “curiously unimportant”. In his *Dictionary of National Biography* entry, John Henry Overton says “he had almost a mania for turning everything into Latin verse”. Barrow seems not to have taken himself too seriously, judging by his remark: “Poetry is a kind of ingenious

nonsense.” Aubrey, giving no examples, praises him as “a good poet, English and Latin”. A fair number of verses in both languages may be seen on relevant internet sites. especially in the Reverend Thomas Hughes’ biographical essay (June 1, 1831) which includes the deflating: “We may lament the taste which led him to compose elegiacs and hexameters”. It seems common practice to divide his output into two categories: academic exercises and addresses of congratulations or condolences, with a third category (dubbed *Carmina Comitalia*) of verses appended to his various theses, his signature gimmick being an invariable beginning with *ergo*, thus:

...ergo

Idem rex hominum poterit, Phoebique sacerdos

Esse, magistratus populique, Deique minister.

[“The same man may be king of men, priest of Apollo, magistrate of the people, and minister of God.”]

Barrow was not actually as dry as all this sounds. He penned Latin verses on a sea battle with pirates on his way to Smyrna, where he also produced an elegy on the death of Mr Bratton, the local British consul. Another choice example is this complaint about his shoddy treatment by Charles II:

Te magis optavit redituum, Carole, nemo,

Et nemo sensit te rediisse minus.

[“No one wished for your return, Charles, and no one has less cause to notice it.”]

William Lord Brereton (1631-1680, unmentioned by Bradner), described by contemporary diarist John Evelyn as “a very learned gentleman,” composed (says Aubrey) “A poem called *Origines Moriens*, a Manuscript.” Both another diarist of the time, Dr John

Worthington, and Pepys in one of his Bodleian Letters (2. 258) confirm its unpublished status. A potential editorial scoop here, if it still exists. The title intrigues – what does it mean?

Aubrey's notice of the scholarly Thomas Cooper (1517-1594, Bishop of my native Lincoln, 1570) includes (without comment) this 1573 tribute (not in Bradner) to his *Thesaurus* from the (to us) obscure Richard Stephens, member of Cambridge University, prolific with such 'puffs' in both Latin and Greek, a kind of ancestor to the modern greeting cards industry:

*Vilescat rutila dives Pactolus arena
Hermus et auriferi nobilis unda Tagi.
Vilescant Croesi gemmae, Midaeque talenta;
Major apud Britones eruta gaza patet.
Hoc Wainflete tuo gens Anglica debet alumno,
Qui vigili nobis tanta labore dedit.*

[“Pactolus rich in glittering sand now looks cheap, as do Hermus, the noble wave of gold-bearing Tagus, the jewels of Croesus and the talents of Midas. A greater treasure has been unearthed among Britons. For this, the English people is indebted to your pupil, Wainfleet, who has given it to us by his great and unflagging labour.”]

We *Vates* scribes would kill for a review like that!

William Holder (1616-1698), brother-in-law of Christopher Wren, not in Bradner) is praised by Aubrey as, “A good poet. I have seen some very good verses (about a hundred) in Latin of St. Vincent's-rocks and the hotte-well near Bristowe.” I have no other information on these; they resist Googling.

Herbert Thorndyke (1598-1672, not in Bradner) is dubbed “a good poet” by Aubrey who had seen “a Poemation of his on the death of

Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden, in Latin hexameters, about a hundred verses or better.” Another Lincolnshire man – excuse my County chauvinism. These verses are not mentioned in his Wikipedia notice as either published or in manuscript; one suspects the latter, given Aubrey’s wording.

Sir William Petty (1623-1687, not in Bradner) is now best remembered as mathematician and economist, having considerable influence on Adam Smith, Karl Marx, and John Maynard Keynes. Apart from making a note to himself to check if Petty had published a Latin translation of an unspecified Psalm in 1677, Aubrey lists under his writings “His owne Life in Latin Verse”. John Evelyn thought “there was no better Latin poet living”. Petty himself was dismissive about his efforts. He was one of a number of satirists who circulated in manuscript anthologies and personal miscellanies squibs in Leonine (i.e. based on internal rhyming) verse; cf. Harold Love, ‘Sir William Petty, the London Coffee House and the Restoration “Leonine”,’ *Seventeenth Century* 22 (2007), 381-394, a rich source for Restoration Latin poetry.

Bradner (202-204) gives a good press to Thomas Hobbes’ (1588-1679) three major Latin poems, respectively his autobiographical *Vita Carmine Expressa*, written in elegiacs at the age of 84; *De Mirabilibus Pecci*, a 500-hexameters travelogue about the Derbyshire Peak; *Historia Ecclesia*, a diatribe in over 2,200 verses against religious sectarianisms, his main target the Roman Catholic Church in tones that would endear him to Iain Paisley.

Aubrey, whose biography of Hobbes is one of his longest, frequently quotes from the *Vita* in Latin, along with its swift English translation a double tribute to its instant fame. Of the religious tirade, he reports having seen early in its early stages “five hundred verses or more in Latin Hexameter and Pentameter.”

What no one could see was the schoolboy Hobbes' translation of Euripides' *Medea* into "Latin iambiques". Aubrey sought diligently for this, in vain, concluding they must have been burned in the "pie oven" of his old teacher, to whom they had been presented. Perhaps this mode of destruction was chosen to reflect the death by combustible dress suffered by Theseus' fiancée through Medea's malevolent magic. There is at least a double irony: Ovid's Latin *Medea* was also lost and, as Bradner remarks, "Nothing could be less Ovidian than Hobbes' style" – he was a dyed-in-the-wool Horatian.

Conflagration may also have been the fate of the *Vita*'s manuscript. Aubrey was informed in a letter from James Wheldon that Hobbes had burnt it to avoid being known as the poem's author, were it published – a curious desire, to modern celebrity-hunting taste. However, an anonymous article in *Mind* 48 (1939), 403-405, speculates that it was likely waiting to be found in the Devonshire Collection of Hobbes Manuscripts – whether it has been, whether anyone had since looked, I know not. Hobbes himself closed the *Vita* thus:

*Octoginta annos complevi jam quatuorque,
Et prope stans dictat mors mihi, Ne metue.*

[“I have now completed eighty-four years, and standing beside me Death proclaims, ‘Do not be afraid’.”]

His editor, Richard Blackburne, altered these to read:

*Octoginta ego jam complevi et quatuor annos:
Penes acta est vitae fabula longa meae.*

["I have now completed eighty-four years: the story of my long life is almost done."]

According to Bradner, the pentameter was changed for theological reasons. He skips over the hexameter's emendation and Aubrey's explanation thereof: it was unmetrical, the 'a' of *quatuor* (better spelled *quattuor*) is long.

Which faulty prosody takes us nicely to John Milton. Bradner (111-118) rhapsodises over his Latin poems, skating over the unpalatable fact that they abound in false quantities (see for a list Helen Darbyshire's Milton edition, vol. 2, p. xvii – I was first alerted to them on a postcard from the late classicist-novelist Simon Raven). This may be why at Cambridge he was whipped by his tutor Mr Chapel, or "received some unkindnesse" in the tactful words of Aubrey who perhaps with equal discretion says nothing about Milton's Latin verses – case of for better or for verse?

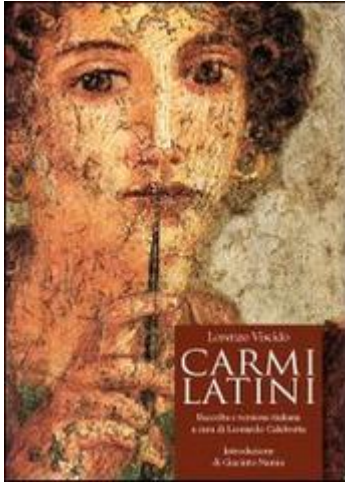
As said, if you don't know Aubrey, you're in for a right treat, and not just on Anglo-Latin poetry. Next time, I'll recur to the eighteenth-century for more *Who? What? Where?*

* * *

Book Review

Carmi Latini

Lorenzo Viscido



Raccolta e versione italiana a cura di
Leonardo Calabretta. Introduzione di
Giacinto Namia.

Printed on behalf of the Arcidiocesi
Metropolitana di Catanzaro-Squillace

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This is a rare and pleasurable opportunity to enjoy the collected works of a contemporary Latin poet. Professor Viscido, whose charming *Dormi, Mater* appeared in the last issue of this journal [VII:16] is both a professional philologist and a prolific amateur Latin versifier (is there such a thing as a professional Latin poet?), who has won prizes for his works in various Italian competitions. This volume includes a selection of those prize-winning works, some of which were originally published in his first collection of *Poematia* (1987, reprinted 2003), as well as a variety of new pieces, all with Italian translations by Leonardo Calabretta.

The introduction (also in Italian) by Giacinto Namia draws attention to the variety of Viscido's muse, which, in the tradition of Catullus, Horace and Martial, ranges over lyrical responses to love, family, and the natural world – such short pieces as *Fervida basia*, *Ad canem meum* and *Ludamus* are firmly in this classical mould – though he does add some medieval-style rhyming verses, too (*Lumen gratum, Te, puella, quando cerno*). But Viscido displays his

personal touch throughout, for example in some unexpected changes of metre, as in the moving *Ad Lauram autoraeda fractam* in which amid elegiac distichs the unfortunate victim is imagined as imploring an inflexible deity in Sapphics:

*Hic si forte potes Dominum contingere verbis,
talìa sollicita voce loquaris Ei:*

*“O Deus, cernens superis ab oris
impiger passus hominum frequentes,
si pari cunctos adamare corde
dos tua magna est,*

*quid nihil curas iuvenes alacres
falce ne letum horribili recidat
neu senes taetris studiis gravatos
vita reservet?”*

In his Preface, translator Calabretta speaks of Viscido’s verses as being “an undisputed act of piety (*pietas*) towards our past”. Yet Viscido’s respectful attitude towards his classical exemplars does not obscure his own distinctive poetical voice. In *Discessus*, for example, a novel word for a novel concept (an aeroplane) concludes his first couplet:

*Rursum ex te, mater, per vastam accingitur aethram
me remove ales corpore mechanicus.*

For readers who don’t know Italian – and here I confess my own grasp of the language is fairly rudimentary – Viscido’s Latin speaks for itself.

Mark Walker

De Gustibus non est Disputandum

Letters to the Editor

email your thoughts to us at: vates@pineapplepubs.co.uk

Dear Editor,

It occurs to me that the following pronouncement by Samuel Johnson (quoted in the *Anecdotes of Johnson* by the Right Hon W. Windham) might serve as the motto for *Vates*:

“The pretensions of the English to the reputation of writing Latin is founded not so much on the specimens in that way in which they have produced, as on the quantity of talent diffused throughout the country.”

Barry Baldwin

* * *

[In last issue's editorial I asked for opinions about approaching a professional publisher with this journal. Of the various replies received – for which I extend my thanks to all – this one amused me the most! Ed.]

Dear Editor,

Congratulations on another fine issue. Besides University sponsorship you might consider promulgating *Vates* under the

aegis of a not-for-profit entity outside of the control of U. presses and other ‘traditional’ publication venues. I think the Foundation Library in NYC still publishes a sourcebook of donors on disk. You would be amazed at what can be funded. I have been here in Nonthaburi for a month now, and I recently visited, as an example, a dog condominium project at a Buddhist Temple a few miles from my house.

Years ago (it seems now like aeons) I was asked to give a talk to a seminar on Greek historians. I am embarrassed to say that I did so for two-and-a-half hours, with copious questions and variegated input from my captive audience. The talk was the ‘talk’ of the department for a bright scintilla of evanescent time and fame, and it was seen to portend a great future nitpicking the fungi and moulds from the Groves of Academe. I thank the Norns and all my potential victims that it was not so.

I think a distinguishing feature of *Vates* has been that the emphasis has been on *poetry*, not on mummification. I would hate to see the guts of the magazine stuffed into some University’s or academic/editorial committee’s canopic jars. As W.B. Yeats reminds us:

Bald heads forgetful of their sins,
Old, learned, respectable bald heads
Edit and annotate the lines
That young men, tossing on their beds,
Rhymed out in love’s despair
To flatter beauty’s ignorant ear.

All shuffle there; all cough in ink;
All wear the carpet with their shoes;
All think what other people think;

All know the man their neighbour knows.
Lord, what would they say
Did their Catullus walk that way?

Bob Zisk

* * *

Advice for Beginners

A semi-regular column (hopefully!) in which contributors offer nuggets of helpful advice for aspiring Latin poets

Vowels have length while syllables have quantity, remarks Editor Mark Walker

A great source of potential confusion for those who first encounter quantitative Latin verse is the distinction between vowel length and syllable quantity, which is all too often blurred or ignored in textbooks, especially older ones. We are told cavalierly of long and short syllables, and vowels that mysteriously become ‘long by position’, when what is actually meant is heavy and light syllables (their quantity) as distinct from the natural (and unvarying) length of vowels.

Vowel length is a matter of pronunciation. Vowels have a certain fixed length, as in the ‘o’ of ‘dog’ (short vowel) or the ‘o’ of ‘bone’ (long vowel). A short vowel is pronounced as a short vowel wherever it is placed in a line of quantitative verse. It never magically becomes long ‘by position’.

Quantity on the other hand is a matter of syllable structure. Heavy syllables are those containing long vowels or ones that are ‘closed’ by a consonant followed immediately by a new syllable that begins with another consonant (with some exceptions). These heavy syllables were thought of as taking longer to pronounce and therefore tended to receive more stress when spoken. Syllables are therefore said to have weight, and this is frequently related to whether they are stressed or unstressed. As W.S. Allen noted as long ago as 1965 in his definitive study of Latin pronunciation, *Vox Latina*:

‘As length is a property of vowels, quantity is a property of syllables; and although there are connexions between length and quantity in Latin, the two properties are to be clearly distinguished ... the reader should be warned that even in some current standard works there is considerable confusion between syllabic quantity and vowel length – a confusion for which the Greek grammarians are ultimately responsible.’
[Chapter 6]

That confusion persists even today. David J. Califf’s *Latin Meter and Verse Composition* (Anthem Press, 2002), for example, talks of both long and short vowels as well as long and short syllables. In his rules for determining the quantity of syllables he states, ‘A vowel followed by two consonants or a double consonant ... is generally long’; but immediately after, ‘The final syllable of a word ending in a vowel and a single consonant is lengthened if the next word begins with a consonant’; then, ‘But a short open vowel at the end of a word is generally not lengthened ...’ [Section II, p.6]

But vowels are not lengthened – rather, it is the syllable weight that changes. A short vowel remains short, even if followed by two consonants.

- Vowels have length – long or short – which is a matter of pronunciation and does not change, regardless of position in a line of verse
- Syllables have quantity – heavy or light – and it is the specific pattern of syllables, determined by various rules, in a line of verse that defines the metre.

The tension between the syllable-based metrical pattern of a line and the rhythm of natural word stress informs much quantitative

verse. Take, for example, the first line of the *Aeneid*. As written below, the top numbers are the six metrical feet; the second line represents the syllabic pattern of the hexameter line (dactyls and trochees); long vowels are marked with a macron over each letter:

1	2	3	4	5	6
- ~ ~	- ~ ~	- -	- -	- ~ ~	- -

arma uirumque canō, Trōiae quī prīmus ab ōrīs,

Notice how the word stress of *uirum* is shifted from the first to the second syllable by the addition of *-que*, i.e. the second syllable now becomes heavy and so carries the word stress. But the vowel ‘u’ is not therefore pronounced as a long vowel.

The metrical beat (*ictus*) always falls on the first (heavy) syllable of each of the six feet. In this example the beat coincides with heavy stressed syllables at the beginning of the first, second, fifth and sixth feet. But in the middle of the line – *cano, Troiae qui* – the stressed syllable where the word accent falls is not in synch with the beat of the verse¹. This is what musicians call syncopation. And for the same reasons that musicians do it, Latin poets also do it. Apart from the first beat of the first foot, where a heavy syllable is always required, and in the cadence² of the fifth and sixth feet, where stress accent and metre frequently coincide, this ‘syncopation’, this offsetting of word stress against the metrical beat, is entirely typical of much Latin verse.

1. The stress accent of a two-syllable word falls on the first syllable, whether it is heavy or light, hence *cano* is stressed on its first syllable even though the final ‘o’ is a long vowel, therefore making the second syllable heavy.

2. The cadential ending of the hexameter is a subject for another time!

Contributors

Barry Baldwin was born a true 'Lincolnshire Yellowbelly', but emigrated first to Australia, thence to Canada, where he is Emeritus Professor of Classics (University of Calgary) and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. He has published 12 books and c.1000 articles/reviews *apropos* Greek, Roman and Byzantine history and literature, Neo-Latin Poetry, Samuel Johnson, Modern English Literature, and the more arcane field of Albanian history, language and literature. Has also published c.70 short stories, mainly mysteries, and freelances on a farrago of subjects for various magazines. He remains a far-off fan of Lincoln City and Nottingham Forest.

Marco Cristini was born in 1992 in Brescia, Northern Italy (60 km from Virgil's Mantua). This autumn he's beginning the third year of his degree in Literature at the Catholic University of Brescia. He loves reading Latin poetry and prose since high school and during the last year has begun to write Latin poems. He is also interested in Late Antiquity and is working on a thesis about the Roman Senate in the 6th Century A.D. He has written a novel about the queen Amalasuntha and Cassiodorus (*I Cavalieri del Crepuscolo*, *The Twilight's Knights*, now available on Amazon in ebook format).

Kemar Cummings lives in Jamaica, where he earned a B.A. in Literatures in English with First Class Honours. He has published poetry in publications such as *Bookends*, *sx salon* and *Tongues of the Ocean*.

Kyle Gervais has recently submitted his PhD thesis, a commentary on Statius, *Thebaid* 2 at the University of Otago (New Zealand), and is using his newfound freedom to get back to an old hobby.

Chris Kelk has an MA from St. Andrews, a Dip. Ed. from Oxford and an MA and PhD. from McMaster in Hamilton, Ontario. He spent two years teaching Latin in Freetown, Sierra Leone from 1967 to 1969 and has been a professional actor since 1973. He also won a medal at the Boston Marathon in 1975 with a time of 2:28:38!

Andreas Lovaniensis is the *nom de plume* of Andy Peetermans, who was born in 1990 in the city of Lier (Belgium) and is new at writing Latin poetry. He started studying Latin at the university of Leuven in 2008 and wants to become a classics teacher.

Paul Murgatroyd is a professor in the department of Classics at McMaster University in Canada. He is the author of ten books and over 60 articles on Greek and especially Latin literature, and is at present working on a critical appreciation of Juvenal *Satire* 10. He has also published original Latin poetry and translations, a collection of which was issued by the Edwin Mellen Press in 1991 as *Neo-Latin Poetry A Collection of Translations into Latin Verse and Original Compositions*.

Richard Sturch is a retired clergyman of the Church of England who read Classics at school and at University, but had only sporadic contact with neo-Latin thereafter. (He recalls translating an 'Horatian ode' by the late Dr. Eric Mascall, himself the author of a splendid Latin parody of St Thomas Aquinas). He is currently engaged in translating Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* into Latin as *Erus Anulorum*.

Mark Walker is the editor of *Vates*. His last book was [*Hobbitus Ille*](#), a Latin translation of Tolkien's classic (HarperCollins, 2012). He has also translated Geoffrey of Monmouth's [*Life of Merlin*](#) from Latin into English verse (Amberley Publishing, 2011). He is currently Head of Classics at St John's Beaumont Preparatory School.

Irisatus Yokohamensis studied the language of the Roman Empire for some years at university in Tokyo. Five years ago, he started to practise Latin composition after years of neglect of Latin literature. Now, using this so-called dead language, he exchanges words with online friends from all around the world over a variety of topics. He used to compose *tanka* (a genre of classical Japanese poetry).

* * *

Look out for the next issue of *Vates* in 2014

Vates is available for [free download here](#)



'ego Lar sum familiaris'

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