

VATES

The Journal of New
LATIN POETRY

Issue 15

(New Series, First Issue)

August 2025

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Dedication for Issue 15

In memoriam

R. G. A.

1938 – 2024

Teacher of Classics

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A note on Latin spelling

The poets in this issue adopt different approaches to spelling, capitalisation, and punctuation. Over the past two thousand years Latin has been presented to readers in innumerable ways; there is no ‘right answer’. Readers may need to take a moment to understand and get used to a poet’s preferred method, especially if familiar capitals or punctuation are missing. Some authors feel strongly about these matters; we hope that readers will sympathise with that, even if their own expectations differ.

Editor's Introduction

David Money

Vates is back, after a break of seven years. Let us begin by thanking Mark Walker, our founding editor, for establishing the journal, and guiding it with kindness and good sense through its first fourteen issues. Welcome back, to readers and contributors who knew *Vates* between 2010 and 2018. I was very happy to be a contributor, under Mark's editorship; and I know that the journal was valued by others too. For those who are encountering *Vates* now for the first time: please do also look back at some past issues, and see how much of interest they contain. Though there will be some changes too, hopefully improvements, the fundamental aim will remain: to support and encourage contemporary Latin verse in all its forms.

When Mark decided to stop in 2018, he felt he had had enough of editing. Someone else might have taken on the task sooner – it is a pity, perhaps, that it has taken this long for it to happen. I thought, years ago, that I was sorry *Vates* had stopped; and that I might take it on myself – and made sure that Mark was content with that. I could certainly have been quicker; on the other hand, I didn't notice anyone else stepping in ahead of me. Enough dithering; the year 2025 was actually going to see something happening. And so things have indeed progressed, from my announcing the intention to revive *Vates* in January, to being ready to produce issue 15 in the summer. To everyone who has assisted in that process, and especially to all the contributors whose work is in this volume, many thanks.

How high are we aiming?

In collecting material for this issue, one thing that I found (and indeed expected) was that writers of Latin verse have quite different levels of ambition. For some, it is a relatively trivial pastime: something they have learnt how to do, and do occasionally when it amuses them, but don't much care about. For others, it is important, and something they want to do well, but far from their primary activity. For a few, it really matters. It may not be lucrative, and they may only create it intermittently: but it is central to what they wish to achieve, in that part of their lives which is devoted to creative art. Is it reasonable to have high ambitions for modern Latin poetry? It would be nice to have readers for *Vates*. I am not imagining that it will suddenly attain widespread fame. Most people now don't know Latin, and don't want to. A pity, perhaps: but we must deal with the world as it is. Most people don't read poetry, either, in their own language; and I don't entirely blame them, given how inaccessible many contemporary vernacular poets choose to be. I do want to emphasise accessibility in *Vates*, as far as that is feasible: so that anyone potentially interested, even if they don't know much Latin, can see what we are up to, and appreciate at least a part of it. This is one form of art, among many others; it has a long history. I don't suggest it is greater than other arts, or other languages; I don't think it is any less important, either, even if its audience is smaller. The challenge for those who want to do the best for modern Latin, is to live up to, and stand alongside, the writing that past centuries have produced (some of it outstanding; some of it only moderately good); and to move forwards into the future too, being prepared to create things that previous poets have not considered.

I would like to think that we can do it. That modern Latin verse can be innovative, skilful, moving, amusing, exciting. That we can respect and imitate the past, without always deferring to it. That it is worth writing, and worth reading. Judgements of literary quality are usually subjective; there can also be a scholarly herd instinct, to praise what is fashionable, or what has previously been admired. Those trying to be objective might look at technical skill in

handling verse forms, or other reasonable criteria. I think *Vates* can, and should, cater for a range of poetic ambitions; I do want to see people using classical metres competently, and trying to avoid mistakes of grammar or versification. No doubt errors will be made, not least by the editor. (If it seems desirable, *corrigenda* can appear in future issues.) We do want to aspire to high standards. We also want to be encouraging and open to people with limited experience, who are trying their best, and will aim to get better. We invite readers to be tolerant of any imperfections.

For some classical scholars, no Latin written today is ever going to be good enough. They have decided in advance it is unimportant, and any flaw is an opportunity to dismiss it; any flaw in Virgil is an opportunity to write another article. That attitude I deplore. I doubt Virgil would have thought much of them, either, for all their footnotes. Some Neo-Latinists feel the same: the sixteenth century may be great, or the seventeenth; perhaps the eighteenth, or the nineteenth if they want to live really dangerously. But get close to a living author, and interest magically evaporates. I am hoping that readers of *Vates* can be more open-minded than that: and if you are, thank you for being so, because many people aren't. You might not like all of what you see here – I imagine different people will like different things, and merely hope that any item we publish might appeal to somebody. Even at its more trivial end, there can be satisfaction in reading a neat new epigram in Latin – perhaps more so than in quite a lot of new English, however critically or commercially successful. I would like *Vates* to be a forum for some of the best in contemporary Latin. It depends on writers to produce it, and on readers to lend it their attention. Readers are the most important people here, and I know that there are many other calls on your time: I hope our authors can earn the right to some of it.

A New Series: What Excites Me

An innovation for *Vates* issue 15 may be found at the start of the prose section: 'What excites me'. I hope it may please you somewhat to read these short pieces; and if it excites you enough for you to want to add to them, all the better. My idea is that it should become a regular feature of the revived *Vates*. Naturally that will rely on a supply of future contributions. The question seems a simple one: what excites me about reading Latin verse? But it goes to the heart of our business. Why should we be bothering with this, as students or scholars, or as creators of new verse? Some say Latin is dead; and it has certainly been in more vigorous life in earlier ages. Modern languages are available, and *Vates* uses one of them. So why do this, if it isn't exciting? Quite often, for many of us, it can be work or a chore: it can be worth reminding ourselves that fun is, or ought to be, involved. And seeing where other people have found intellectual excitement can be quite instructive. There can be lessons for future poets, in seeing what enthuses readers; and for scholars too.

So I am particularly grateful to all of those who have so far been willing to say what excited them, and who have therefore enabled this series to make an encouraging start. I will mention two here by name: my thanks to Keiran Carson, for being the first to submit something – they are not all published in order of submission, but Keiran's (WEM 2) was indeed the first to arrive after I created a sample (WEM 1) for circulation. Thank you for seeing the point immediately, and coming up with a thoughtful response immediately. I'd also like to thank Richard Rook (WEM 9) for offering us a more jaundiced view, as a corrective to any complacency or over-enthusiastic assumptions we may have. Let's remember that not all classically-educated people do like poetry; that it can be hard to teach well; that we need to argue, sometimes, for its worth – and that we cannot assume others will be persuaded.

One aspect of this which appeals to me is its democratic nature. There is no need at all to be a professor of Latin, or an experienced Latin poet – though we have some people in both those categories among our initial group. Anyone who reads verse, including students at any

level, can have a view that is worth listening to. There may be barriers to participation in *Vates* as a poet: versification can be hard for beginners. But for this, there is no meaningful barrier: please do consider telling us what you think. It has been an interesting experience getting WEM started, involving both general and personal invitations (I have lost count of the latter). It is not for want of asking, that we don't yet have a female voice on the topic. Is there any woman, anywhere in the world, who quite likes Latin and is willing to say so, in this format? It doesn't sound too much to ask. For the regrettable reluctance of many people, there may be good reasons: too busy, too important, too whatever; still, at its simplest, the task can be done in less than half an hour, and should be fun to do, as well as provoking thought. Is there a scientific explanation: that the classical scholar, *mus mediterraneus*, in its natural semi-desert habitat, is a wee and timorous beastie, unprepared to reveal a personal opinion? There have been amusing moments; the following is a genuine response from a fairly senior and well respected scholar, in a fairly well respected institution, in a nation that shall remain nameless: 'The only thing that excites me at the moment is the thought of a university administrator being hit by a truck.'

A Challenge to Teachers

What would support and encourage contemporary Latin verse? One thing might be for more people to read it. Adult enthusiasts may of course read whatever they like; please encourage them to read some of this, alongside whatever else they choose. Students of Latin, though, may have less choice, and less understanding of what is available. Their teachers are in a position to guide them in various directions, beyond the most obvious material that they will meet in their textbooks.

So I would like to issue a challenge to teachers of Latin – at any level, anywhere. Why not, just occasionally, introduce a Latin poem by a living author to your students? Let us say, once a year. That does not seem too greedy or impractical. I am aware it is not likely to be on the syllabus, and therefore that you can't take too much time away from compulsory topics. Just part of a single class would do: enough to show people that Latin is not quite as dead, as a literary language, as they may have assumed. A short time would be sufficient to present a single example of living creation – it need not be long or complicated, it might or might not be indebted to, or make an interesting contrast to, a classical work that the students are studying. Perhaps the students will not care, and feel their time is wasted. But in fact I doubt it. Some may be pleasantly surprised, or even inspired, and want to find out more. Even to the relatively incurious, it may be a small curiosity that they will not immediately forget.

Please give it a try. Tell us how it goes. It's a small thing, but if enough people dare to do it, it might have a real impact on attitudes to our subject, and to the future of Latin verse as a living form of art.

How can we help? A *Vates* Teaching Anthology

I can foresee one obvious barrier to teachers taking up the suggestion above: they may not know what might be suitable, and may not have time to look. Looking through issues of *Vates* might throw up some ideas. But perhaps we could help, by selecting some short and accessible poems, and making them even more accessible by adding any annotation, either on the language or the subject-matter, which could help a class to appreciate them better.

To start the idea off, I will make one initial suggestion from our previous issues: a short poem of my own. That is for two reasons: to enhance the gaiety of nations, as you all laugh at editorial vanity; and to avoid the need for a tough decision between the competing claims of works by others. A poem that struck me as potentially suitable is my 'O Mensa', at *Vates* 6 (2012), pp. 15-16. It isn't too long or difficult. It aims to be lightly amusing, to give a fresh

view of a familiar aspect of Latin (the vocative, ‘o table’), and to offer a little moral to end with.

But what I really want is not for people to put forward their own works, but to select something by someone else, that they feel a teacher could usefully put before a class. I’d like to propose a collective anthology – created by you, *Vates* readers, and published in *Vates* as it is created (and perhaps also separately, if that would be useful). It should not take long, if you do feel it worthwhile, until we have a reasonable selection available, from which teachers can pick examples to use in class, when introducing students to the concept of modern Latin verse.

As a partial model, I am thinking of the existing online Neo-Latin teaching anthology (covering all periods, prose and verse) established some time ago by the Society for Neo-Latin Studies (SNLS). The society and its anthology may not be well known to readers outside Britain: essentially the former is a small, local version of the International Association (IANLS), set up for academics in the British Isles. The anthology has always been a collaborative venture – I may even have had a part in thinking of it: it’s so long ago I can’t remember – but has not yet expanded very far; and I can’t say how often it has ever been used in teaching. Imminent improvements, and possibly some expansion, are promised. It is freely available at:

https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/ren/snls/snls_teaching_anthology/

How might we adapt the concept for our own purposes? Perhaps we don’t need very long introductions: just enough to explain things that might otherwise mystify students. We definitely do want translations into English – and possibly into other languages too, if there’s a strong likelihood the poem will be introduced to speakers of them; and we want notes on anything students might not understand. We want to be told the metre of the verse, with a note on any striking aspects of the versification. Beyond that, perhaps it is best to keep things short and simple: think of something easy that might work in a short class, or part of one, rather than tough material for a lengthy university seminar discussion. I think it better if all of this supporting material comes from someone other than the author of the poem: so that there is a measure of independence and objectivity. Naturally it can also be the result of discussions with the author. One thing I would stress is the absolute need for the author’s permission (and any other permissions required by copyright or good manners, for example from editors of journals where a poem may have previously been published). I appreciate that some authors can be hard, or even impossible, to contact. Possibly we can help to locate them. But if we can’t, that is just unfortunate: it doesn’t mean we can steal their work for our anthology. Choose a different poem instead, by someone you *can* contact.

To summarise: I would welcome submissions for a new *Vates* teaching anthology, aimed at helping teachers of Latin in schools as well as universities (so please do not assume too much knowledge from students): items should be

- By a living author (i.e. alive on 1 August 2025), who is not yourself
- Offered with the author’s express, written permission
- In any verse form (please explain the form if it is unusual)
- Short (anything from four to twenty lines, approximately)
- Accessible to students, preferably at any level
- Accompanied by a short introduction, translation, and uncomplicated notes
- With any bibliographical details (place of previous publication, etc).

The anthology will of course give credit both to the author and to the person who selects and annotates the poem.

The Dedication – Who was R. G. A.?

He was R. G. ('Geoff') Allibone, a teacher of Classics for many years at Tonbridge School. It was with his encouragement that your new editor learned to write Latin verse: and thus, indirectly, he is a parent of the revival of *Vates*. I say a little more about what it was like to learn in the 1980s, in the editor's note that follows Barry Baldwin's reminiscences of doing so at an earlier time (pp. 135-36). Some people's initials, I find, are memorable – in schools which make much use of them, that may often be the case; just occasionally, I remember them for people encountered elsewhere (D. A. F. M. R. springs to mind: the late Oxford professor Donald Russell). So I hope Geoff's spirit might be pleased at being remembered here, and by initials.

As well as to Geoff as an individual, we may also dedicate the volume to inspirational teachers everywhere. To teachers in general, one might say: *do* be inspirational. Some of the students will probably hate you anyway. Many of them are likely to be indifferent, to you personally or to the subject. So when you have the chance to convey something worthwhile to someone who may be receptive: take it.

I think, too, that Geoff would have seen the point of our challenge to teachers, to include some verse by living authors in their lessons. We never did it at school – the idea would have been unheard of: if he had heard of it, I think he might have liked it, and might even have done it. But having an open mind, being prepared to challenge oneself, and not automatically rejecting the new because it is different to the old: that all seems to be consistent with the spirit of R. G. A., and now of *Vates*.

Phaedriana Quaedam

Benedictus Fehér

Introduction:

Naturally these three short Aesopic fables, ‘Somewhat in the manner of Phaedrus’, follow Phaedrus’ metrics. The second one is a versified version of a nineteenth-century Hungarian fable originally written by András Fáy (1786 – 1864), a lawyer, publicist, and parliamentarian. The other two are wholly mine.

1. Culex et scarabaeus

Occurrit quondam scarabaeo culex volans
aitque: o turpem, qui vescaris stercore!
Indignatus quem scarabaeus sic reppulit:
Re vera turpis sum, sed quae nil usui
cuiquam est, hac vescor re, non vivo sanguine. 5
Hoc, si quis eleganter ceteris nocet,
dari protentum speculum intelligat sibi.

Metre: iambic senarii.

Translation:

‘The gnat and the scarab’

Once the gnat, while flying, met the scarab and said: ‘O you ugly one, who feed on dung!’ The scarab answered with indignation: ‘Indeed I am ugly, but I feed on that which no one can use, and not on living blood.’

He who harms others in an elegant way, must understand that this is a mirror held before him.

2. Simiae castaneas cupientes

Castaneas in silva invenere simiae.
Quaerentes, quo manducarent eas modo,
sic allocuta est harum versatissima:
Assare vidi nuper hominem castaneas.
Focos relictos invenire possumus, 5
condamus istas sub carbone candido.
Factum est, assata est cena tempore brevi,
quam sub carbone quonam promerent modo,
contentio orta est simiarum maxima.
Communi pro cibo, unaquaeque ait, manum 10
uramne propriam? Sic exustae sunt dapes.
Cum pro salute communi est agendo opus,
quam multae simiae sunt in re publica!

Metre: iambic senarii.

Translation:

‘The monkeys wishing for chestnuts’

The monkeys found chestnuts in the forest. When they were seeking for a way to eat them, the most skilled of them told them: ‘Recently I saw that a man was baking chestnuts. We can find the abandoned fireplace, let us hide them under the living coal.’ [7] It was done, the food was baked soon, but the monkeys began a great controversy, how they could take it off from under the embers. [10] Every one of them said: ‘Shall I burn my own hands for the common food?’ And thus the repast was all burnt up.

When one must operate for the common welfare, how many monkeys are found in a state!

3. Gallinae duae et lumbricus

Duae dum quondam (aut numquam) prisco tempore

gallinae terram rostro radunt et pede,

lumbricum rostris ceperunt ambae simul.

Mortem imminentem fugere lumbricus volens

sollerti voce: Fortiori praeda, ait,

5

haberi vestrum malim. Nescientibus,

decernerent quo pacto, proposuit modum:

Defodiam penitus me sub terrae pondere,

deinde exclamabo: nunc, nunc fortes radite!

Utri tenebor, stomacho condat ista me.

10

Consentiuntque gallinae stultissimae,

defossumque alte lumbricum exspectant adhuc.

Qui non sentit, quid doceat illum fabula,

gallinis exspectabit finem longius.

Metre: iambic senarii.

Translation:

‘The two hens and the earthworm’

Once upon a time (or never) when two hens were scraping the earth with their beaks and feet, both of them caught the same earthworm at the same time. The earthworm, wishing to escape imminent death, said with cunning words: ‘I would like to be the prey of the more valiant of you.’ [6] Since they did not know how they could decide, it suggested a way: ‘I shall dig myself deep in the earth, and then I shall cry out: Now, now scrape bravely! Whichever of you get me, she shall bury me into her belly.’ [11] The stupid hens consented, and they are still waiting for the earthworm who dug itself deeply in.

He who does not understand what is the teaching of this tale, must wait for its end longer than the hens.

Shorter Religious Poems, and a Fable

Giacomo dalla Pietà

De Iesu Christo

Christus tam valuit puer ut sit natus egenus
sponte sua; valuit tantum ut penderet et ultro
de cruce. Quid mirum si iterum surrexit? At ecce
talìa de nullo possunt nunc quippe referri.
Ecce Deus verus profertur et unicus, almus!

Metre: dactylic hexameters

Translation:

‘On Jesus Christ’

Christ was so powerful that he wanted to be born as a poor child of his own free will, and that he wanted to hang on the Cross of his own free will. Why then should we be surprised if he rose again? Now, such things cannot be said about anyone else. Therefore he shows himself as the true, unique and kind God.

Mariae Bernardillae Subirous

Oblatam esse ferunt specubus Mariam sine labe
conceptam parvae purae dulcique puellae;
hanc iussam esse haurire ex fonte unde ipsa medella
proflueret multis; primum accepisse salutem
Eugenia natum, prolem ipsam Napoleonis.
Aerumnas quot passa fuit Bernarda puella!
Inde inter sanctos dicunt illam esse relatam
ob vitam puram, non ob miracula rerum.
Ora pro nobis humilis dulcisque puella!

5

Metre: dactylic hexameters

Translation:

‘To Maria Bernadette Soubirous’

They say that Mary, conceived without blemish, showed herself in a cave to the pure and sweet young girl; and that the girl was ordered to drink from the source from which a medicine could flow for many. The first to benefit from it was Eugenie’s son, Napoleon’s own offspring. [6] How many vicissitudes Bernadette endured! They say that she was welcomed among the saints not because of her miracles, but because of her simple and pure life. Pray for us, humble and sweet girl!

In honorem Divi Iosephi Redemptoris Custodis

Ornatus es tu nomine quod fuit
pastoris almi somnia cui data,
discordia qui oblitterata
dat veniam manet atque iustus.

Sponsam penes te tu retinens, nihil
curare vulgi dicta salacia
mavis; fidem das tu superni
Numinis aligero beato.

Iosephe, nostras ipse domus videns
tutare semper; semina et auferas
discordiarum; in caritatem
muta odia et mala sensa nostra!

Metre: Alcaic stanzas

Translation:

‘In honour of Saint Joseph, guardian of the Redeemer’

You bore the same name that the pure shepherd had borne, to whom dreams had been given as a gift. He, forgetting the discord, forgives and remains just.

[5] Keeping your bride at your home, you prefer not to show interest in the salacious words of the common people. You trusted the blessed angel of the Lord.

[9] Joseph, looking at our homes, always protect them! remove the causes of discord and transform our bad feelings into charity!

Cogitans ante tempus de Die Natali Domini (anno 2015)

Numen, fuisti parvulus et neci
mitti clues tu, praestet ut unica
nunc caritas divina semper
motibus omnibus adsident qui

menti furenti turbidae et invidae
mortalium! Nos valle vagos iuva
nunc debiles tristi morantes
fletibus ac lacrimis referta.

Quam quod probetur consilium DEI
absurdus quis dixerit. At fides
innixa parvo qui beatos
nos pueros agat atque puros!

Carus puellus, frigore languidus,
nunc est fovendus. Cordibus omnibus
sanctus manebis. Nunc benigne
respice quot venerentur et te!

Metre: Alcaic stanzas

Translation:

‘Thoughts in advance of Christmas, 2015’

O God, you were a little child, and it is reputed that you faced death so that Divine Charity may prevail over the feelings which besiege our turbid, envious mortal minds. [6] Comfort us, we who live wandering in this valley full of sadness and tears! God's plan seems too absurd to be plausible, but Faith is founded on a child who can turn us into happier and simpler children. [13] The dear little child suffering from the cold must now be warmed up. You will remain in everyone's hearts. Protect those who venerate you throughout the world.

Fabella

Fluitans, capessens otia ad rivi sinus
a scorpio rogatur ut rana advehat,
transmittat ipsum ripam amoenam ad alteram.

Obiectat illa posse se spinis mori
onustus unde factus est. “Vanus timor
est iste. Nonne intelligis memet mori,
pungam veneno si meo - inquit - te malo
ferentem? An ipse fluctibus non obruar?”

Secura facta rana bestiolam accipit
humeris. Ut est aggressa iter medium, sibi
mortem ipsa sentit scorpium spinis datam.
“Quid haec parasti crude!” “Natura haec iubet”
respondit ille. Semper infidos cave.

Metre: iambic trimeters

Translation:

‘Fable’

While swimming and resting on the bank of a river, a frog was asked by a scorpion to carry him to the other bank. The frog objected that it could die from the sting with which the scorpion was endowed. [5] The scorpion replied: ‘It is a vain fear. Or do you not understand that I too would die if I stung you with my poison and that I would be overwhelmed by the wave?’ [9] The frog, thus reassured, took the creature on his shoulders, but when he was halfway there, he realized that death had been administered to him by the sting. [12] ‘Why did you do this to me, you cruel one?’ The scorpion replied: ‘Nature orders me to do all this.’ One must always fear those who are untrustworthy.

Warburgius Renascens

Nathaniel Hess

Introduction:

This piece was written to mark the completion of the ‘Warburg Renaissance’ project, the long-awaited renovation and augmentation of the Warburg Institute in Bloomsbury. It takes its departure from an incident during the works, when an urban fox was rumoured to have found its way into the building. In the course of its escapade it experiences several distinctive features of the institute and its library: the elliptical coffer of the new auditorium; the relief of the Muses, a fortuitous survival from the Georgian building previously out of sight, now displayed in our atrium; and the peculiar arrangement of the collections, designed to foster the serendipitous ‘law of the good neighbour’.

Huius instaurationis, doctissimi atque illustres sodales, tot et tanta sunt gaudia, ut uix admirationem meam exprimere possim. Dignitatem huius aedis, quam partim renouatam, partim auctam uidemus, conor in sermone adumbrare: primordia quaerens distrahor. Laudo liberalitem eorum, qui tot beneficiis sodalitatem nostram ditauerunt: uox absona est. Commendo sodalitatem ipsam, tam iucundam quam rerum abditarum peritissimam: haesitat lingua, obmutesco, totus torpeo. Pro oratione igitur carmen citabo, nugax quidem, sed quod aliquid pertineat ad rem. Fabella est Aesopia, siue Phaedri siue imitatoris cuiusdam opus, quam, cum uagarer labyrinthos per anfractus bibliothecae, inueni in libello uetustissimo et numquam prius in lucem edito.

Scientiam multorum, quae cultu caret, Parum ualere, testis fabula haec breuis. Delubra forte uulpes noctu intrauerat, Nouem Pieriis sancta matre cum sua.	
Per fana, quae lacunar ouatum tegit, Paulum spatiaata; non tamen curae fuit Splendor parietis, quem putares Indico Dente expolitum potius quam tectorio. Angusto ad imum fissus est foramine:	5
Hoc conspicata clanculum uulpecula Irrepsit, sese insinuans per tenuia loca. Inuenit intus regis plus quam Lydiae Opulentiam: non constat auro sed libris.	10
Animal nasutum uulpes est, et callidum: Haec cum uidisset tanta et tot uolumina Gauisa codici ex illis ueterrimo Inserere rostrum; deinde sumpsit alterum,	15
Ad umbilicum alacriter euoluens pede; Dein alterum: illis tam auide inhiauit omnibus Voluptas ut satiari non posset sua. Nec gustauit modo, sed totos absorbit.	20
Non aequat ingluui ei diligentia. Ordo sagax, qui steterat integerrimus Longum per saeculum, penitus conturbatus est: Vicinitatis lex bonae frustra ruit.	25

Est pro forulis infecta sorde nec satis
 Digesta moles. Iam tandem illuxit dies,
 Simul et surrexit quaedam Musarum chori.
 Libros temere dispositos cum conspexerat,
 Chartas cacatas, et pluteos putescere, 30
 Scopas suscepit cum quis deiceret feram.
 "Sacella nostra," dixit, "ne turpaueris.
 Bona est doctrina, sed nobis maius placet
 Amoenitate mixta. Tunc pura ac puta
 Haec aedis fiat: hinc brutum procul omne abi!" 35

Metre: iambic senarii (Note: though essentially the same as a trimeter, the senarius permits a greater variety of substitutions, in any foot except the last; such as spondees in the fourth foot, as in lines 1, 12, 24.)

Translation:

'The Warburg Institute reborn'

So great and manifold are the joys of this renovation, most learned and illustrious companions, that I am scarcely able to express my admiration. I try to sketch out in speech the dignity of this building, partly extended, partly renovated, but I can hardly find a place to begin. I praise the generosity of those who have endowed our community so well, but my voice sounds off. I commend the community itself – its good company as well as its expertise in all kinds of recondite subjects – but my tongue gets stuck, I fall silent, and become entirely stiff with apprehension. Instead of an oration, therefore, I will give you a poem – a silly one, perhaps, but not entirely irrelevant. It is an Aesopic fable, the work of Phaedrus or some recent imitator, which I found, whilst I was wandering through the labyrinthine windings of our library, in an old and hitherto unpublished book.

Without the refinements of civilisation, knowing many things is of little worth, as this short fable will attest. One night a fox happened to enter a sanctuary dedicated to the nine Muses and their mother. It wandered a little through the inner sanctum, which was covered by an oval ceiling. The walls were so splendid that you would think them clad in ivory rather than plaster, but this was not of interest to the fox.

[9] Noticing a small gap at the bottom, it twisted itself through the narrow opening and crept silently in. Inside it found a wealth greater than that of Midas, consisting not of gold but of books. The fox is an intelligent creature, with a good nose for such things, and this one was overjoyed at the sight of so many marvellous books. It found which the oldest one there was, and got stuck in with its muzzle. Then it picked up another, enthusiastically turning it over with its paw and getting right to its heart. Another followed. In fact, so greedily did it gape at all of these books that its pleasure could scarcely be satisfied.

[21] It not only tasted them but utterly devoured them. Its appetite, however, was not matched by carefulness. The well-devised order, which for one whole century had stood intact, was entirely thrown into confusion: the law of the good neighbour ceased to apply, and there was a dirty and ill-digested heap where the bookcases were. [27] At long last dawn came, and with it one of the Muses arose. When she saw that the books were in disarray, and that the papers and desks were mired in filth, she took up a broom to eject the beast. [32] 'Do not mess up our holy places', she said. 'Learning is good, but we like it better when it comes with amenities. So let this building henceforth be clean and pure, and from it all unpleasantness be gone!'

A Tribute to William McCulloh

Clifford Weber

Introduction:

This poem was composed in 1999 in honor of my Hellenist colleague's retirement. It was read aloud at a large banquet attended by McCulloh's students past and present, and so the *mise-en-scène* described actually occurred. McCulloh's monologue is a spoof of the lines given to Gallus in Virgil's *Eclogue* 10. In general, I tried to maintain a mock-heroic style.

Pauca Carmina Nostro G. McCulloh Dicenda

Est locus hirsuta circumdatus undique silva
arboris unde capit regio cognomina "Buckeye."
Illuc conveniunt iuvenes teneraeque puellae
non, ut saepe solent, aliquid puerile petentes,
aurea sed potius clari praecepta magistri. 5
Omnino nihil est sapiens quod nesciat ille:
scripta, viros, mores, sermones discere si vis
temporis antiqui, potes illic cuncta doceri.
An "poteras" dicam? Tandem professor habenas
compescit mannosque premit cursuque quiescit. 10
Ecce autem – quare mea lucida lumina lucent?
Quod visum volitans viscatis haeret ocellis?
Incipit ipse toro sapiens praeclarus oriri
cordibus et maestis haec tristia fundere verba:
"Quae loca, qui me nunc exaudiet angulus orbis 15
muneribus functum supremis erudiendi?
Aut ubi discipulos condiscere nostra volentis
praecepta inveniam? Quae me loca progenuerunt
illa petam? Nequeo perferre diutius agros;
pertaedet pecoris quoque, porcorumque piget me. 20
Quae nemora intexere abavos antiquitus, illuc
nunc exul redeam silvarumque incola fiam?
Dicitur ille locus, fugientibus arva colonis,
horribilis ursos nuper vidisse: timerem
ne me ipsum mea quam praeceptaprehendere mallent. 25
O utinam lente me conterat alba senectus
divini Sophoclis docta dum cunctor in urbe!
Hac tamen optatis cura prohibebor Athenis:
utile quid poterit cognoscere Graeculus a me?
Si non discipulos, certe vos corrigere ipsos, 30
collegae, potero. Vestris malus incidit error
consiliis? Adero rectique ad limina ducam.
Seditio vestros coepit contingere coetus?
Heu bello pacem longe praestare docebo.
Difficili studio sunt qui librisque resistent? 35
Vocibus utimini blandis et parcite fastu.
Saepe vocate ad vos, protendite pocula melle
oblita, tum demum medicinam imponite furtim:

Attica sic elementa novus sorbebit alumnus.	
Deinde ut amet vere Musam suadere pedestrem,	40
hoc opus, hic labor est. Vehemens est illa puella	
et rudior quam quae subolem deleniat urbis.	
Vere suo iuvenum cum tandem adoleverit aetas,	
egressos nido summa ad monumenta vocabunt	
Aeschylus et Sophocles et Pindarus Euripidesque.	45
Hoc quaeso regimen servate perennius aere.	
Vester ut eveniat septem feliciter annis	
cursus et e dubio veniatis ad otia tandem,	
scribite fasciculos, componite grande volumen:	
tantae molis erit nostrum placare tyrannum.”	50
Inde pater fessus tacuit finemque loquendi	
fecit et os pressit verum, sermone quieto.	
Deficiente die contemplabatur alumnos,	
multa putans in corde suo quae condidit alto.	
Tandem corripuit sese in lectumque resedit.	55
Post haec audires quae decidit aethere pennam,	
omnibus attonitis primum quod versibus uti	
hexametris, dein tanta loqui praecepta poteset.	
Quae reddant responsa? Quibus rationibus aucti	
talia iussa negent? Quis prima exordia sumat?	60
Nemo est quin metuat ne quid dicatur inepti;	
undique, vix sensi, repunt per inane susurri.	
Attamen ipse domum gelida vult nocte reverti,	
disceptare suis cum certis ausus amicis.	
Interea placidas caliginis aestibus aedis	65
suffundit virisque viris ex omnibus haurit	
Hesperus. Hospitibus comites cedentibus illinc	
occursant, invitat enim nocturna voluptas.	
Vir venerate, diu valeas, valeamus et ipsi;	
mutua sint nobis multos haec fata per annos.	70

Metre: dactylic hexameters

Translation:

There is a place that is everywhere ringed by a shaggy forest of the tree from which the region takes its name: “Buckeye.” There young men and tender girls assemble, seeking not something childish, as they often do, but rather the golden precepts of a renowned teacher. [6] There is nothing at all that that sage doesn’t know: if you wish to learn the writings, the men, the customs, the languages of an ancient time, you can be taught everything there. Or am I to say “you once could?” The professor is finally tightening his reins and curbing his horses and withdrawing from the race.

[11] But look – why do my bright eyes brighten? What fleeting vision clings glued to my eyes? The celebrated sage himself begins to rise from his couch and to pour forth these sad words from a sorrowful heart: [15] “What places, what corner of the world will listen to me now that I have completed my final duties of teaching? Or where will I find students wanting to learn our precepts? The places that begat me – shall I head for those? I cannot endure the country any longer; I am sick of cattle as well, and I loathe pigs. The groves that anciently sheltered my forebears – am I now to return there an exile and become a denizen of the woods?

[23] With farmers fleeing their plowfields, that place is said to have seen terrifying bears of late; I would be afraid lest they prefer to grasp me myself rather than my precepts. If only white old age may slowly wear me down while I linger in the learned city of divine Sophocles! Yet this concern will keep me away from longed-for Athens: what useful thing will a Greekling be able to learn from me? If not my students, colleagues, I will surely be able to correct *you*. Has malign error befallen your counsels? I will stand by and take you to the threshold of what is right. [33] Has sedition begun to defile your assemblies? Ah, I will teach that peace is far better than war. Are there some who resist difficult study and books? Use flattering words and avoid arrogance, summon to your side often, offer cups smeared with honey, then finally put in the medicine by stealth: so will a new pupil swallow the Attic basics. Then, to persuade him or her to truly love the Muse of prose, this is the task, this the ordeal. That girl is tough and too coarse to charm a scion of the city. [43] When finally the age of your young people has matured in its spring, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Pindar, and Euripides will call them out of their nest and on to the highest monuments. [46] Pray keep this rule more lasting than bronze. In order that your own race turn out happily in seven years, and that you come from doubt to freedom at last, write papers, compose a big book: so great a task will it be to placate our ruler.”

[51] Then the weary father fell silent and made an end of speaking and restrained his truthful mouth, his speech at rest. With daylight fading, he kept gazing on his pupils, thinking many things that he buried deep in his heart. Finally he took hold of himself and sat down in his chair. [56] After this, you would hear a feather that drops down from the air, all being astonished, first, that he could use hexameter verses, then that he could utter such great precepts. What replies are they to give back? Armed with what reasonings are they to refuse such commands? Who is to take up the first beginnings? [61] There isn't anyone who isn't afraid that something silly will be said; on all sides, barely sensed, whispers creep through the emptiness. Yet the teacher wishes to return home in the chill of night, having dared to debate with his trusted friends. [65] Meantime, the evening star fills the quiet room with waves of darkness and drains strength from all the men. As the guests depart from there, their comrades rush to meet them, for nightly pleasure beckons. [69] Esteemed man, long may you thrive, and may we ourselves thrive as well: may this mutual destiny be ours throughout many years.

Notes:

Title: a paraphrase of *pauca meo Gallo . . . carmina sunt dicenda* at the beginning of *Eclogue* 10, where *meo Gallo* can mean either “by my Gallus” or “for my Gallus”.

1: *est locus* is a formula for introducing a *topothesia*, i.e., a description of a landscape.

2: *cognomen* is elevated diction for *nomen*.

4: alliteration is a common feature of traditional/old-fashioned epic style.

7: monosyllables as the final word in a line are old-fashioned and avoided in Classical hexameters.

9-10: three co-ordinated clauses = tricolon, common in both Virgil and forensic oratory.

10: Virgil is fond of lines that begin and end with identical verb forms. Cf. lines 20 and 66 below.

11: the alliteration and etymological word play belong to traditional epic style.

12: triple alliteration. On the other hand, diminutives such as *ocellus* for *oculus* are alien to epic style. There is only one (*parvulus* for *parvus* coming from Dido) in the *Aeneid*.

14-15: both lines contain a so-called “bucolic” (because ubiquitous in Theocritus) diaeresis, i.e., a word break after a dactylic fourth foot. Cf. lines 17, 18, 23, 26, 29, 31, 37, 49, and 65 below.

15-29: modeled on Gallus' monologue in *Eclogue* 10.31-69.

16: lines consisting of only four words are rare. A single word filling the last two feet is *verboten* in Classical hexameters and condemned by Quintilian as *praemolle* (“exceedingly

soft”). It is allowed, however, in the elevated style of Lucretius, where the word is often a gerund. There are two such lines in Lucretius 1.1-40.

18: another line with a single word filling the final two feet, the word in question being archaic and so appropriate to elevated diction.

20: quadruple alliteration. The cadence *piget me* violates Classical metrical norms, but it is mitigated by the absence of an accent on the pronoun *me*. Cf. Lucretius 1.14 and 1.33.

21-25: Pennsylvania, where encounters with bears had been in the news.

27: McCulloh’s PhD dissertation was on Sophocles.

29: *Graeculus*, another diminutive, is a contemptuous slur for *Graecus* and the last word that a phil-hellene like McCulloh would ever use.

30: the elision in *corrigere ipsos* is inelegant (intentionally) in that position in the line. It is rare even in Lucretius.

36: *fastu* is dative singular.

41: *hoc opus, hic labor est* is quoted from *Aeneid* 6.129, where the words refer to the difficulty of returning from a descent into the Underworld.

45: an imitation of Horace’s single-line list of Greek writers of Old Comedy in *Satires* 1.4.1.

46: *perennius aere* is quoted from Horace *Odes* 3.30.1, where it is applied to the predicted immortality of Horace’s lyric achievement.

50: *tantae molis erit* is quoted from *Aeneid* 1.33, where it summarizes the immense task of founding the Roman state.

51-52: epic pleonasm on steroids. Both lines taken together = “he fell silent”. Cf. Aeneas after his narrative delivered at Dido’s banquet in his honor: *sic pater Aeneas . . . conticuit tandem factoque hic fine quievit* (“so father Aeneas . . . finally fell silent and came to rest, making an end here”) in *Aeneid* 3.716-18.

53: after line 16 above, another hexameter of only four words.

54: echoes of Virgil (*multa putans*) and of Ennius.

58: *potesset* is an elevated archaism = *posset*.

60: *exordia sumat* is quoted from Lucretius 1.149.

62: as a noun, *inane* is commonest in Lucretius, where it refers to the Epicurean void.

66: for *virisque viris*, see the note on line 11 above.

Paraclausithyron

Paul Murgatroyd

istarum nequeo speciem nunc ferre genarum,
isti me pulchri mox periment oculi.
ad surdas sedeo portas exclusus amator,
et tu dura mihi difficilisque manes.
nam bonitatem a corde tuo tua forma fugavit. 5
nil mihi nil prodest flere, dolere, queri.
reddere me tristem gaudent tua lumina dura;
subridet raro, saepe maligna micant.
nam bonitatem a corde tuo tua forma fugavit.
nil mihi nil prodest flere, dolere, queri. 10
parce precor: duro crucior percussus amore;
tu me morte gravi solvere sola potes.
istarum nequeo speciem nunc ferre genarum,
isti me pulchri mox periment oculi.

Metre: elegiac couplets

Translation:

I cannot endure now the beauty of your eyes, your lovely eyes will soon kill me. I sit, a locked-out lover, at your deaf door, and you remain cruel and harsh to me. For your beauty has driven kindness from your heart. It does me no good, no good to weep, grieve, complain. [7] Your cruel eyes take a delight in making me sad; they smile seldom, often flash unkind. For your beauty has driven kindness from your heart. It does me no good, no good, to weep, grieve, complain. [11] Spare me, I pray: I am tormented, struck by a cruel love; you alone can release me from a painful death. I cannot endure now the beauty of your eyes, your lovely eyes will soon kill me.

Note:

1: 'genae' in the less common sense of 'eyes', 'eye-sockets' rather than 'cheeks'.

Ode to Andria

Michael Atkinson

Introduction:

This short poem was a product of a gap-year spent in Buenos Aires (hence the reference to the Southern moon and the Southern constellation of Aquarius) in between a Latin course at one English university and a Spanish course at another. There was a fashion for Latin love poets to imagine their girlfriends came from Aegean islands – Lesbos in the case of Catullus and Delos in the case of Tibullus – so I'm in good company in dedicating this to the 'Girl from Andros', particularly as her name actually happened to be Andrea. Otherwise, I think the poem speaks for itself.

Iuxta pulchra iaces, Andria, crinibus
perfusis humerum trans niveum nigris,
atque Indis redolet pectus odoribus
somno virgineo calens.

Australis cecidit luna et Aquarius,
et lux prima subit; sed vigilo tua
forma contigua saucius, anxius
ne nos dimoveat dies.

5

Metre: Fourth Asclepiadic stanzas

Translation:

You are beautiful, Andria, lying beside me with your black hair spilling over your snow-white shoulder and your breast scented with Indian perfumes and warm with a sleep of a young girl.

[5] The Southern moon has set. So too has Aquarius, and dawn is stealing in. But I cannot sleep. I am racked with desire for your body that is touching mine, but also with worry that the daylight will draw us apart.

Tria Carmina

Barbara Dowlasz

Serva Camenae

Strophae Sapphicae

Poetria quaerit atque ipsa sibi responsum dare conatur; quare carmina Latina componat.

Unde vox semper venit haec amoena?

Quid susurrans mi canit eleganter

Musa? Quo me, Bacche, rapis? Iubes cur
pangere versus?

Exigam forsán monumentum honestum,
grandibus possim licet aemulari
vatibus nunquam. Ast humilis manebo
serva Camenae.

5

Gloriam sperno, titulos, honores.

Non ego omnis nam moriar, legentes
expetant dum carmina litterasque.

10

Umbra poesis!

Metre: Sapphic stanzas

Translation:

‘Camenae’s Servant’

[The poet seeks and tries to give herself an answer as to why she composes Latin poems.]

Where does this graceful voice continually come from? What is it that the Muse whispers to me, sings with grace? Where are you taking me, Bacchus? Why do you tell me to write poetry? [5] Perhaps I will build a decent monument, although I will never be able to equal the great poets. Instead, I will remain Camenae’s [the Muse’s] humble servant. [9] I despise fame, titles, honours, because I will not die completely as long as readers reach for lyric and literature. Poetry is a shadow!

Notes:

3: cf. Horace, *Odes* 3. 25. 1.

5: cf. Horace, *Odes* 3. 30. 1.

10: cf. Horace, *Odes* 3. 30. 6.

Via

Hendecasyllabi

Carmen tempore difficili conscriptum. Persona loquens nescit, quid ei agendum sit: utrum vitam totam commutare et nova suscipere, an potius statu veteri permanere. Deus Ianus adoratur; quippe qui deus sit cuncta initia necnon omnem finem sciens.

Quo ducit via? Nesciens rogabam.

Respondere nequit deus biformis,

qui futura videt memor peracti.
 Custos temporis, adiuva vagantem!
 Tu, qui cuncta potes videre, Iane, 5
 ianuas aperi sciens futuri!
 Noli spernere, dive, te colentem!
 Aptum quodnam iter est mihi sequendum
 Monstra tu, nova qui futura praebes!
 Apparet via iam recens, opaca! . . . 10

Metre: hendecasyllables

Translation:
 'The Way'

[The poem was written during difficult times. The speaker does not know what to do: whether to change his whole life and take up new things, or rather remain in his old state. The god Janus is worshipped, since he is a god who knows all beginnings and all ends.]

Where does the way lead? I asked without knowing. The two-faced god, who sees the future and remembers the past, cannot answer. Guardian of time, help the wanderer! [5] You, who see everything, Janus, open the door knowing what is to come! Do not reject, o holy one, your worshipper! [8] You, who reveal the new things that are to come, show me, which of the paths is right for me, which one I should take.
 [10] A new path, still dark, now appears! . . .

Lethe

Hendecasyllabi

In hoc carmine iam ante multos annos conscripto de desiderio amasii cuiusdam agitur, qui tunc multis chiliometris remotus habitabat, quam ob causam nobis neque per longum tempus convenire licebat neque magna spes erat communis felicitis futuri.

Oblivisci opus est tui, mi amice.
 Ipsa non valeoque diligo te!
 Surgam, fluminibusque inebriabor
 Lethes somniferis. Misella quaeram
 annem priscum ubicumque, spem perennem. 5
 Oblivisci opus est tui, mi amice . . .

Metre: hendecasyllables

Translation:
 'Lethe'

[This poem, written many years ago, deals with the longing for a certain lover, who at that time lived many kilometers away, for which reason we had neither been allowed to meet for a long time nor did we have much hope of a happy future together.]

I must forget you, my friend. But I cannot do it myself, I love you! I will rise, I will get drunk by the waters of Lethe, which bring sleep. Poor me, I will search everywhere for the ancient river, eternal hope. I must forget you, my friend . . .

Poems of Art, and Love, and Wine

Chloris (Karin Zeleny)

Introduction:

Chloris is my Renaissance Alter Ego. Some of these poems happened to come up in the course of work – proofreading exhibition catalogues of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, concerning Renaissance Art – and were printed therein as ornamental vignettes in good old humanist tradition for the very few who appreciate Latin poetry. Not so the Origin of Barbera: when the city council of Castagnole delle Lanze near Asti in the Italian region of Piemonte deliberately set prizes for Latin texts on the famous local wine “Barbera domina uinorum”, an elegy in the style of humanist metamorphoses in Ovid’s wake seemed the appropriate thing to invent, and indeed won the competition and was premiered there on 4 May 2008 (with a chest of very fine wine easily and soon to be emptied with good friends). The promised publication of the contributions was never printed, so now – thanks to David Money – *Vates* provides space for it. Other poems I wrote to dear friends accompanying my life, and the motives often are coloured by the seasons and the elements, the changes in the course of nature and life, flowering and withering, and anyway the fact that nothing stands still, and everything is constantly inconstant, just as Ovid says about the dancing Fortuna in *Tristia* 5. 8. 18: “et tantum constans in leuitate sua est”. Being in love and a little high from time to time is great, of course, and yet: best of all is the company of true friends and of all the kind Muses in Epicurus’ garden.

Ad Mundum Viuum

iam nihil aeterni nihil immutabile nobis
tempora naturae sub ioue fine carent
nox lucem sequitur tenebras lux mox peritura
et latet in pulchris spina dolenda rosis
uer florens aestas feruens autumnus feraxque 5
et tu bruma rigens auscultate preces
obsecro terra parens uosque aer ignis aquaeque
praesidia infirmae fortia ferte mihi
exsiccate malum date cornua pellite curas
inter uos uigiles fit mihi certa salus 10

Metre: elegiac couplets

Translation by John Nicholson:

‘To the Living World’

Nothing eternal is left to us, nothing immutable:
In this world, nature’s times have no end.
Night follows light, and light, soon to fade, darkness,
And roses fair conceal a painful thorn.
Flowering spring, burning summer, fruitful autumn, 5
And you too, harsh winter, hear my prayers.
I beseech you, Mother Earth, and you, air, fire, water,
Give me, weak as I am, powerful protection.

Exsiccate evil, grant strength, drive away cares:
 With you as my guardians, I will surely be safe. 10

Quae Venus Augustae Vindelicorum Mercurio Dormienti Dixit

Mercuri facunde, quiete foeda
 obrutus desterte, ueni, loquamur,
 nam tuam dulcis Venerem uoluptas
 urget amandi.

filius ludens iterum Cupido 5
 matre confossa tuus ille gaudet,
 qui secundus iam Cicerone lippo
 denumerante.

forsitan fratres alios requirit?
 insuper septem pariam libenter 10
 ad Lichi ripas uirides amores:
 surge, loquamur!

feruidam laetis animam repone
 sedibus uirgaue uigil coercens
 aurea corpus calidum potenter 15
 da mihi uerba!

Metre: Sapphic stanzas

Translation by John Nicholson:

‘What Venus Said to the Sleeping Mercury at Augsburg’
 (inspired by ‘Mercury, Venus, and Cupid’ by Hans Burgkmair the Elder (1473 – 1531) and the
 many limestone Putti by Hans Daucher (c. 1486 – 1538) from the Fugger Chapel at St Anne’s
 in Augsburg)

Smooth-tongued Mercury, deep in shameful slumber,
 Stop snoring – come, let us talk,
 For your Venus is hard-pressed
 With sweet desire for love.
 Once again your playful son Cupid is happy 5
 To have transfixed his mother,
 He that bleary-eyed Cicero numbers
 The second of his kind.
 Maybe what he wants is more brothers?
 Here on the Lech’s green banks 10
 I’d willingly bear seven more like him.
 Up with you, let us talk!
 Lay my burning soul upon this gladsome ground!
 Waking, mightily subdue my ardent body
 With the golden staff 15
 And give me words!

Chloridis Carmen Etymologicum

Vertumnus ad Pomonam:

liberam sane toleramus artem
ut decet Pomona deos, sed audi:
cum tuis pomis mihi tu perenni
sola uoluptas

pinxit Arcimboldus opus stupendum, 5
iunxit ignotam temere innocenti
sponte Vertumno nitidamque uerno
flore puellam

iam docet nomen, mihi te docenti 10
crede: VER TEMNO, steriles sed aruis
haec tuos purus timeo furores
ne ferat aestas

Pomona ad Vertumnum:

VERTITVR Vertumne globus: nec actum
rite uer temnas timeas nec ortum
tempus aestiuum tibi quo quieta
poma coquentur

ut dedit flores modo uer odoros 5
sic ferax aestas erit atque fructus
diues autumnus dabit usque uer quos
pectore norat

Flora si nescis Italis uocatur, 10
atque pictori male qui Viennae
uixit ignoscamus iniqua passo
tempora brumae

Metre: Sapphic stanzas

Translation by David Graham:

‘An Etymological Poem by Chloris’
(inspired by ‘Vertumnus’ and ‘Flora’, by Giuseppe Arcimboldo (1526 – 1593))

Vertumnus to Pomona:

Of course we tolerate the liberty of art,
as befits gods, Pomona, but listen:
With Thy fruit, in all my eternity
Thou art my only lust.

Arcimboldo painted an amazing picture:
out of his own with innocent Vertumnus
he arbitrarily coupled an unknown maiden
refulgent in vernal flowers.

Already my name is telling it, believe me, if I tell Thee:
spring doth not interest me, but I fear that,
although I am true, summer might bring Thy harmful wrath
all over the fields.

Pomona to Vertumnus:

The globe, Vertumnus, is turning:
neither shouldst Thou condemn the lawfully gone spring
nor fear the summer that has started,
in which fruits for Thee will ripen in peace.

As spring has given you fragrant flowers,
thus summer will be fertile,
and rich autumn will bear Thee fruit in abundance,
which spring already knew in the heart.

Flora is she called by Italians, if Thou didst not know it!
And we will pardon the painter,
because he lived miserably in Vienna,
where he had to suffer the foul winter's weather.

Quomodo in Vindobonensi Silua Grus Serpentis Signum Obtinuerit

FONTIS NIMPHA SACRI SOMNVM NE RVMPE QUIESCO

custodit pacem grus uigil absque metu	
olim hic dormiuit serpentum rex modo pransus	
destituit lassum digna corona caput	
aduolat en plumis teneris niueisque superba	5
noctua quae uarios candida temnit aues	
urget caeca fames: regis sub uentre plicatas	
alas turgenti non uidet inde nefas	
nam rex serpentum sacer est auibusque canoris	
alatus colitur nobilis instar auis	10
aggreditur: uigilat sed grus teretemque lapillum	
ut solet et bolum sustinet ungue luti	
quos iacit et bolo lutescens noctua cedit	
sanguine perfusae lutea pluma rubet	
psittacus et phoenix pauo cirisque cachinnant	15
lucus quotquot aues uindobonensis habet	
tergere mox frustra uelit inuisum illa colorem	
uenari pictam post nisi nocte pudet	
rex seruatorem commendat cumque corona	

serpentis merito signa tenere iubet
inde uiator abi: satis est spectasse puellam
pictor quod faciat grus tibi caute caue

20

Metre: elegiac couplets

Translation by Agnes Stillfried:

‘How the Crane in the Vienna Woods Received the Sign of the Serpent’
(on the sign of Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472 – 1553), inspired by Cranach’s painting ‘Water Nymph at a Fountain’, inscribed ‘FONTIS NIMPHA SACRI SOMNVM NE RVMPE QUIESCO’ on the rim of the fountain)

I, the nymph of this sacred spring, am resting: do not disturb my slumber!
The watchful and fearless crane guards the peace.
Once the serpent king rested here after his dinner;
his worthy crown had rolled off his tired head.
See, the white owl approaches, so proud of its fragile and snowy plumage,
who despises the colourful birds.
[7] Blind hunger propels it forward: it sees not the folded wings
hidden by the king’s bloated stomach and thus not the sacrilege,
for the serpent king is sacred and revered like a noble bird by the singing multitude,
because he too is winged.
The owl attacks him, but the crane is keeping watch and, as always, clasps
a smooth pebble and a piece of mud in its claw,
which it throws, and the owl, turning yellow from the earthy pigment, retreats.
Where blood drips from the wound its yellow plumage turns red.
[15] Parrot and phoenix, peacock and kingfisher snigger,
joined by all the birds who live in the Vienna Woods.
The owl would love to wipe off the hated colour at once – but to no avail:
dyed and coloured, henceforth it is too ashamed to hunt but at night.
The king praises his saviour and bestows on the crane the well-deserved privilege
to bear the sign of the crowned serpent as its own.
So be warned, wanderer, and move on: it is enough to have set eyes on the maiden!
Beware of what the painter Crane could do to you.

In Francisci Parmensis Cupidinem Arcum Caelantem

fractus est arcus pede sub superbo
iam iacent artes neque uult amari
stante quod regno patiens amabat
uulgus agreste

tu quidem magni dominator orbis
te tuasque acres metuunt sagittas
quis satis paruum puerum ueretur
sanus inermem

5

fractus est arcus nouus est parandus
cude caela fac propera Cupido
mundus immanis sine amore friget
et sine morte

10

Metre: Sapphic stanzas

Translation:

‘On “Cupid Carving His Bow” painted by Parmigianino (Francesco Mazzola, 1503 – 40)’

Broken lies the bow beneath the haughty foot: already the arts languish, and the rural folk who patiently loved, when your authority was strong, do not want to be loved anymore. But you are the commander of this great globe, they fear you and your painful arrows. [7] Who, in his right mind, respects a rather small boy without a weapon? Broken lies the bow, and a new one needs to be carved: strike, whittle, work, hurry, o Cupid; the vast world grows cold without love, and without death.

Ad Xauerium Kainzbauer Chori Regentem

laetificat tecum cor musica: sic mihi saeuae
tecum paganae fit quoque grata sacra

Metre: elegiac couplet

Translation:

‘To Xaver Kainzbauer, conductor of our choir’

With you music makes the heart happy: and thus I, a wild heathen, with you can even come to like sacred music.

Ad Wilfridum Seipel Chloridis Carmen Genethliacum

rite rectori tibi gratulamur
uera nam nostrum duce te supremo
grande museum peragebat olim
aurea saecula

Bessus et Bubastis Osiris Isis
Sphinx apud nos hinc habitant in aeuum
Bacchus et Faunus Venus et Diana et
laeta Minerua

5

uis tibi optamus maneant et ardor
risus et uiuax uigor et solutum
cor tuum penna leuius uolucris
dum tibi uita

10

Metre: Sapphic stanzas

Translation:

‘To Wilfried Seipel [an Egyptologist], a birthday poem by Chloris’

Rightfully we congratulate you, chief, because our great Museum with you as director-general did really once enjoy a golden age. Bessus, Bubastis, Osiris, Isis, and the Sphinx can thus live with us forever, along with Bacchus, Faunus, Venus, Diana and happy Minerva. [9] We wish that force and fire may be with you, and laughter and long-lasting strength; and may your serene heart, lighter than a flying feather, stay with you as long as you live.

Ad Alesium Poetam

quascumque quaeras umquam habeas tibi
seu spiritu tu siue ioco meris
seu uersibus temptes puellas
allicias nitidas Alesi

seu te bearis uitigeno mero
quocumque lecto uincere Massico
saeuam sitim quaedam uenusta
praebat absque pudore amica

5

Musae puellae sponte sequuntur et
carum poetam te madidae colunt
has mitte tantum nam nequimus
laurigeris comites carere

10

Metre: Alcaic stanzas

Translation:

‘To Alesius, the poet’

Whatever girl you want: keep them all! No matter if you attract them by your spirit or by your jokes or just by your pure verses: allure the most beautiful, Alesius, or if you like to quench your wild thirst in some bed by wine made from grapes of the Massic hills some sweet shameless girl may offer you her own wild thirst. [9] The Muses are girls, too, and follow you uncompelled, and wet and drunk adore you, dear poet: only please allow the Muses to stay with us, your friends, because we cannot live without the laurel-crowned girls.

Epigrams: metre: elegiac couplets

Epigramma Organo Inscribendum

carmina concentus concors uinum inter amicos
dulces laetitiae candida dona deum

Translation:

‘An Epigram, to be Inscribed on an Organ’

Poems, songs, harmonious wine with friends: sweet joys, bright gifts of the gods.

Ad Quendam Fumatorem Furiatum

callida fumoso tibi iam prius allia odora
basia quam rapui caepeque care dedi
nil timeas porro prudenter tu mihi olentem
pipam praebebis basia si qua uoles

Translation:

‘To a Certain Passionate Smoker of Tobacco’

Cunningly I gave you, my dear, fragrant garlic and onions to eat, before I stole kisses from your smoking mouth. Don't be afraid: from now on you will prudently offer me a stinking pipe, if you want some kisses.

De Diuina Inspiratione

tempora sunt miseris diras quibus altus Apollo
in caput aerumnas rite cacare solet
tempora sunt tantas merdas quibus igniuomus Sol
siccans in cineres mutat et ipse litat

Translation:

‘On Divine Inspiration’

There are times, when sublime Apollo is in the habit of ritually crapping dreadful troubles on the heads of wretched people. There are times, when the fire-spitting Sun-god dries these heaps of shit and turns them into ashes and into fertile omens himself.

Ad Sauianum Poetam

ingens librorum domus est mea plena poetûm
sarcinulis semper Naso magister inest
tu mihi si scribas librum pulcherrimus ille
scriptus sit corio cordis amice mei

Translation:

‘To Savian, the poet’

My vast house is full of books by poets, in my knapsack I always carry Ovid around. If you would write me a book, my friend, this very beautiful one should be written into the hide of my heart.

Ad Eundem

di mihi dent uersus ardentis quos tibi possim
intonso corio scribere care tuo

Translation:

‘To the Same’

May the gods give me burning verses, so that I could write them onto your unsheared hide, my dear.

Ad Amantem

aureo autumno tibi uenit aestas
tantus est cordis calor ut perennis
inde naturae modus innouetur
legitimusque

non ita elusus tibi cedit annus
di uelint blandos zephyros sequatur
iusta quae praebabit hiems pruinas
non nimis acres

5

Metre: Sapphic stanzas

Translation:

‘To my Lover’

In golden autumn there came summer for you: so hot is the heat of your heart, that the eternal and rightful way of nature is changed. [5] The astonished year does not thus yield to you. May the gods grant that after the vernal zephyrs comes a fair winter, which will offer you frost that is not too bitter.

De Larua

quando erit tempus spoliata abibo
Chloridis lorica cadet soluta
detrahet laruam capiti grauem mors
ultima rerum

at meae dum sunt iacio molestas
ipsa Lenaeoque potenti amice
nunc lubet donare ueni sub arta
uite bibamus

5

Metre: Sapphic stanzas

Translation:

‘The Mask’

When the time comes, I will go naked. Chloris’ cuirass will be unfastened and fall, and Death, the last thing of all, will rip off the mask from the head, where it became a burden. [5] But as long as they are mine, I will throw away those cumbersome things myself, and now it is my pleasure to donate them to mighty Bacchus, my friend: come let us drink beneath the thick vine leaves.

Anacreontica

Anacreontis Carmen (Henricus Stephanus sic olim Latine uertit)

Faecunda terra potat,
Hanc arboresque potant.
Et potat aequor auras,
Phoebusque potat aequor,
Ipsumque Luna Phoebum. 5
Quid ergo uos sodales
Potare me uetatis?

Chloris Respondit Anacreonti

Potare non ueto te
O Anacreon poeta
Cani merum bibentes
Nigrum tibi nigrescunt
Ipsa haurio labellis 5
Nectar tuis amice
Et cura dormit atra

Metre: iambic dimeter catalectic

Translation:

‘A Poem by Anacreon (once translated into Latin by Henri Estienne)’

The fruitful earth drinks, the trees drink from her, and the sea drinks the winds, and the sun drinks the sea, and the moon the sun. Why, my friends, do you forbid me to drink?

‘Chloris Answers Anacreon’

I do not forbid you to drink, o Anacreon, dear poet; drinking dark wine, your white hair will become dark again. Myself, I sup the nectar from your lips, my friend, and black sorrow sleeps.

De Barberae Origine Chloridis Carmen

uere nouo Bacchus Thebas thiasumque relinquit,
Indis iam uisis, Hesperiamque petit.
nondum culta ferax sua munera terra recepit,
nondum mos Italis cingere uite caput.
Barbara migranti comes est, pulcherrima Amazon, 5
filia reginae, nobilis, alta, potens.
ut mos Threicius, sequitur panthera superba,
nigra, carens maculis, longa, decora, ualens.
a cunis iunctae: fortes tener inter amicas
est amor et duro Marte probata fides. 10
mores at molles faciunt bona uina puellis:
saepe ineunt potae proelia ficta ioco.
ludens nymphea fera praestanti uincitur ultro
nec nocet ense suo, nec nocet ungue fera.
applaudit Bacchus blandis prostratus in herbis, 15
ualde nam iuueni uicta uirago placet:
“Martis femellas” petulans uocat atque “puellas
hast-ens-unguiferas” mollior ipse suas.
est regio felix Eurus quam mulcet inermis
Alpinum et saeuo seruat ab imbre iugum, 20
qua placidis caelis auraque serena salubri
sub Pedemontanis collibus arua uirent.
hic ubi castaneas tellus fert candida celsas
et calidis frondens solibus ulmus adest,
ecce deus madidus, cui tanta potentia uini est, 25
ut sudet sputet mictitet ipse merum,
si bene promittunt, glaebas nec uertere temnit,
uomere nec terram temnit arare rudem.
Barbara pro rastris mansuetis utitur hastis,
aptum et mucronem ferreus ensis habet. 30
quae numquam nymphae fidissima deserit umbram,
adiuuat hamatis unguibus atra fera.
iam spectant homines segetes uinetaque laudant,
laetis iam crescit collibus uua recens.
contentus quae sint plantae quaerentibus Euan 35
explicat et praebet pocula grata meri.
tunc populos ulmis teneras intexere uites
atque docet dura falce putare comam.
mox autumnus adest: maturas colligit uuas,
et premit illauto dulcia musta pede. 40
fit uinum: potant, gaudent mortalia corda.
incauto Liber pectore mira facit:
libera uina truces possunt incendere mentes,
mitibus ast animum libera uina parant.
omnibus ingenium crescit - sacra munera Bacchi! -, 45
frangitur at ratio iudiciumque perit.
nocte deo media fit festum uitisatori,
inter castaneas ebria turba iacet.

uatibus incompitis ex tempore praemia ponunt et tibi Bacche choris carmina laeta canunt.	50
Baccho cuncta placent. taciturna cubilia nympha fessa, cauos nidos et fera pota petunt. per siluas titubat uino male firma uirago: deuia pantherae carpit et ipsa uiam.	55
at si Parcarum nouisset ferrea fata, quot ferret uatum carmina foeda libens! uae! tenebris atris non cernit acumina caudae et temere en nocuo conterit atra pede.	60
laesa rugit fulgente ferit fera caeca furore: ut natura iubet, quod nocet ungue petit.	65
Barbara confoditur. "tu caede nocentia Amazon" ut didicit lactens, confodit ense feram. ambae sic caedunt quod amant pereuntque puellae: funditur - heu! - sanguis ebrietasque fugit.	70
inuenit attonitus morientia corpora Bacchus, attonitus comitum uulnera saeua uidet. temptant nympha manum, caudam fera maesta mouere, sed dominum iamiam tangere neutra ualet.	75
sic neutram certum est seruari posse dolenti: uinum pro lacrimis imbuit ora deo.	80
imbuit et terras fuso cum sanguine mixtum, quo subito uitis splendida nata loco est luxurians uuis, quam mox nymphaeque feraeque spiritus extremus corpore missus init.	
commoto gemitum Bacchus de pectore soluit: "solamen gratum nunc noua uitis erit."	
dulce merum diuus degustans approbat auctor: "uinorum domina est" inquit "in ore meo! purpureum nectar regali ridet odore, nescioquid rarum femineumque monet,	
at certe uarium: primum quod suaue uidetur, monstrat pantherae postmodo forte notam. det Panthera suum, det nomen Barbara uiti: iunctum Barberae nomen in aeuam ferat."	

Metre: elegiac couplets

Translation:

'The Origin of Barbera'

In the new spring Bacchus leaves Thebes and his thiasus, and as he has already seen India, he travels to Italy. This fruitful land had not yet received her cultivated gifts, and the Italians were not yet accustomed to crown their heads with wine-leaves. The traveller is accompanied by Barbara, the most beautiful Amazon, the queen's daughter, noble, tall and powerful. As is the custom in Thrace, a haughty pantheress follows her, black, without spots, long, handsome and vigorous. [9] From childhood on they have been united: there is a gentle love between the strong friends, and trust tested in hard war. But good wine softens the girl's morals: often, when

they are drunk, they start fictitious fights just for fun. In the game the girl voluntarily accepts being defeated by the predominant animal, and neither does she cause hurt with her sword, nor does the animal hurt with her claw. [15] Bacchus applauds, sprawled out in the comfortable grass, because he is delighted to watch the defeated Amazon. 'Mars's women,' he calls them wantonly, and his 'girls carrying lances, swords, and claws,' himself being less valiant.

[19] There is a fertile region caressed by the unarmed east wind, and protected from rain by the Alpine mountains, where with placid skies and wholesome air serene fields grow green under the Piedmont hills. [23] Here, where the bright earth nourishes big chestnut trees and in the warm sun leafy elm trees prosper, here the wet god, who has so much power of wine that he sweats, spits and pisses pure wine, neither scorns turning around clouds, if they are promising, nor grooving the unbroken earth with the plough. [29] Barbara uses docile lances instead of harrows, and the iron sword presents an adequate blade. The black animal, who devotedly never leaves the girl's shadow, helps with curved claws.

[33] Already the people see the seed and approve of the vineyards, already new wine grows on the happy hills. With pleasure Bacchus explains to the enquiring folk, what plants they see, and offers them pleasing cups full of pure wine. Then he teaches the people to braid tender vine branches into the elm trees and to prune the shoots with the hard sickle. [39] Soon there comes autumn. He collects the ripe grapes and presses the sweet must with his unwashed foot. Wine is produced. Mortal hearts drink and are happy. Bacchus does wonderful things in an unwary breast. Free wine can inflame wild brains, but to mild brains free wine gives courage. In everybody the natural character grows - holy gift of Bacchus! - but reason is broken and judgment is lost.

[47] In the middle of the night a feast for the wine-growing god takes place, and the drunken crowd lies between the chestnut trees. They offer improvised rewards to unkempt poets and sing happy songs for you, Bacchus, in choirs. All that sounds nice to Bacchus. The tired girl goes to her silent bed, and the drunk animal to her concave nest. Not very steadfast, due to the wine, the Amazon staggers through the wood and having lost the path herself she follows the path of the pantheress. But if she only knew the adamant fate of the Parcae, how many abominable songs of the poets would she happily endure! [57] Alas! In the black darkness she does not see the black tip of the tail and unwittingly steps on it with her harmful foot. The hurt pantheress roars and strikes blind with rage: as her nature commands, she attacks with her claw all that hurts. Barbara is pierced. As she learned in her childhood: 'You, being an Amazon, kill all that hurts,' she pierces the animal. [63] So both girls kill whom they love and die: blood flows, alas, and the drunkenness goes away.

[65] Shocked, Bacchus finds the dying bodies, shocked he sees the dreadful wounds of his friends. The girl tries to move her hand, the animal sadly to move her tail, but none is anymore able to touch their lord. So he is sure that none of them can be saved and he is sorry: wine instead of tears wets the god's face. Mixed with shed blood it wets also the earth, and suddenly on this spot a beautiful vine is born, full of luxuriant grapes, and in it then goes the last breath sent forth from the bodies of the girl and the animal.

[75] Bacchus emits a sigh from his moved breast: 'The new vine will now be a pleasant comfort.' Tasting the sweet wine, the divine creator approves of it: 'The mistress of all wines,' he says, 'is in my mouth. The purple nectar laughs with royal fragrance and reminds me of something rare and female, most certainly something fluctuating: what seems dulcet at first, then shows strongly the character of the pantheress. May the Panthera, may Barbara give both their names to the vine: it shall bear the name Barbera for all eternity.'

Three Love Poems to Jan

Brad Walton

Ad Ianum: Quis Es?

an sis discipulus meus impiger,
an sis natus suppositicius,
an mihi, Ianule, fidus amans,
insperatus an hospes avens
cervisiam vinumque meum, 5
an tantum leviter mihi notus,
Ianule, raro et fortuito
concursu mihi callibus obviis,
an penitus mihi sis extrarius.
omnino sum, Ianule, nescius. 10
hoc tantum scio: non es amicus.

Metre: dactylic tetrameter

Translation:

‘To Jan: Who Are You?’

Jan, I have no idea whether you are my zealous pupil, my surrogate son, my faithful lover, an unexpected guest demanding my liquor, a mere slight acquaintance encountered on rare, chance meetings in the street, or a complete stranger. The only thing I know, dear Jan, is that you are not my friend.

Dormiens Monstrum (ad Ianum)

dormiens monstrum thalamo recumbit,
os, modo durum, vehemens, acerbum,
innocens nutat placida quiete
innocuumque.
cur amo monstrum? quid habet venusti? 5
corpus excultum validamque mentem,
indolem, cum vult, lepidam, ferosque
cum trahit unguis.
me dolet monstrum. mihi dat misellum
pauculos risus nimiosque fletus, 10
et, licet spectet cupiatque amorem,
nescit amare.

Metre: Sapphic stanzas

Translation:

‘The Sleeping Monster (to Jan)’

The monster is lying on the bed. His countenance, a moment ago stern, sharp, morose, nods innocent and innocuous in peaceful sleep.

[5] Why do I love the monster? What charm does he have? A sculpted body and a powerful mind, a charming character when he chooses and when he retracts his savage claws.

[9] I feel sorry for the monster. The poor thing gives me few joys and too much pain, and, although he aspires to love and desires it, he does not know how to do it.

Monstro Gratias Ago (ad Ianum)

unum per annum post amantis ultimum	
semperque plorandum diem,	
vixi corusco pectoris motu carens,	
ut umbra apud vivos cava.	
dein praeditus tu plurimis virtutibus,	5
totidemque foedis labibus,	
omnes citasti pectoris motus mei	
totum per orbem affectuum:	
saevum dolorem et gaudium, spes et metus,	
reverentiam et fastidium,	10
odium atque amorem, lumen et caliginem,	
animum meum redintegrans.	
prudens utrum haec confeceris an insciens,	
tenebris tui cordis latet.	
at gratias laudesque debeo tamen	15
referoque, mostellum, tibi.	

Metre: Iambic strophe: iambic trimeters alternating with iambic dimeters

Translation:

‘A Thank You to the Monster (to Jan)’

For one year after my lover’s last and ever-to-be lamented day, I lived as a hollow ghost among the living, without the shimmering action of my heart. [5] Then you, endowed with many virtues and as many detestable defects, triggered all the motions at my core through the whole cycle of passions: fierce grief and joy, hopes and fears, respect and disgust, hatred and love, light and darkness, restoring my soul to wholeness. [13] Whether you did this intentionally or unwittingly is concealed in the darkness of your own heart. Nevertheless, I owe and repay you, dear monster, gratitude and praise.

Poems of Love, Admiration, and Loss

Clifford Weber

In Laudem Gaufridi Henderson

Comoediarum quas vetus Attica
spectavit Indi per cuneos dei
sermone foedo non abhorres
intrepidus sapiens et audax.

Sit turpe dictum sic tibi gloriae
ut ipse dicam turpia: censeo
chartas tuas quanti putavit
membra Lysistrata sex virorum.

5

Metre: Alcaic stanzas

Translation:
'In Praise of Jeffrey Henderson'

An intrepid and daring scholar,
you do not shrink from the foul speech
of the comedies that old Attica
watched throughout the Indian god's rows of seats.

May the shameless word be your glory on the condition
that I myself say shameless things: I appraise
your pages for as much as Lysistrata reckoned
the genitals of six men.

5

Note:

Written in 1994. Jeffrey Henderson edits the Loeb Classical Library, though his initial claim to fame was the book *The Maculate Muse* on obscene language in Attic Old Comedy. At Kenyon College, Henderson studied with William McCulloh, whom he considers his best teacher ever. "The Indian god's rows of seats" refers to the Theatre of Dionysus in Athens.

Ad Donnam Tartt: Cur Libros Eius Non Legam

Non aliter quam tu, viridi sub monte legebas
assidue veterum praeclara poemata vatum,
carmina sic iuvenes olim Romana docebam.
Ex illis erat una dicax, formosa, faceta,
quae pariter tecum laudes audiret easdem
si vellet. Quae te genuit plaga semper aprica
nutriit illam eadem, priscis auctoribus isdem
imbuta est ac tu, me ipso ducente magistro.
Transiit multa dies, et iam non estis eadem.

5

Scribere opus magnum poteris tu paene puella; omnibus in terris legeris, laudata per orbem. Illam vir contra iuvat annis creber et auro, delectatque domus nitidis sex fulta columnis. Floribus omniparens variatis hortus abundat. Tu proprio splendore nites iusteque refulges, illa, coli cupiens, alienos captat honores pluribus in vicis quo nobilis ipsa putetur. Cur tua non legisse velim fortasse requiris. Mente sagax sed iners, cessat mea mollis alumna; illa potest tantum, tu vera volumina finis. Si tua verba legam, rursus memor illius urar igne diu quo nos pariter flagravimus olim.	10 15 20
--	--

Metre: dactylic hexameters

Translation:

‘To Donna Tartt: Why I do not read her books’

Just as you, under a green range of mountains, used to read tenaciously the beautiful poems of old bards, so did I once teach young people Roman poems. Of these, one was witty, beautiful, elegant, who could hear the same praises as you, if she wanted to. The same region, forever sunny, that produced you nourished her; she was imbued with the same ancient authors as you, with myself leading the way as pedagogue.

[9] Many a day has passed, and you two are no longer the same. You were able to write a great work when almost a girl; you are read in all lands, praised throughout the world. She, however, finds pleasure in a man full of years and gold, and a house propped up by six shining columns delights her. A prolific garden abounds in multicolored flowers. You shine with your own splendor and shine justly, but she, desiring to be admired, chases honors that belong to others, so that she herself be thought special in more neighborhoods.

[18] Perhaps you ask why I don’t wish to read your things. Clever but inert, my gentle charge takes things easy. She has only potential, but you complete real volumes.

[21] If I read your words, remembering her, I will burn again with the fire with which we were long equally inflamed in time past.

Note:

Written in 2013, revised in 2025. At this remove in time, these lines seem to echo Catullus 85 (*odi et amo*), which is quoted in line 18. My aim, however, was to transform an encomium into a love poem at the very end. In line 1, *viridi sub monte* refers to the Green Mountains of Vermont, where Donna Tartt attended Bennington College.

Ad Quendam Chaldaeis Credulam

Nonne meum Tauri Virgo tua diligit astrum?
Credula Chaldaeis, haec mihi falsa negas.
Rex caelestis, amans Europae virginis, ergo
decrevit formam dissimulare bovis?
Sidera nostra iubent illos imitemur amantes:
pondus eris gratum, taurus onustus ero.

5

Metre: elegiac couplets

Translation:

‘To a girl who believes in astrology’

Doesn’t your Virgo love my star of Taurus? Trusting astrologers, you tell me that this isn’t false. Is it thus that the king of heaven, enamored of the maiden Europa, decided to fake the form of a bull? Our stars order that we imitate those lovers: you will be a welcome weight, I will be a load-bearing bull.

Note:

Written on August 25, 1997.

Ad Marcum Zuckerberg: De *Libro Vultuum* Ut Est Nominatus

Exoniense lego tua pectora ferre sigillum,
quod monet ut memores aliis prosimus alumni
neve laboremus nobis ut sit bene solis.
Perfecisse aliquid populo potes utile dici? 5
Nonne homines sapiens Epicurus vivere iussit
ignotos? Nescis quem diligis esse secutum
Vergilium mandata tuum divina Epicuri?
At tamen ostendit nostros tua machina vultus
cuiviscumque, patent cognomina nostra per orbem 10
te propter, nostrum nemo est qui vivat in umbris.
Non mihi per digitos datur optima copia fandi;
Ipse ego voce volo viva cum gestibus uti
verbaque vera loqui recubans sub tegmine fagi.

Metre: dactylic hexameters

Translation:

‘To Mark Zuckerberg, concerning Facebook’

I read that your chest carries Exeter’s motto, which advises that we mindful alumni benefit others and not labor so that we alone are well off. Can you be said to have achieved something useful for the masses? [5] Did the sage Epicurus not order people to live in obscurity? Do you not know that your Virgil, whom you esteem, followed the divine mandates of Epicurus? Yet your contrivance shows our faces to anyone at all, our names are manifest throughout the world because of you, there is no one of us who lives in the shadows. [11] The best means of speaking is not given to me with my fingers; I want to use a living voice with gestures *in propria persona* and to speak real words while reclining under the cover of a beech tree.

Note:

Written before 2020. It is said that Mark Zuckerberg attended the Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire in order to read Virgil. Exeter’s motto is *Non Sibi*, “not for oneself,” which appears on an imagined sweatshirt in line 1. These lines were written some years ago and mailed to Zuckerberg. While I do not know whether they ever reached him, they have never been acknowledged. They were written with my tongue in my cheek, but they might have been taken in dead earnest. The final four words are quoted from Virgil, *Eclogues* 1.1.

Epigrammata De Obitu Coniugum

Two Epigrams on the death of spouses, in elegiac couplets

(1) Ad Margaritam Clausen

Mira tuus docuit coniunx; avelleris illo
uxor discipulis iuncta dolore pari.

Translation:

‘To Margaret Clausen’

Your husband gave marvelous lessons; you, his wife, are torn away from him, joined to his students by comparable grief.

Note:

Written in late October, 2006. As an undergraduate, I studied with Wendell Clausen in the early 1960s. He was arguably the most influential American Latinist of the twentieth century. Long after my years as his student, he and I used to meet for lunch at intervals of roughly once every year. In 2006, I called his house to propose another lunch, only to be told by his wife Margaret that, after an unhappy confinement in a nursing home, he had died only weeks earlier. An immediate sympathy card was obviously required. This epigram came to me in a flash, and a card so inscribed was mailed to Margaret Clausen on October 29th or 30th. To this day, I do not know whether she ever read my tribute, because she herself died without warning on November 6th of the following week, less than a month after her beloved husband.

(2) Ad G. McCulloh

Gaudia di senibus cohibent, meminere dolores
largiri; scelus hoc turpe malumque puto.
Corde tamen memori dulcis retinebitur aetas;
sic recipi possunt furta nefanda deum.

Translation:

‘To William McCulloh’

The gods keep joys from old men, but they remember to be generous with pains; I think this a base and evil crime. Nevertheless, a sweet time of life will be retained by a heart that remembers; so can the gods’ unspeakable thefts be taken back.

Note:

Written on January 19, 2024, after the death of McCulloh’s wife. William McCulloh was my Hellenist colleague from 1969 until his retirement in 1999. As of this writing in 2025, he has reached age 94.

Ad Duos Amicos De Natali

Two Birthday Poems to Friends, in elegiac couplets

(1) Ad Carolinam Hahnemann

Si qua dicata novem Musis compleverit annos
triginta sed erit visa puella tamen,
illi quod dabimus nomen? Rudis ane putetur
cult? Doce quaeso quo memorere modo!

Translation:

‘To Carolin Hahnemann’

If a woman devoted to the nine Muses will have completed thirty years but will nevertheless have seemed a girl, what name will we give to her? Is she to be thought naïve or sophisticated? Pray tell how you are to be spoken about!

(2) Ad Fiachra Mac Góráin

Aetatis ratio nova quid nunc postulat abs te?
Cena, chori, cantus, oscula, lusus, amor!

Translation:

‘To Fiachra Mac Góráin’

What does a new reckoning of age now demand of you? A banquet, dances, songs, kisses, dalliance, love!

Note:

(1) Written on February 24, 1999; (2) written on February 5, 2024. In 1998, Carolin Hahnemann replaced William McCulloh as Hellenist at Kenyon College in Ohio. Twenty-seven years later, she remains in that position. My friend Fiachra Mac Góráin is Associate Professor of Classics at University College London. We share a specialty in Virgil. As an undergraduate, Fiachra studied with the Hellenist who was among my best friends in graduate school. Classics is indeed a small world.

Two Poems of the Sea

David Money

Introduction:

These poems were composed in 2018, and they just missed their chance of inclusion in *Vates* issue 14.

1.

Prandium Ceti

Prandium ceti quot habet minorum
Morte vitarum subita? Peremptae
Mille sunt gentes, populosque monstrum
Devorat omnes.

Mortuorum autem suboles virescens
Piscium fortem cito perdidit spem:
Bestiam quaedam cupiit tenax e-
volvere in altam. 5

Piscis at simplex cohibente fato
Speque devotus remanet remota,
Sorte qui tandem meliore formas
Cogitet amplas. 10

Parva finitur sine gloria mens
Muta, quae mutans potuisset artes
Explicare audax sibi pulchriora
Carmina ceto. 15

Tot tamen vitae pereunt virorum
Rebus haud gestis; minimi laborant
Et ruunt magnis dominis fieri
Prandia parva. 20

In gulam trudit minimas avarus
Impudens vitas; caveatque vulgus.
Vitat humanos sapiens quieto
Pectore cetos.

Metre: Sapphic stanzas

Translation:

‘The whale’s lunch’

How many lesser lives does the whale’s lunch consume, in sudden death? A thousand tribes are taken away, and the monster devours all their populations. [5] As for the maturing plankton among these deceased sea-creatures, they have suddenly lost their strong hopes; a certain determined individual wished to evolve into a higher form of beast.

[9] But, constrained by fate, someone remains doomed to end as a simple fish, all hope taken away: with better luck, he might finally have philosophised some Platonic form.

[13] A mute inglorious minnow is finished; if she had changed her arts, she might boldly have developed a more beautiful song for herself than any whale.

[17] So many human lives, however, perish like this, without any real achievement. The little people work and rush downwards, so as to turn themselves into little lunches for the great.

[21] A greedy man shamelessly forces little people's lives into his throat; let the common people watch out for him. A wise person keeps a quiet heart, and avoids such human whales.

2.

Discipulus Pelagi

Discipulus pelagi tolerabat saepe dolores:

Quod fecit ventus quodque magister edax.

Cum nautis velum miseris sublime legebat

Dum surgens malum volvitur et unda quatit.

Esuriens regnum stupidi tenuisque tyranni

5

Circum orbis fines sensit, ubique madens.

Historiam navis pravae narrare rogatus

Demum inter libros, ille dolore silet.

Talia cum gemitu numquam meminisse iuvabat;

Post tot salsa adhuc aequora laedit iter.

10

Metre: elegiac couplets

Translation:

'The Apprentice Sailor'

The apprentice often endured the sorrows of the sea: what the biting wind can do – and a bitter master. With the unfortunate crew he furled the high sail, while the surging wave rolled and shook the mast. [5] Hungry, he felt the regime of a foolish and petty tyrant, around the edges of the world – and everywhere soaking wet.

[7] Much later, among his books, when asked to tell the story of that dreadful ship – he was pained, and silent. [9] It never was 'helpful to remember' such things, with a groan; after so many salt seas have passed by, that journey still causes hurt.

Note:

This poem is inspired by the following quote, from Alan Villiers, *The War with Cape Horn* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971; paperback edition: London: Pan, 1973), p. 187:

Poor *Inverness-shire*: poor crew! Some years ago, the deputy librarian at Christ Church, Oxford, confided to me that he had been an apprentice in the *Inverness-shire*, but when I asked about his experiences he only looked pained. And no wonder.

This was the period, in the early part of the twentieth century, when large steel sailing ships still dominated the trade between Europe and the west coast of North and South America, and across the South Pacific to Australia. (Other routes were already taken over by steamships; but for practical reasons – such as a lack of economically-viable places to take on coal – the Cape Horn route was unattractive to steamship owners; the Panama Canal was not yet open.) They

would sail around Cape Horn, which could sometimes be an easy passage eastwards in summer, but a very different matter sailing westwards into winter gales – a fight which could take many weeks, and was sometimes unsuccessful. Some British ships, like this one, had a poor reputation, with constant trouble between stubborn old captains and unhappy crews, ill-fed and small in number for the dangerous daily tasks they faced; men fell from aloft or were washed overboard; in port, they deserted. In such circumstances an apprentice had to learn his trade.

Sardanapali Quies

Giacomo dalla Pietà

Introduction:

This poem, written in 2001, draws inspiration from the events of the reign of Ashurbanipal king of Assyria (669 – 627 BC), known in the Greek and Latin world as Sardanapalus. I have not followed the tradition that paints Sardanapalus as effeminate and soft. Instead, I have tried to delve into a psychological investigation. I am not unfamiliar with the novels of Nicholas Guild, set in the Assyrian court.

Paulatim vultum sol iam celare parabat;
occiduis radiis regia tecta micant.
Astitit Assyriae rector tranquillus in horto.
illius ante pedes pulcra puella sedet.
Marmorei genii spectant fortasse benigni
binos: corpus equi barbaque et ala manet. 5
Paelex Graeca fuit: rectoris nempe superbi
unus amor. Nata est sanguine Cecropidum.
Barba perpexa tacitus rector manet ille,
deriguitque animus forsitan ipse malis. 10
Longa silentia rex fecit fecitque puella,
nigram pulcra comam cara puella gerit.
Attamen ipsa nequit per tempora longa silere
anxietate animi cogitur inde loqui.
“Quid mihi maestus ades, quidnam suspiria ducis? 15
Significat vultus condita multa mala.
Quin loqueris? Iucunda haud sint, quae in pectore volvis
ede tamen. Gratum flere, ubi maeror adest.
Gloriae an es cupidus? Quam numina multa dederunt!
Haud satis est? Non sunt maxima regna tua?” 20
“Quorsum scire velis?” rex inquit “An ipsa dolorem
ut paelex tollas, gratiam ut ipse feram?
Quantum, pulcra, tamen dilexeris haud fugit. Ecce
sum narraturus multa dolenda quidem.
Assyriae nosti laudare per invia nomen 25
Assyrios fortes instituisse meum.
Et Babylona quidem subiectam noveris illam
quae ex auro constans tota superba cluet.”
“Omnia nota mihi sunt talia Sardanapale”
dixit tum paelex (nomen erat Merope). 30
“Fraterno exitio prolatas esse fugit te
imperii fines, regnaque parta mihi.
Nam pater ut moriturus erat, diviserat illa,
et fratri Babylon, Niniva nostra fuit.
Mortuus inde pater, res est divisa subinde, 35
paxque perennavit, iurgia at alter init,
maioris regni motusque cupidine, bellat:
inruit in fines fratris, ut inde fuget.
Quidnam agerem pollens? Iaceamne intutus inermis?

Vincimus et frater compede vinctus abit.	40
Poenaque mors posita est. Potior clementia poena.	
Ignovisse velim. Frater amandus erat.	
Inrita sunt tamen haec. Mortem conscivit is ante	
quam veniam expectet. Censor et ipse sui!	
O fratrem! Quianam scelera haec admittere tanta	45
ipse coactus eras? Unde, tibi, unde furor?	
At, memini, ioca semper erant communia nobis	
cum pueri fuimus, cumque iuventa fuit	
semper amicitiam iuravimus inde perennem	
inter nos veram perpetuamque fore.	50
Quae diducta fuit, iam rupto foedere regni.	
Gloria tam potuit frangere iura, fidem.	
Prisca at amicitia poteras, mi perfide, niti.	
Sonti quin veniam frater ego ipse dabo?"	
Vix haec fatus erat magnus rex Sardanapalus	55
cum funesta quidem dicta miser subicit:	
"Tune adamas Merope me postquam talia dixi?"	
"Sane adamo" dixit "pectora rexit amor."	
Alter prosequitur "Iam iam tempus datur ut tu	
rebus in adversis experiare fidem.	60
Hunc tibi do gladium, confige in pectore regis,	
excussis vinclis spiritus hinc fugitet."	
"Quid struis?" illa rogat "Suntne haec mea praemia amoris?"	
Bardus es aut stultus, qui ista nefanda petis?"	
"Dissolvi cupio" dixit rex "Tartara fingo	65
fratrem ad dilectum liber ut ire queam."	
"Mentis vix oculis complector Sardanapali	
verba" inquit Merope "Talia tene loqui?"	
Haec ubi dicta dedit, paulatim cura facessit,	
deflagrant animi. Rex tamen ista refert.	70
"Nonne mei miseret? Vitam sum degere adactus.	
Qui illius valeo nescius esse necis?	
Nexuit ille dolos, bellum intulit, ipse necavit	
se, veniamque meam respuit inde sibi.	
At quidnam doleo? Fuerat quondam ille sodalis	75
et satus est frater (nam pater unus erat)."	
Subiecit Merope: "Fas est iunctos miserari,	
ast alios rector nonne magis doleas?	
Subiectosque quotos bellum illud trivit utrimque?	
Vitas quam multas servat et otium, amor?	80
Rex tacitus mansit. Forsan sunt haec nova verba	
Assyrio regi, suntque recepta minus.	
Paulatim vultum sol iam celare parabat;	
occiduis radiis regia tecta micant.	

Metre: elegiac couplets

Translation: 'The rest of Ashurbanipal'

Little by little the sun began to hide its face. The palace was shining with the rays of the sunset. The king of Assyria was sitting quietly in a garden. Before his feet was a beautiful girl. Marble

bas-reliefs of genii, endowed with human beards, horse's body and wings were looking, perhaps benignly, at the king and the girl. [7] The concubine was Greek, and was the king's only love, she was of Athenian origins. The king, who was wearing a well-combed beard, remained silent for a long time. Perhaps his heart was affected by troubles. Both the king and the girl, who had long black hair, remained silent for a long time. However, the concubine was not able to remain silent for long. Anxiety finally forced her to speak. [15] 'Why are you so sad and why do you sigh? Your face hides many unexpressed evils! Why don't you speak? Even if your thoughts are not pleasant, express them! It is good to cry if there is pain. Do you want more glory? Isn't this enough? Don't you have the greatest kingdoms?'

[21] The king replied 'Why do you want to know all this? Perhaps you, a mere concubine, would like to take away my pain, so that I will have to thank you later? However, my dear, I know well how much you love me. I am about to tell you many painful things. You know well that my subjects, scattered throughout the steep mountains of Assyria, habitually praise my name and you also know that proud Babylon, all golden, is subject to me.' [29] The concubine, whose name was Merope, replied: 'All this is known to me, Ashurbanipal.' The sovereign added, 'Perhaps you do not know that the borders of my kingdom have been expanded through the assassination of my brother. In fact, when our father was dying, he had divided the kingdoms: Babylon was given to my brother, Nineveh to me instead. When my father died, the power was divided. Peace lasted for a long time, but my little brother then began a quarrel. He, moved by desire for a greater kingdom, invaded my borders, with the aim of overthrowing me. What should I have done then? Should I have remained helpless and insecure? I won and my brother was put in irons. [41] He was sentenced to death, but my mercy was stronger than the punishment. I would have forgiven him. A brother must be loved. All my attempts to be merciful, however, were in vain. He committed suicide, he judged himself severely. My brother! What compelled you to commit such a great crime? Where did this madness come from? I remember that when we were children, we always played together; we did the same in adolescence. We swore that our friendship would be eternal. After our agreement about the kingdom was violated, our mutual friendship also dissolved. A vain desire for glory broke through laws and mutual loyalty. You could have trusted to ancient friendship, oh perfidious brother! Would I not have forgiven you, even if you were guilty?'

[55] The king had just finished saying these things, when he added: 'Do you love me, Merope, even after I have told you all this?' Merope answered: 'Certainly, I love you, my heart is full of love.' The king then continued, 'It is time for you to test your loyalty towards me. I give you this sword, plunge it into my heart so that my spirit, free from bodily bonds, may escape freely!' [63] Merope asked the king: 'What are you thinking? Is this the reward of my love? Are you not foolish, are you stupid, to ask me these things?' The king said, 'I wish to dissolve myself. I think intensely about the afterlife, longing to meet my beloved brother.' Merope said: 'I hardly recognize you, Ashurbanipal. How can you tell me all this?' [69] Little by little the king calmed down, but said: 'Have you no pity on me? I am forced to live, but how can I not feel guilty for his death? He deceived me, he declared war on me, he killed himself and refused my forgiveness. Why then do I grieve? Because he was once my friend and because he was my brother (for we shared a father).' [77] Merope added: 'It is right to grieve for your relatives. However, O king, should you not grieve even more for your subjects? How many victims did that war cause, on both sides? Do not tranquility and peace preserve more lives?' [81] The king remained silent. Perhaps these last words seemed strange to an Assyrian king, and were unheeded. Little by little the sun began to hide its face. The palace was shining with the rays of the sunset.

Filia Marti

Bethany Abelseth

Introduction:

I am currently composing Latin poetry around the theme *Tempestiva* (Seasonal), with the goal of writing one poem for each month about an ancient Roman holiday or deity associated with that month. Since March was associated with Mars, I chose to write this one about him. However, in a world as tormented by war as ours, it seemed inappropriate to celebrate Mars as a god of conquest. So, I found examples of lesser-known stories from Roman mythology and religion, invoking Mars as a god of agriculture and protection, hoping that if he brings anything to my descendants, it will be these kinds of things rather than what he is most known for today.

Munifico Marti generoso filia Patri
Versiculos dono pia fictaque munera sacro.
Mox veniamque petam tutam pacemque solutam,
Femina nec faciens nec agens ita credula ritus,
Sic recinunt Fratres Arvales carmina saltu: 5
“Nosque iuvate Lares arvumque iuvate tuentes!
Iam religate lues diras religate ruinas
Marmar stes fervens; fiat satis hac fere Marmar!
Atque super limen saliens alia exitia aufers.
Cuncta vocabit Avus crescentia semina Marmar!” 10
Desiliunt fratres memores Semonis arantis:
“Alterne circum Marmar nostra arva triumphas!”
Sic recinunt Fratres, ut scriptum in marmore templi.
Munus ego primum perfeci femina supplex
Ficta luto mulier; condones si mihi formam, 15
Donum aliud tibi dem Patavinae docta tabellae.
Fabula signata est fragmentis pristina longa
Antiquo calamo; fingam pauca agmina mixta
Romanos initus consecrat gloria belli
Gradivo Marti. Martem dein femina patrem 20
Nuncupat incertae stirpis. Numa conditor arae
Rexque sacerdotes bis sex Salios tibi sancit.
De ancili res est narrata volumine fasto;
Ut Naso memorat: posuit Numa fidus ab horto
Pro capite exciso caepam; rex ille capillos 25
Pro spirante homine ac piscem Numa callidus exstans
Pro vivente anima. Demisit Juppiter armum
Sic ancile vocat scutum Numa. Fabula lata est.
Nunc veniamque peto tutam pacemque solutam:
Ter pia dona dedi serves ut alasque nepotes. 30

Metre: dactylic hexameters

Translation:

‘A Daughter Addresses Mars’

To benevolent Mars, generous Father, I, a daughter, give little verses, and, pious, I consecrate formed offerings. Soon I will seek safe mercy and peace unbound, a woman, neither making

the sacrifice nor directing the rituals, so believing; thus the Arval Brothers recite the songs with a leap: [6] “Lares, help both us and help our field, preserving (us and our field)! Now bind dire plagues, bind destruction. Mars, stand burning; let there be enough here, wild Mars; and leaping over the threshold you carry off other destruction. Grandfather Mars will call all the growing seeds!”

[11] The brothers jump down, remembering farming Semo: “Mars, you make your triumphal procession around our fields, each in turn!” Thus sing the Brothers, as written on the marble of the temple. I have finished the first gift, (I) a female suppliant, a woman made from clay; if you should forgive me my shape, I, having learned it from a Paduan tablet, would give you another gift.

[17] There is a long, pristine fable, marked in fragments, by an ancient pen; I will shape a few mixed processions: the glory of war makes Roman beginnings sacred to Mars Gradivus. Then a woman names Mars the father of an uncertain lineage. Numa, the founder of the altar, and a king, ordains priests, twice six Salii.

[23] The story of the shield is told in a holiday scroll. As Ovid recounts: Faithful Numa placed from his garden an onion for a severed head; that king (put) hair for a breathing person, and outstandingly clever Numa (put) a fish for a living mind. Juppiter sent down a defense. Thus Numa calls the shield “ancile”. The story has been told. Now I ask for safe mercy and peace unbound. I, thrice faithful, have given gifts so that you preserve and strengthen your grandchildren.

Notes:

8: *fere Mars* appears in the Arval Hymn, where *Mars Ferus* is invoked directly, and the *Semones* are called upon indirectly. Some vocabulary/phrases from lines 6-12 have been taken/borrowed from the Arval Hymn as we know it.

16: a reference to Livy, who was born at Padua; his “tablet” is the *Ab Urbe Condita*. Livy’s original phrase at l. 4 was “*Martem incertae stirpis patrem nuncupat.*” At l. 20 Livy explains the twelve Salii, and uses the phrase “*caelestiaque arma, quae ancilia appellantur*” in reference to the shield story, which is further elaborated in Ovid (see below).

23: in *Fasti* 3. 339-42, Ovid recounts the story of Numa substituting non-human sacrifices for Juppiter in exchange for the *ancile* which will be given to priests of Mars. Lines 343-78 tell how the shield came to be called *ancile*, and lines 379-92 give an explanation for *Mamurius* being connected to the *ancile* (and theoretically also to the vocative form *Marmar*).

Epistula de Socrate Romano

Peter Hulse

Introduction:

I recently noticed on the internet an examination paper from long ago, a Latin Essay paper (for 'University Scholarships') of January 1964. The first of eight possible topics on which candidates could write a Latin prose essay was 'Si Socrates apud Romanos' ('If Socrates had been among the Romans').

I can't think why it was posted (by a very learned person) on the internet – to fascinate? Or to horrify? Anyway, I'm sure I wouldn't have been able to do it on a Saturday afternoon, confined in a hall for three hours. The sight of it, however, did inspire a vaguely competitive urge. I, therefore, decided to offer up a very late entry – totally ignoring the question paper in true bad candidate fashion – in the form of a poem. See below for the results; apologies to Horace and any other relevant shades of Antiquity!

Epistula de Socrate Romano

Quid si Romanus fuerat, non Atticus ille
Socrates, et nostris spatians meditansque sub astris?
Aspice! Iam media sapiens togatus in urbe
Incedit, circaque frequens toga candida patrum.
Non de Cecropiis quaerit sublimia formis, 5
Sed magis utilius quid fas et iura requirant.
Ecce Cato occurrens torva cum fronte: "Quid," inquit,
"Graecule, pervertis nostros sermone Quirites?"
Ille autem placide: "Nihil, o gravissime censor,
Disco libens, quoniam nil me scire ipse fatebor." 10
Ridet ad haec Cato, paulatim mitior, et iam
Praebet amicus opem, dum sermo volvitur almus.
Tullius ipse dehinc rhetorum gloria prima
Accedit, sapiens artem pernoscere vatis:
"Fare, age, dic sophia quid vera eloquentia possit?" 15
Ille docet dubius melius quam certa docendo.
Sic ego Romuleum Socratem dum fingo togatum,
Cogito quam varium virtutis iter patefiat:
Nam dubitare iuvat melius quam credere tantum,
Et via Romana est Graeco cum lumine mixta. 20

Metre: dactylic hexameters

Translation:

'What if Socrates had been a Roman?'

What if he had been Roman, not Attic - that famous
Socrates - walking and musing beneath our stars?
Look! Now wise in his toga, in the midst of the city
He strides, while senators' white togas crowd all around.
He asks not of lofty Cecropian forms, 5
But rather what divine law and justice more usefully require.

Lo, Cato approaches with frowning brow: 'Why,' he demands,
 'Little Greek, do you corrupt our citizens with your talk?'
 But he calmly replies: 'I gladly learn, since I myself
 Will confess I know nothing.' Cato laughs at this, 10
 Gradually becoming gentler, and now
 Offers friendly support, while nurturing conversation unfolds.
 Then Tullius himself, foremost glory of orators,
 Approaches, eager to learn the wise teacher's art:
 'Come, speak, tell what true philosophy can do for eloquence?' 15
 He teaches better through doubt than by asserting certainties.
 Thus while I imagine Socrates in Romulean toga,
 I think how varied the path of virtue might become:
 For he who doubts well does better than merely believing,
 And the Roman way is mixed with Grecian light. 20

Carmina Latina

Horatius Antonius Bologna

I

Cupido corda ferit

Poeta, cum Graecorum tum Romanorum lyricorum exempla secutus, in quibus Mimnermus et Horatius principem obtinent locum, de brevitate non solum vitae sed amoris etiam altero quodam modo agit. Amorem, quamvis in omnibus hominibus eundem, alterum semper esse sentit.

Silvas virentes cum peragres levis,
Cupido telis te feriat levis;
 infundat aeternas tenelli
 delicias animi, puella.

Colunt amorem pectora fervidum, 5
puella dulcis, candida virginum:
 pectus decorum, verberante
 Idalio puero, movetur.

Cupido vindex praemia cordibus 10
feris sagittis donat amantibus.
 Si pergit interdum molestus,
 accipiunt homines amores.

Venus silenti progreditur gradu, 15
ferens rosarum candida noctibus
 tardis odores, qui puellae
 corda movent rubeo colore.

Iuventa transit, Marce, celerrima; 20
cunctis severos vespere terminos
 ponit: semel tantum virescit,
 cuncta novat, fugiente vita.

Pergit senectus gressibus aegrior
certis, reducens noxia cordibus
 incommoda et pellens maligna
 delicias tenerae puellae.

Brevis manet lux. Nos veluti rosae, 25
comae salicti frondiferae simul,
 gressu silentis Mortis acri
 exitio rapimur supremo.

Dies agamus, Marce, perutiles,
sinum tegentes nocte frequentius
mollem puellae, quam Cupido
sollicitat, volitans serenus.

30

Metre: Alcaic stanzas

Translation:

‘Cupid wounds hearts’

[The poet, following the example of both Greek and Roman lyric poets, in which the main role is played by Mimnermus and Horace, deals with the brevity not only of life, but in a different way also of love. He is convinced that love, although equal in all men, always manifests itself in different ways.]

While you wander carefree in the green woods, may carefree Cupid wound you with his arrows; may he infuse your soul, my dear girl, with eternal sweetness. [5] Sweet girl, the candid hearts of girls sense the fervour of love; a sensitive soul is shaken by the blows of the Idalian boy. [9] Cupid, while taking revenge, with his cruel arrows gives the prize to the hearts of lovers. Even if he sometimes appears annoying, men do receive love.

[13] Venus now advances with a soft step, shining white, bringing the scent of roses in the late night, which with their red colour excite the heart of my girl. [17] Marcus, youth goes away very quickly; in life's evening it sets rigorous boundaries for all; it blooms only once and, as life passes, it works profound changes.

[21] Grievous old age advances with sure steps, brings painful inconveniences to the heart and wickedly chases away a tender woman's joys. [25] Of the day very little remains. We, like the petals of roses, like the willow branches, at the inevitable silent step of death, are suddenly taken on our last journey.

[29] Marcus, let us spend our days more usefully. Let us touch more often the breast of the voluptuous woman, whom Cupid excites with his tranquil flight.

II

Mortem senex invoco

Quo in carmine poeta, qui inscius grave fecit crimen, ante lectoris oculos infandum ostendit dolorem. Omnes ulla sine pietate eum adgrediuntur, quia superbia elati atque insolentes se perfectos esse iactant. Tanta malevolentia maerens, mortem invocat, quae una tanti cruciatus finem ponit.

Aegrum, cadentem corripiat senem
mors atra penna praecipiti! Gravi
me falce tondat colla eburna,
Tartara me vehat in profunda!

Gradu citato nunc venias, precor!
Te voce clamo mortiferam miser:
altus voret spirantem abyssus
et requies veniat serena!

5

Dolore tristi pectora libera,
saeva securi cor ferias meum:

10

ater cruor venas relinquat,
excruciar pavidus dolore!

Nil morte dira dulcius imminet;
hora suprema munere filiae
vultu decori me solentur, 15
quas colui teneroque amore.

Malignus error me tenuit! Miser
in altum abyssum nescius incidi.
Pectus dolens torquet catenis
nunc animum pietate dignum. 20

Patri misello parcite, filiae.
Paterna semper munera firmius
servetis immensoque amore,
tempore difficili premente.

Deum precari quid iuvat inscium, 25
quem culpa tristem vexat inaniter.
Serum gravat me paenitentem,
oh minime tenuatur angor.

Finire vitam terribilem volo:
vel ense pectus perfodiam ferox, 30
vel per volatum ex alta rupe,
vel fluvio in peream profundo.

Nullum sepulcrum contegat arctius,
nec urna servet parvula longius,
nec terra mater post tueri 35
hos cineres gelidosque curet.

Ventis ferantur per mare turbidis,
mergantur undis subsilientibus,
ne quis manu clemens rosarum
serta ferat lacrimetque maerens. 40

Metre: Alcaic stanzas

Translation:

‘An old man invokes death’

[In these verses the poet places before the reader's eyes desperate pain for a sin committed involuntarily. Everyone pitilessly attacks him, because in their presumption they believe themselves perfect. In the face of of such wickedness the poet invokes death, which alone can put an end to such torment.]

Let black death with hasty flight carry me away, now that I am old and sick! May death with its hard sickle cut my ivory neck and drag me to deep Tartarus. [5] I pray you, come with swift

step! Unhappy, I call upon you, who put an end to everything: may the the depths of the abyss swallow me while I still breathe, and may quiet rest come!

[9] Free my breast from its sad pain, and may you strike my heart with a merciless axe: let my blood abandon my veins and I trembling be consumed by pain. [13] Nothing hangs over me more sweetly than cruel death; as a gift in the supreme hour let the affectionate look of my daughters, whom I have always loved tenderly, console me.

[17] I am crushed by wickedness born of an error; unhappy, without realizing it, I have fallen into a deep abyss. The chains now torment the grieving heart and the soul worthy only of pity. [21] Daughters, pity your father's misery. Always preserve, with full conviction, what your father has given you, and with great love, even crushed by harsh adversities. [25] What good is it for an unaware man to pray to God, when guilt torments him in vain in his sadness? Upon me, a late penitent, pain falls: it does not abandon me for an instant.

[29] I want to put an end to this horrible life! Either I will pierce my chest vigorously with a sword, or I will throw myself from the top of a cliff, or I will drown in the depths of a river. [33] Let no tomb hold my cold ashes, nor a small urn preserve them for long; let not mother earth protect and care for them. [37] But let them be scattered in the sea by the whirlwinds, let them be submerged by the stormy waves, so that no one in his clemency may wear a crown of roses and weep in sorrow.

III

Agricolarum vita

Quo in carmine poeta mentem vertit in agricolarum vitam, quae saepe agricolis laboriosa et difficilis est. Vespere familia ante focum laxatur et tranquillitate gaudet. Iuvenes primos amores experiuntur. Ante lucem agricolae fenum bobus ministrant, pastores pecudes in pascua ducunt.

Imminet aspera hiems tristi vice grandinis nivisque:

arva boves fugiunt, quos validos durus arator amat.

Ante focum memorat pastor gravis invidiam iuventam,
dum venti sibilant continuo, tecta lavantur aquis.

Flamma senem refovet crepitans leve, quem favor deorum
incolumem servat temporibus, prole vidente, malis. 5

Pessima quem mulier, violens ibi quem gravique voce
terrificat miserum propter aquas fluminis atque lacus,

ducere quo pecudes teneras avus et pater solebant,
quis tiliae frondes, sol rutilans munera grata ferunt. 10
Nunc tristis memorat iuvenem quoque se fuisse laetum
tempore, quo vires ipsa Venus dulcis alebat ibi.

Praelia multa puer, veniens citus et levis, ciebat
noctibus aestivis ad nemoris limina, amore fruens.
Basia cum fugerent, iuvenis levis asteris nitore 15
obtexit Lyciae lactigerum noctibus arte sinum.

Quae memorans neptem teneram videt ante matris ora,
ne tangat manibus flammivomum, luce cadente, focum.
Lassa iacet tandem, lino tegit interim puellam
Niliaco teneram, dum digitum dentibus arcta tenet. 20

Lassula per placidum somnum videt arcta brachiis puellas
gaudia ducentes terrigenis multa favore Dei.
Oscula dat genitrix natae levis anxiae labellis,
quae resonant tenebris Cimmeriis casta et in ore senis.

Ad praesepe terit vitulus tener arduum salictum 25
ante oculos matris. Conspiciens laetus arator aquam,
quae laetas segetes liquido facit omnibus liquore,
porrigit et fenum cornigeris bovis ante diem.

Metre: alternating Greater Archilochian lines (cf. Horace, *Odes* 1. 4) and 'extended' pentameter lines: that is, taking regular dactylic pentameters and inserting a choriamb (long-short-short-long) at the caesura to create a different longer line. See also editor's note below this translation.

Translation:
'The life of farmers'

[In this lyric the poet turns his mind to the life of the peasants, which is often tiring and difficult. At evening the family relaxes in front of the fireplace, and enjoys some tranquillity. Young people experience their first loves. Before daybreak the peasants give hay to the oxen and the shepherds lead the sheep to pasture.]

A violent downpour falls with a disastrous alternation of hail and snow; the oxen, which the tough ploughman appreciates for their strength, flee from the fields. In front of the fire the shepherd sadly remembers his envied youth, while the winds continue to whistle and the roofs drip with water.

[5] The crackling of the flame warms an old man, who still retains the protection of the gods in the eyes of his children despite the adversities of the times. There his hostile wife terrifies him with a threatening voice, near the waters of the river and the lake, where his grandfather and father used to drive the sheep. The linden leaves and the splendor of the sun were welcome gifts. Now he remembers with sadness how he was young and happy, when there the sweetness of Venus invigorated his strength.

[13] As a young man he went there with carefree lightness, engaged in battles of love on summer nights at the edges of the wood and enjoyed love. While the kisses flew away, the young man with delicate grace covers the white breast of the girl Lycia, shining like the stars.

[17] She, before the eyes of her mother, sees her tender granddaughter and remembers not to touch the flaming fire with her hands, as the light fades. Finally she lies tired, and in the meantime covers the young girl with Egyptian linen, as she sucks her thumb.

[21] In the tranquility of sleep, the tired little one, tightly held in her arms, sees girls, who favoured by God give men many joys. The mother with her small lips lightly gives her little daughter her kisses, which resound chastely in the Cimmerian darkness even on the lips of an old man.

[25] A tender calf near the stable breaks the branches of a tall willow under the gaze of its mother. The ploughman, while he happily looks at the water, which fertilises the luxuriant crops for all with its lifeblood, before daybreak offers hay to the horned oxen.

Editor's note: on the metre of poem III. What is described above as an 'extended' pentameter is an interesting innovation of H. A. B. in this poem. We find similar use of choriamb in the centre of some of the longer lines of Horatian lyric: compare the Greater Asclepiadic line (e.g. *Odes* 1. 18) which has a quite similar effect (at least when the opening foot of the pentameter

is a spondee), but differs in the ending (long-short-long, rather than H. A. B.'s pentameter ending). Metrical innovations and variations do appear in some modern Latin verse – the late, lamented Stephen Coombs was a particularly enthusiastic practitioner – and this is something that *Vates* would like to encourage, while also trying to explain clearly to readers, as far as the editor is able, what is going on and why. (D. M.)

IV

Incerta pax

Breve carmen, modis Alcaicis confectum, quid gentes cupiant, proponit. Populi petunt Pacem, quam homines scelerati rerumque cupidi interire non dubitant. Russi Ucrainam invaserunt; Americanorum Moderator ulla sine pietate Ucrainorum Moderatorem humiliavit insolenterque tractavit.

Apollinaris coetus amabilis
fugit citatis gressibus inscios
bellum viros crudele amantes,
pacifico resonante verbo.

Armis frementes candida noxiis
columba vitat vocibus horrida:
Pacem vocat tristisque luget,
umbriferis tiliis relictis.

5

Tyrannus urget iam stimulis ferox
gentes acutis territat adrogans
Pacem petentes, voce dira
consimiles violens repellit.

10

Scythae cruenti milite Caesaris,
armis necantur missilibus, domo
pelluntur et privantur acres
divitiis aliisque gazis.

15

Plumbo tenellus transfoditur puer;
viros minaces pellere virgines
conantur et frustra tuentur
virgineum trepidae pudorem.

20

Tyrannus alter nuntius advenit
Pacis, superbus divitiis, potens
suffragii vulgi; cohortes
adgreditur domitas minanter.

Throno ex sublimi condicionibus
cogit molestis, qui requiem petunt:
indutias victoris acer
magnanimi socius videtur.

25

Gazae tyrannos, non populos iuvant,
 qui bella multo sanguine sustinent; 30
 gentis laccessitor domatae
 militibus fruitur cruentis.

Iratus undis lenibus influit
 dites per agros, quod onerat Ceres;
 rarum metallum unus tuetur 35
 marginibus Tanais sacratis.

Metre: Alcaic stanzas

Translation:
 'Uncertain peace'

[The short lyric interprets the expectations of the people, who ask for Peace, suppressed by ambitious criminals. Russia invaded Ukraine and the President of the United States of America arrogantly humiliated the President of Ukraine.]

The pleasant gathering of poets is moving away with great strides from those ignorant men who prefer the cruelty of war, despite the resounding name of Peace. [5] The horrified white dove moves away with its song from those who enjoy the destructive power of weapons; it invokes Peace, goes away and abandons the shade of the linden trees.

[9] The tyrant presses on, with ferocious aggressions and arrogance he attacks those who ask for Peace and with cruel violence he repels his own kind. [13] The Ukrainians are massacred by the cruel soldiers of a new Tsar and by missiles; they are driven from their homes and, although brave, are robbed of their riches and other goods. [17] A young child is pierced by lead; the women try in vain to ward off the threats of men and in vain tremble in the defence of their virginal modesty.

[21] As a messenger of Peace another tyrant advances, arrogant because of his riches and strong because of the votes he has received, he threateningly attacks the defeated army. [25] From the heights of his throne he imposes harsh conditions on those who ask for a truce: he appears to be a violent ally of the victor, who in his magnanimity imposes his truce.

[29] The tyrants enjoy riches, not the people, who sustain bloody wars; the aggressor of the defeated people has a bloodthirsty army at his disposal. The angry Don flows with calm waters between fields rich in wheat; only he with his sacred banks defends the 'rare earth' metals.

V

Insanum bellum

Orbis nationes Pace incerta fruuntur. Russi acie nefasta invaserunt Ucrainam et agri nive albicantes sanguine tinguntur. Populi Pacem petunt, quam alter tyrannus diuturnam futuram adroganter promittit. Qui vero non Pacem, sed divitias quaerit.

Arida nunc gens fruitur Quiete,
 Martha, turbata Borea minaci:
 territat gentes atomi potestas
 tempore nostro.

Occupat fines populi propinquos, acer oppugnans acie tyrannus Martia turmisque Scythos inermes enecat atrox.	5
Albicantes acre nives cruore illinit pectus: rabies nefasti Caesaris crudelis aperta quaerit aequora laeta.	10
Invocant Pacem trepidae perennem caelitus gentes, moriente nato ante munimen Patriae tuente limina dulcis.	15
Perfidi terret strepitus tyranni turbidus, sensus hominum timentes concutit verbo gravium minaci absque pudore.	20
Alterum nuper populus tyrannum repperit trucem, reparare Pacem qui perennem iactat acerbis, amplam concupit unus	
corde tellurem populi domatam divitis diro: pedibus misellam conterit Pacem, terit et superbus mortua corda.	25
Quid siet nescit Pietas misellus, improbis gazas reputat fuisse cuncta qui stultus bona ditibusque commoda sola.	30

Metre: Sapphic stanzas

Translation:
'A mad war'

[The peoples of the earth enjoy an uncertain peace. Russia with its bloodthirsty troops occupies Ukraine and the snowy fields are stained with blood. The peoples ask for Peace, which another bully believes will last with his intervention. This bully, however, does not ask for Peace, but for riches.]

The peoples, Martha, enjoy an unstable peace, upset by a threatening Boreas. The peoples today are frightened by the power of the atomic bomb. [5] A cruel tyrant occupies with his army the borders of a neighbouring people and with his tanks massacres defenceless Ukrainians with atrocities.

[9] Violence stains the whiteness of the snows with blood. A Tsar with furious cruelty seeks expanses of fertile lands. The people tremble and ask heaven for a lasting Peace, at the sight of a son who died in defense of the sacred borders of the Fatherland. [17] The tyrant's menacing and treacherous cries shake the senses of men terrified by shameless threats.

[21] A nation has just elected another cruel tyrant, who boasts of establishing a lasting peace; but he only desires the vast and rich expanses of lands of the conquered people; he tramples on peace and with his feet proudly crushes the poor dead. [29] Miserable creature, he does not know what Piety is: foolishly he believes that riches, even ill-acquired, are the only goods and offer comforts only to the rich.

Epistulae ad Heroa Quendam

Anna Elissa Radke

A series of letters addressed to a Ukrainian soldier.

I

Longinqua e terra longaeva poetria mittit
chartulam electronicam ad militem et ad iuvenem.

“Mille ego nata annos” cecinit Iudaea poetris:
Sunt omnes vates perveteres iuvenes.

Mutandum est metrum! Mihi vellit Horatius aurem: 5

Dic, quo nomine te, Triptolemum ane Antinoum vocem?
De fato dubio, Triptolemus, desine quaerere!
At tu ne liqueris vina, agetum pro patria tua
et pro discipulis tam cupidis vitam etiam immola!
Sic parata et ego barbariem vincere carmine: 10
Pugnabo emoriens usque etiam spiritum ad ultimum!

Metre: lines 1-4, elegiac couplets; line 5, dactylic hexameter; lines 6-11, Greater Asclepiadic lines

Translation:

From a long distance, both in geography and age, a poet sends an email to a young soldier. ‘I am a thousand years old!’ – so sang the Jewish poetess: all poets are both extremely old, and youthful, at the same time.

[5] I must change my verse-form, as Horace is whispering in my ear: [6] Tell me, what name shall I use for you, Triptolemus or Antinous? Triptolemus, do not ask about your doubtful fate. [8] But do not pour wine; come, be prepared to sacrifice your life for your country and also for your so eager students! [10] So too am I ready to defeat barbarism with poetry: even unto death shall I fight, to my last breath.

Notes:

3: ‘Iudaea poetris’: Else Lasker-Schüler.

5: cf. Horace, *Odes* 1. 11.

II

[The *Epistula secunda* is not in Latin verse, but German prose]

Zu Horaz, c.I,11,5

(ein textkritischer Espresso, den Kollegen an der Front gereicht als Erfrischung in einer Gefechtspause)

Horaz, c.I,11 [Falls kein Horaztext zur Hand ist, hier das ganze carmen I,11.]

Tu ne quaesieris (scire nefas) quem mihi, quem tibi
finem di dederint, Leuconoe, nec Babylonios
temptaris numeros. Ut melius quicquid erit pati!
Seu pluris hiemes seu tribuit Iuppiter ultimam,

quae nunc oppositis debilitat pumicibus mare
Tyrrhenum, sapias, vina liques et spatio brevi
spem longam reseces. Dum loquimur, fugerit invida
aetas: carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero.

5

Am Tag der Wahl (06.11.2024) von Donald Trump zum amerikanischen Präsidenten beginne ich eine textkritische Miszelle zu Hor.c.I,11,5 zu schreiben, die besonders bestimmt ist für die ukrainischen Philologen, die ihre wissenschaftliche Forschung unterbrochen haben, um die Freiheit ihres Landes zu verteidigen.

Aber, gibt es nicht an einem solchen Schicksalstag für Europa Wichtigeres zu tun, als sich um die Überlieferung antiker Texte zu kümmern?

Ich behaupte, dass auch die Tradierung der antiken Texte lebensnotwendig ist für eine humane Kultur, die sich mit ihren Wurzeln verbunden weiß.

Und gerade in Zeiten, wo man „an des Lebens Rand“ (Eichendorff) steht, liest man die alten Texte mit einer Wachheit, die den saturierten Generationen von „Textverwaltern“ verloren gegangen ist. Wenn auch im Laufe der Jahrhunderte immer neue Textausgaben von Horaz ediert wurden, so blieb an doch weitgehend bei den einmal getroffenen Entscheidungen für die „richtige“ Lesart und verbannte alternative Textzeugen in den textkritischen Apparat, was schon ein großer Verdienst der Herausgeber ist, weil jeder dadurch die Möglichkeit hat, selbst zu entscheiden, ob die Textvariante, für die sich der Herausgeber entschieden hat, wirklich diejenige ist, die vom Autor selbst stammt, oder ob vielleicht eine andere Lesart die „lectio difficilior“ und daher für das Original wahrscheinlicher ist.

Um die Darstellung kurz zu halten: in Horaz, c.I,11,5 geht es um die Lesarten „quae“ (Hauptstrang der Überlieferung in Ψ und Ξ) und die Variante „qui“, die in δ =Harleianus 2527,s.IX überliefert hast und zu dem Überlieferungsstrang Ψ gehört.

Geht es also um eine Quisquillie: ob „quae“ oder „qui“? Es geht um viel mehr: Geht es einem Philologen wirklich um die treue Überlieferung eines Menschheitstextes, der vor zweitausend Jahren von einem Römer verfasst wurde und in der europäischen Kultur immer gegenwärtig war – oder gibt man sich damit zufrieden, was frühere Generationen vielleicht unkritisch weitergegeben haben?

In dem Satz (v.4-5) „seu pluris hiemes seu tribuit Juppiter ultimam / quae(qui) nunc oppositis debilitat pumicibus mare / Tyrrhenum“ geht es darum: Worauf bezieht sich das Relativpronomen: auf hiemem ultimam (=quae) oder auf Juppiter (=qui)?

Ich vermute, dass die mönchischen Abschreiber der Handschrift sich „quae“ entschieden haben, weil sie die Rolle des Jupiter (qui) als Wettergott für „politically incorrect“ hielten – wie man ja heute auch leider der political correctness wegen literarische Texte verändert. Jupiter als Schicksalsgott (seu pluris hiemes seu tribuit Juppiter ultimam) konnte man noch als Synonym für „Deus“ akzeptieren, aber die antike Vorstellung eines Wettergottes widersprach dem christlichen Weltbild.

Und es ist kein Zufall, dass ich erst heute, obwohl ich mich seit Jahrzehnten mit Horaz beschäftige, den Text mit neuer Wachheit gelesen habe, weil ich an diesen vertrauten Text die Frage richtete: Kann man dieses Gedicht als Frontlektüre für Philologen empfehlen die ihr Leben für die Freiheit ihres Volkes einsetzen statt Schüler oder Studenten zu unterrichten oder selbst wissenschaftlich zu forschen?

Ich meine, es lohnt sich, in den kurzen Pausen des Gefechtslärms hineinzuhorchen in die alten Texte und sie neu zu entdecken als Garanten der eigenen freiheitlichen Kultur.

Und wenn diese Miszelle nicht an die Front übermittelt werden kann, dann werden die Helden nach dem Sieg erfahren, dass es Philologen gab, die stellvertretend für sie an der „Überlieferungsfront“ gekämpft haben.

Translation:

On Horace, *Odes* 1. 11. 5.

(Coffee-break: an espresso of textual criticism, served to colleagues at the front as a refreshment during a lull in the fighting.)

On the day of the election (November 6, 2024) of Donald Trump as American President, I begin writing a text-critical miscellany on Horace, *Odes* 1. 11. 5, especially intended for the Ukrainian philologists who have interrupted their academic research to defend their country's freedom.

But isn't there more important work to be done on such a fateful day for Europe than to attend to the transmission of ancient texts? I maintain that the transmission of ancient texts is also vital for a humane culture that feels connected to its roots. And especially in times when one stands 'on the edge of life' (Eichendorff), one reads the ancient texts with an alertness that has been lost to the saturated generations of 'textual administrators'. Although new editions of Horace's texts have been published over the centuries, they largely stuck to the decisions that had previously been made about the 'correct' reading and banished alternative textual witnesses to the 'apparatus criticus'. This is a great credit to the editors, because it gives everyone the opportunity to decide for themselves whether the textual variant chosen by the editor is truly the one originating from the author himself, or whether perhaps another reading is the 'lectio difficilior' and therefore more likely to be the original.

To keep the presentation brief: Horace, *Odes* 1. 11, 5 deals with the readings 'quae' (main strand of the tradition in Ψ and Ξ) and the variant 'qui', which is handed down in δ = Harleianus 2527, p.IX and belongs to the strand of tradition Ψ .

So, is it a trivial question, whether it should read 'quae' or 'qui'? It's about much more: is a philologist really concerned with the faithful transmission of a human text written by a Roman two thousand years ago and always present in European culture – or are they content with what previous generations may have uncritically passed on? The sense of the sentence (lines 4-6) 'seu pluris hiemes seu tribuit Iuppiter ultimam / quae(qui) nunc oppositis debilitat pumicibus mare / Tyrrhenum' rests on what the relative pronoun refers to: either to 'hiemem ultimam' (= 'quae') or to Jupiter (= 'qui').

I suspect that the monastic copyists of the manuscript chose 'quae' because they considered the role of Jupiter ('qui') as weather god to be 'politically incorrect' – just as literary texts are unfortunately altered today for the sake of political correctness. Jupiter as the god of fate ('seu pluris hiemes seu tribuit Iuppiter ultimam') could still be accepted as a synonym for 'Deus', but the ancient conception of a weather god contradicted the Christian worldview.

And it is no coincidence that only today, despite having studied Horace for decades, I read the text with renewed vigilance, because I addressed this familiar text with the question: Can this poem be recommended as front-line reading for philologists who dedicate their lives to the freedom of their people instead of teaching pupils or students or conducting academic research themselves?

I believe it is worthwhile, in the brief pauses in the noise of battle, to listen to the ancient texts and rediscover them as guarantors of one's own liberal culture. And if this miscellany cannot be transmitted to the front, then the heroes will learn after their victory that there were philologists who fought on their behalf on the 'traditional front'.

III

Rursus Elissa suum Antinoum incolumemque salutat:

Sitne ille incolumis, quaero ego sollicita.

Non, ut Leuconoe, tempto babylonica signa,

et de sorte tua Vergilius tacuit.

Elysio e longinquo audivi murmur Horati: 5
 “debilitare opus est pumicibus maria!”
 Militibus sic oppositis est debilitandus
 impetus horribilis perpetuusque odii.
 Namque odium insertum est menti cordique tyranni:
 Antinoe, obdura pumicibus similis! 10

Metre: elegiac couplets

Translation:

Again Elissa greets her Antinous safe and sound: and I ask anxiously if he is truly still unharmed. I did not consult the horoscopes – like Horace’s Leuconoe – and Virgil’s oracle provides no information either. [5] And I heard Horace whisper, from far away in Elysium: ‘The power of the seas must be broken on the rocks!’ [7] The terrible and incessant onslaught of hatred must be broken through the resistance of the soldiers. For hatred has taken root in the mind and heart of the dictator: Antinous, resist like the rocks!

Notes:

3: cf. Horace, *Odes* 1. 11. 2.

6: cf. Horace, *Odes* 1. 11. 5.

IV

Epistula discipulorum ad magistrum pro patria pugnantem

Noster magister optime,
 servire mavis patriae.
 Ergo relictī epistulam
 scribamus ad te balbulam.

Tu fidior Lycoride 5
 ducem sequente perfide:
 idyllium illud Vergili
 de sorte narrat flebili

Galli poetae – plaudite,
 ter plaudite atque fingite 10
 magistrum et heroa impigrum
 ad nos revertisse integrum!

Metre: iambic dimeters

Translation:

‘A letter from students to their teacher fighting for their fatherland’

Our best teacher, you choose to serve your fatherland, so we, the abandoned ones, must write a stammering letter.

[5] You are more loyal than Lycoris (of Gallus), who treacherously followed a general. Virgil’s tenth eclogue tells of the sad fate of the poet Gallus – clap, clap three times, and imagine that the teacher and tireless soldier has returned to us unharmed!

Editor's note: on the iambic metre of letters IV, X, and XIII. One might be tempted to read these as accentual iambics (especially with the rhymes in IV); and indeed that method of scansion may also be applied successfully. But I am assured by A. E. R. that her intention is to treat them all as quantitative, classical iambic dimeters. (D. M.)

V

Biblicum verbum tibi mittit Anna,
nempe post partum puerum altera Anna
gratias solvit Domino benigno
carmine magno:

"Fortium est arcus superatus atque
robore accincti timidi iacentes".
Tu tene verbum, Antinoe, inque corde et
mente fideli!

5

Metre: Sapphic stanzas

Translation:

Anna sends you a Bible verse: for after the birth of her son (Samuel), another Anna thanked merciful God with a great song: [5] 'The bow of the mighty is broken, and the mighty lie frightened on the ground.' But you, Antinous, keep this saying faithfully in your heart.

Note:

5-6: cf. 1 Samuel 2:4: 'Arcus fortium superatus est, et infirmi accincti sunt robore'.

VI

De cena rustica

Rusticis miles dapibus gavisus
gratias egit dominae culinae,
brassicas quae praeparat inque iure
deliciosas.

Persicos odisti etiam apparatus
carmen illius memorans Horati.
At rosas mensae tamen addit ulti-
masque Camena.

5

Metre: Sapphic stanzas

Translation:

'A rustic meal'

The soldier, delighted by the simple food, thanked the cook for the delicious borscht. [5] You, too, don't like elaborate dishes, and think of Horace. But the Muse still adds late roses to the table.

Note:

5: cf. Horace, *Odes* 1. 38. 1: 'Persicos odi, puer, adparatus'.

VII

De imagine, qua milites pedefolle ludunt

Quis pedefolle ludit?
Milites gaudent pedefolle inter et arma dura
ludere tempore arto
otii tecti galeis sarcinulis gravati.

Namque ubicumque ludet
liber atque humanus homo, despiciet coactos
anxietate vique.
Tuque et esto verus homo, verus homoque ludens.

5

Metre: Lesser Sapphic stanzas: Aristophanic lines alternating with Greater Sapphic lines (cf. Horace, *Odes* 1. 8)

Translation:

‘On a picture of soldiers playing football’
Who is playing football? Soldiers enjoy playing football, even during short breaks in fierce battles, fully equipped with helmets and marching packs. [5] For wherever a person plays, he will be free and truly human, despising those who allow themselves to be compelled by fear and violence. [8] And you should be a true human being, a true person who plays.

VIII

Solus exsomniae – alii sodales
dormiunt fessi – veteris memorque
carminis versus repetis, magister
quos docuit te:

Luna iam mersa est vaga Pleiadesque,
praeterit noctis medianae et hora.
Cetera et nosti: vigilasse tecum
nocte Camenam.

5

Metre: Sapphic stanzas

Translation:

Alone and sleepless—your other comrades are already asleep, exhausted—you remember an old song and recite the verses your teacher taught you: [5] The moon and the Pleiades have set, midnight has already passed. You know what happens next: that the Muse has been watching with you.

IX

Carmen vespertinum militibus dedicatum

“Milites, dormite!” Diana fessos
allocuta est suave solo iacentes:
“Nocte vos muto, iuvenes, benigne in
Endymiones.”

Metre: Sapphic stanza

Translation:

‘Evening song dedicated to the soldiers’

‘Soldiers, sleep!’ Diana gently spoke to the weary ones lying on the ground: ‘Tonight, I will transform you all, young men, into Endymions.’

X

Ad Sanctum Nicolaum milites visitantem

O Nicolae prodige,
largire forti militi,
qui solus obrutus nive
exspectat hostis impetum!

Dona fidem certamque spem,
per rusticosque crustula
offersque sponte heroibus
multas agensque gratias.

5

Metre: iambic dimeters

Translation:

‘To Saint Nicholas, visiting the soldiers’

O bountiful Saint Nicholas, bestow gifts on the brave soldier who waits alone in the snow for the enemy’s attack. Give him confidence and firm hope, and let the peasants bring him cakes, and thank the heroic warriors yourself!

XI

Ad primam Dominicam adventualem

Tempore adventus quid ages proculque
patria, in fossa propius periclis?
Proque candela iaculat sagittas
hostis adustas.

Donec arcebis nocuas sagittas,
invicem adventum est celebrare nobis:
Prima candela est tibi dedicata et
sollicitata.

5

Metre: Sapphic stanzas

Translation:

‘For the First Sunday in Advent’

What will you do during Advent, far from home and all too close to danger in the trenches? And instead of Advent candles, the enemy sends incendiary bombs. [5] As long as you can keep the deadly missiles at bay, we can celebrate Advent: we light the first candle for you and remember you with sorrow.

Note:

1: cf. Horace, *Odes* 3. 8. 1: 'Martii caelebs quid agam Kalendis'.

XII

De cane per vicum vastatum errante

Hanc creaturam recipe, hanc caninam,
miles, orbatae miserere, tolle
e ruinosi domibus, tuumque
divide panem.

Metre: Sapphic stanza

Translation:

'On a dog wandering in a devastated village'

Take care of this creature, this little dog, soldier, have mercy on this orphaned creature, rescue it from the ruined houses, and share your bread with it.

XIII

De lepore timido

Quis invenit leporem in nive
pellem gerentem candidam,
qua tectus est ab hostibus
prudencia et simul sua?

Linnaee, cur leporem vocas
timidum, immo vafrum et callidum?
Sic miles et latet nive
albaque veste et nil timens.

5

Metre: iambic dimeters

Translation:

'On the "timid" hare'

Who can spot the white-furred hare in the snow, protected by the wise foresight of its nature?
[5] Linnaeus, why do you call this hare 'timid', when it is so very clever? And so, too, the soldier in the snow is camouflaged by his white uniform and has nothing to fear.

Note:

Germany chooses an annual 'animal of the year' – for 2025, the 'timid' hare.

XIV

De stella Bethlehemica (donum natalicium 24 Antonio dedicatum)

Sulcis insere milites
effossisque profundius,
ut sint praesidia abdita,
miles Triptolemusque!

Astrolabio et utere: 5
Sursum verte oculos tuos:
Inter tela volantia
stellarum atque planetum

cursum perpetuum vides: 10
En, consistit et unica
In fossa nimis altius
nuntiansque salutem!

Metre: Glyconics

Translation:

‘On the star of Bethlehem’ (a present for Anton, Christmas 2024)

Entrench the soldiers more deeply, so their garrisons can be hidden, and a soldier can be like Triptolemus. [5] Take the astrolabe, raise your eyes to the heavens: between the flying drones you see the eternal course of the stars and planets: [10] Look, only one remains standing above the deep trench and announces salvation!

Note:

4: Triptolemus: a judge in the underworld.

XV

Sarcinis multis onerate, miles,
instrumenta et arma, etiam sclopetum
sustines laetus patriam adiuvere, he-
ro iuvenilis!

Imperatores sequeris libenter, 5
nam simul sunt et socii et sodales,
qui pericula omnia et hostis impe-
tum patiuntur.

O vigil custos, celeres sagittas 10
igneas arce patriae! Sodales
fortiter tecum vigilant, omittunt
Pleiadesque . . .

Metre: Sapphic stanzas

Translation:

Soldier, laden with much baggage, you carry instruments, weapons, and even a rifle, glad to help your fatherland, young hero! [5] You gladly follow your leaders, for they are both comrades in arms and comrades who endure all dangers and the onslaught of the enemy together. [9] O careful sentry, keep the swift missiles away from our fatherland! Your comrades watch bravely with you, not thinking of the (Sapphic) Pleiades . . .

Note:

12: cf. Sappho 94D.

XVI

De vestibus militum hiemalibus

Luna, quae Phoebi soror et vocaris,
lumen et fratris reicis, revelas,
quod latet tectum tenebris, et urbes
prodere gaudes.

Militi in campis niveis iacenti
parce, post nubes radios reflectos
conde, vel vestes nivibus adeptas
mitte, precamur. 5

Iam modo miro similem ferarum
pellibus miles gerit ecce vestem
candidam falso nivium colore
decipientem. 10

Metre: Sapphic stanzas

Translation:

‘On the soldiers’ winter clothing’

Moon, who are called sister of the sun, you reflect the light of brother sun and reveal what is covered by shadows and are happy to betray cities too. [5] Spare the soldier lying in the snow, hide your rays borrowed from the sun, and, please, send camouflage clothing adapted to the snow. [9] And already, miraculously, the soldier is wearing clothing that resembles the winter fur of animals: white clothing that deceives the enemy with the false colour of snow.

XVII

Ad milites reconvalescentes in valetudinario

Salvete, invalidi, mox ut valeatis, amici,
tota Ucraina orat, vota poeta refert:
Musa, mihi memora, Phaeacia ut ante Tibullum
Desertum atque aegrum detineat patriae,
ut quaesiverit ante omnes matrem atque sororem – 5
Delia amor nusquam: ah, ubi vester amor?
Fingite vos reduces, ut mater, amorque sororque
Vos amplectantur – vestra poetria abit . . .

Metre: elegiac couplets

Translation:

‘To soldiers recovering in hospital’

Greetings, wounded friends, may you recover soon! All of Ukraine prays for you, and the poet sends you her best wishes for your recovery. [3] Muse, remind me how Phaeacia kept the abandoned and sick Tibullus away from his homeland, how he searched for his mother and sister – Delia was nowhere to be found either: Oh, and where are your beloved ones?[7] Imagine, when you return home, how mother, beloved, and sister embrace you – your poet withdraws (quietly) . . .

Note:

3: cf. Tibullus 1. 3. 3.

XVIII

Ad mensem Februarium

O mensis Februarius,
affers spem reducis veris, age adveni,
et cantus merulae simul:
auris, corque sitit carmina dulcia.

En, iamiam procul audio
exspectata diu tot modulamina:
Nunc solvis, merula, et gelu,
nunc manant lacrimae denique per genas! 5

O mensis Februarius,
affer spem reducis pacis amabilis,
solve et frigora cordium:
manabunt lacrimae denique per genas. 10

Metre: Second Asclepiadic stanzas (Glyconics and Lesser Asclepiadic lines alternating: cf. Horace, *Odes* 4. 1)

Translation:

‘To the month of February’

February, you bring us hope for spring, come here! Bring the song of the blackbird with you: Ears and hearts long for sweet songs. [5] Listen, I already hear from afar the many long-awaited melodies. Now, blackbird, melt the ice, now the tears will finally run down our cheeks. [9] February, bring us hope for dear peace, melt the ice in our hearts: then tears will finally run down our cheeks.

Note:

8: cf. Horace, *Odes* 4. 1. 34: ‘manat rara meas lacrima per genas’. I have adapted a line from a poem about love for a more political theme.

XIX

Ad milites proficiscentes

En, vidi agmina militum
sarcinasque ferentia,
inter quae comitantia
invisibilia agmina
custodum superiorum. 5

Semper vos comitabitur
fortis militia altera,
o confidite, milites!
sarcinarum onus et levat,
tela et mortifera arcet. 10

Mi fili, incolumis redi,
sponse, amice, pater, redi,
tu fortis quoque filia,
mater, sponsa, soror, redi,
vobiscum Deus ibit!

15

Metre: trochaic dimeter catalectic

Translation:

‘To soldiers ready to march’

I saw combat troops carrying their marching packs, and among them invisible hosts of guardian angels. [6] A second, strong army will always accompany you—believe in it, soldiers!—it will lighten the burden of your packs and ward off the deadly missiles. [11] My son, come home safe and sound. You too, bridegroom, friend, father, come back, and you too, brave daughter, mother, bride, and sister, return home. God will go with you!

XX

De convivio militum

Te, Quinte Horati, te cichorea, te
malvaeque pascunt addita olivaque
post parmulam abiectam, o miselli,
laete tamen resides Sabino.

Vobis parata est cena opulentior
et mensa longa a civibus: offerunt
farcimina et panem recentem,
omnia, quae tribuit culina.

5

Pascit supremus vos Dominus videns
Vestram fidem erga patriam et incolas.
Implebit, ut psalmista dixit,
pocula uberrima vestra in aevum.

10

Metre: Alcaic stanzas

Translation:

‘On the soldiers’ feast’

You, Quintus Horatius, live on chicory, mallow, and olives, and, after you, poor coward, have thrown away your shield, you still reside on your Sabine farm. [5] A more sumptuous meal has been prepared for you, soldiers, at a long table by the citizens: they offer you sausage and fresh bread, everything the kitchen can provide. [9] You are nourished by the Most High God, who sees your loyalty to the fatherland and its inhabitants. He grants you, as the Psalmist said, fullness for eternity.

Notes:

2: cf. Horace, *Odes* 1. 31. 15-16.

3: cf. Horace, *Odes* 2. 7. 10.

11: cf. Psalms 22:5 (Vulgate).

XXI

De maximis Caesaris itineribus

Praecessit olim legionarios,
qui gente natus Caesar Iulia,
iussu illius terras remotas
agmina tam facile occupabant.

Vidi ambulantes per niveos agros 5
Tot milites, qui tanta umeris ferunt
Et pondere armorum et ciborum:
Pro patria et tolerant pericla.

Columna nubis nunc iterum anteeat
vos per diem, demonstret et ignea 10
columna per nostis tenebras
semitam: ubique Deus teget vos!

Metre: Alcaic stanzas

Translation:

‘On Caesar’s forced marches’

Once Caesar, of the ‘gens Julia’ led his legionary soldiers. At his command, the troops effortlessly conquered distant lands. [5] I saw many soldiers marching across snow-covered fields, carrying such heavy burdens of weapons and provisions on their shoulders. [9] And again, a pillar of cloud precedes you by day, and by night a pillar of fire shows you the way. And everywhere God will protect you.

Note:

9: cf. Exodus 13:21 (Vulgate).

Three Poems of the Air

David Money

Introduction:

The first two poems are inspired by RAF fighter pilots of the Second World War, one who survived to our own day, and one who died young. Group Captain John ‘Paddy’ Hemingway was born in Dublin in 1919, and died as recently as 17 March 2025, at the age of 105. He joined the RAF in 1938, and flew Hurricanes with 85 Squadron in the Battle of France and Battle of Britain.

The episode I focus on comes from shortly before the end of the war, when he commanded 43 Squadron in Italy, being determined to ‘help them [the Germans] with their retreat’. On 23 April 1945 he baled out of his Spitfire; chased by German soldiers, he reached a farmhouse where partisans ‘fed him with plenty of wine’.

He was disguised in peasant clothing, and a little girl from the locality took his hand and guided him past German positions to the safety of the Allied lines . . . He recalled some seventy years later that he was more frightened for the life of that small child than for his own safety, and he never forgot her.

His son Brian said: ‘He was not particularly interested in the past. Like so many of his generation, he doesn’t feel as though he did anything special. But he liked the idea that he was the last Irishman to have fought in the Battle [of Britain].’ In his own words, at a reception for his 105th birthday: ‘I am here because I had the staggering luck to fight alongside great pilots, flying magnificent aircraft, with the best ground crew, in the best air force in the world.’ His closest friends were all killed in the war. (Source: Hemingway’s obituary, *The Daily Telegraph* 19 March 2025, p. 25.)

The second poem is taken from a remark in *Spitfire Pilot* (1942: reprinted London: Greenhill, 2006) by Flight Lieutenant David Crook, referring to the Polish pilots he had flown with during the Battle of Britain (p. 123):

Such indomitable courage and determination cannot go unrewarded, and when this war is won we must see that Poland is again restored to her former liberty and freedom, which her sons fought so valiantly to maintain.

According to the nephew of a Polish pilot from his squadron, quoted in the 2006 preface (p. 15), ‘He will always be remembered as a true friend of Poland.’ Born in Huddersfield in 1914, he worked for the family business (sports equipment), joining the Auxiliary Air Force in 1938. He noted after the Battle of Britain that ‘out of the gay and light-hearted company of friends who flew together at Church Fenton in August 1939, more than half were killed within twelve months’ (p. 203). (A Spitfire flown by Crook in this period is preserved at the Imperial War Museum.)

Crook does include a slightly cynical joke by a fellow officer, complaining about low pay: ‘Never in the history of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few – for so little.’ One might add – as he did not know in 1942 (and would not have been permitted to say, anyway) – ‘for so little good to Poland’. For his optimism about Poland’s post-war liberty was to be misplaced; he lived to see the destruction of the Warsaw Rising in the autumn of 1944, but died on 18 December 1944 while training as a photo-reconnaissance pilot. There may not have been anything practical the Western Allies could have done, to prevent the final

imposition of Stalin's tyranny on Poland from 1945 onwards: but the betrayal would probably have appalled Crook, had he survived the war.

The third poem turns from military to civil aviation. Its inspiration was an article by Etan Smallman, 'The bizarre, turbulent history of in-flight entertainment' (*The Daily Telegraph*, 28 February 2025, Features section pp. 8-9). We can now commemorate the centenary of that invaluable luxury: in April 1925, on an Imperial Airways flight from London (Croydon) to Paris, the first ever feature-length in-flight movie was shown to passengers. It was *The Lost World*, based on Arthur Conan Doyle's dinosaur fantasy of 1912. The experiment was not without risk, given how flammable film was, and how disastrous that might have proved in the air. We now take it for granted, at least on longer flights. According to Smallman, 'In January, shooting began on *The Entertainment System is Down*, a dark satire set on a long-haul flight on which passengers are compelled to face the agony of being bored.' (Are their personal devices out of action too?) That film is still forthcoming at the time of writing – I hope to catch it on a future flight – but in the meantime I have given some thought to the problem. The metre (scazon, or limping iambic, choliambic) seemed appropriate to the idea of turbulence: it gives a little turbulent jolt to the reader at the end of each line, by reversing the iambic rhythm for a trochee or spondee in the sixth foot.

1.

Holding Hands; or, The Last Irishman

Tange manum tenuem: manus haec, tam parva, salutis

Spes erit; effugium multa pericla vetant.

Hostis adest; diro cingit loca rustica ferro

Agricolis tantum semita nota manet.

Nubibus e celsis cecidit percussus; amicus

5

Ruris, iam socius: nuper at hostis erat.

Sic volvit fortuna vias; fugitivus inermis

Auxilio nubes ardet adire suas.

Arsit, et haud pro se metuit: sed pro duce parvam

Tendenti gratis impavidamque manum.

10

Evasit. Minimaeque diu meminisse puellae

Gaudebat spirans, vitaeque longa fuit.

Excessit tandem nostrorum aetate superstes

Ultimus e paucis; insula magna viret.

Aeriam in pugnam paucos illa insula misit;

15

Stare potest hodie libera propter eos.

Debilitatur enim manus omnis tempore lento;

Historiae tenuem tangimus arte manum.

Metre: elegiac couplets

Translation:

Hold on to her fragile hand: this hand, so small, will be your hope of safety! Many dangers stand in the way of escape. The enemy is here, he surrounds the countryside with steel. Only a path known to the peasants remains. [5] He fell, shot down, from the clouds: a friend to the peasantry, now their ally – though not so long ago he had been an enemy himself. [7] Thus does fortune turn round human destinies. As an unarmed fugitive he longs to return to his own

clouds, with their assistance. He longed for that, and had no fears for himself: but he did fear for the guide, who freely stretched out her small and fearless hand.

[11] He got away. He long rejoiced to remember that small girl – and his life proved very long. He has died at last, having survived into our own age, the last of ‘The Few’ – and his large, green island flourishes. That island sent few indeed into battle in the skies; though it owes its present liberty to what they did then. [17] For every hand grows weak with the inevitable passage of time. We can touch, through art, the fragile hand of history.

Note:

14-16: there is some compression of ideas here, and some deliberate ambiguity. One could read the ‘large island’ as either Great Britain, green and pleasant, or Ireland, traditionally green and fairly large. I avoided using words for those countries (though they might have fitted the metre) both to keep it concise, and to preserve both possibilities. ‘The Few’ refers to Battle of Britain aircrew (of all nationalities): they also relied on many other men and women on the ground. The Republic of Ireland was neutral in the war; individual Irish people made the choice to support the Allies (or not). Much of this remains contentious. As for the suggestion that today’s liberties were preserved, for Ireland as well as the rest of Europe, by Britain’s survival: that relies on counter-factual historical speculation ... but counter-factual history is sometimes the most important kind. How can we understand the past and present, if we don’t consider what alternative outcomes were possible? In this case: I suggest that, in the event of German victory, Ireland – neutral or not – would have found itself forced into some kind of European Union which it might have found less benign than the current version. Anyway, the verse can be read in various ways: but the sharper reference to Ireland is intended to be one of them.

2.

Poloniae Amicus

Prodere nolentes clademque videre coacti
Non poterant aequo sociorum reddere munus
Munere libertatis: adest renovata tyrannis
Quae plus quam longos terram populumque venenat
Quadraginta annos, populi dum spiritus auras 5
In nitidas iterum volet. Eventumque molestum
Non vidit moriens: venientis at inscius ille
Proditionis avet scriptis spem pacis honestam.
Qui simul in sudum venantes saepe volabant
Quique simul reditu potabant, vincula fratrum 10
Grata tenenda putant; vinci vix carcere credunt.
Omnia mutantur, renovatur et ipsa petita
Libertas; brevior tamen est tutamine inerti,
Suntque minae vero: noli bis prodere amicos.

Metre: dactylic hexameters

Translation:

‘A Friend of Poland’

They did not want to abandon their friends, but were forced to watch the catastrophe: they could not give their allies back the same gift of freedom which they had themselves received.

A fresh tyranny arrives, which poisons land and people for more than forty long years, until the people's spirit can fly free again.

[6] He died before he could see this dreadful outcome: not knowing of the betrayal to come, he hopes in his writings for an honourable peace. [9] Those who often flew into clear skies together as hunters, and who drank together on their return, thought that they should retain the links of brotherhood. They scarcely thought that it would be broken by the imprisonment [of Poland itself]. [17] All that is changed now, and long-sought liberty has been restored. But if guarded weakly, its tenure may be short. There are real threats. Let us not betray our friends twice.

Note:

9: the hunting call 'Tally Ho!', widely used in RAF Fighter Command, was the motto of Crook's 609 (West Riding) Squadron.

3.

We are experiencing some turbulence

Adstringe zonam sede nunc manens: noli
Fumare mingens: si cies tubam fumo
Potes cloacam per sonabilem expelli
In aethera ut redire propriis tentes
Pinnis: monere; minge, si libet, cura 5
Gnava propinquos sedibus nimis turbans.
Delectat aures – longiore nam cincti
Sumus volatu – rite copia immensa
Imaginum sonique. Nonne laudemus
Exordium illud strenuum antehac annis 10
Centum? Superne nam tuentur *Amissum*
Mundum viatoresque monstra mirantur:
Commotio alta cordis! O dies luxus!
Flammae periculum forsitan: at favet coeptis
Fortuna: terra mox revisitur tuto. 15
Viae saluto celsioris heroes!
Quid? Si statim nos gaudiisque privati
Simus sonisque? Luxus absit omnino
Si notus, et doloris omne solamen?
Ut impleamus tempus idque inane amplum, 20
Quid restat? Artem num invenire sermonis?
Libros legendi? Pangere aut poema? Horror!

Metre: scazontes (limping iambics)

Translation:

Please remain seated and fasten your seatbelt. Do not smoke in the lavatory. If you set off the smoke alarm in the lavatory, you may find yourself forcibly ejected from the aircraft via the noisy toilet, so that you can attempt to return to ground level using your own wings. You have been warned. Do go to the toilet very carefully, if you like, causing the maximum disturbance to people in neighbouring seats.

[7] A vast selection of sound and images delights your ears, as is proper – for we are stuck on a long-haul flight. Let us praise those pioneers, a hundred years ago, who began all this! For they watched *The Lost World* above the world, and the travellers could marvel at monsters. [13] What deep emotions! What a day of luxury! And not without risk of fire – but fortune favoured their attempt, and they soon landed safely. [16] I salute those heroes of air travel! But imagine: what if we were now suddenly deprived of our entertainments? If all our familiar luxury, and sole relief from discomfort, were gone? [20] What would remain, for us to fill up time and that enormous void? Rediscover the art of conversation? Of reading books? Or even write a poem? The horror of it!

Translations from Persian Poetry

Ignatius Armella

Haphezi Shirazii
ghazela sive ode 7

Eia, veni, sophe! Nam rutilant iam pocula vino atque corusca patet funditus urna tibi.	
Non ex altisono sacrum doctore petendum est: quin potius retegunt vela modo haec bibuli.	
Hic quod prendamus nihil est quam labilis aura insidiasque Simorgh semper avis refugit; et quoniam fluit omnis res mortalibus ex quo exsulat Adamus: gaudia promptus eme!	5
Ast epulis saeculi nimium ne falsus adhaere: ut fuerint calices unus et alter, abi!	10
Eheu! Ver iuvenis labi sine flore tulisti: i nunc et frugi laude tumesce, senex!	
Obsequio semper parens tua limina pressi; nunc, Ere!, me blandis respice, quaeso, oculis.	
Haphez sum, Calici devotus: surgite, venti!, atque referte duci symbola servitii.	15

Metre: elegiac couplets

Translation:

Hafiz of Shiraz, Ghazal no. 7

Ah! Come, you Sufi! For the glass is glowing with wine, and the glittering-bottomed jar is welcoming you. The sacred mystery is not to be sought from a pompous Mullah; only the drunkards uncover this veil, instead. Here there is nothing we can seize, if not a short breeze, and the bird Simorgh is always avoiding our ambush. And, because all things are ephemeral to us mortals since the day when Adam was exiled: be prompt and buy yourselves some enjoyment! [9] But beware, do not to be deceived by putting too much trust in the banquet of this world: once you had one or two cups, leave for good! Alas! When young, you let the spring slip away without any flower: now go and praise yourself for being virtuous, you old man! [13] I have always come to your threshold yielding with obedience; now, cast a benevolent sight on me, my Lord, I pray you! I am Hafiz, a follower of the Chalice: arise, you winds! and send to my master these signs of my devotion.

Notes:

6: Simorgh: a mythological bird most appreciated in Persian folklore. In many aspects, it is similar to the Arabian Phoenix. The main source for Simorgh and other mythological figures present in the following poems is the *Shahnameh* of the 4th/10th century poet Ferdowsi, sometimes regarded by Western commentators as the ‘Persian Homer’ (see Abolqasem Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings*, translated by Dick Davis, Penguin Classics, 2016).

15: the word *calix* here seems to be an allusion to the dedicatee of the poem, who may have been a native from Jam, a place whose name also means ‘cup’ in Persian. Hence the pun in the original.

Omar Khayyamii
epigrammata quattuor

3.

“Verba Dei” repetunt “cunctis potiora putato!”
Dicunt, at carptim verba Dei recitant.
Proflua sed calicis sub labro verba coruscant
quae tibi perpetuo sunt recitanda: “Bibe!”

7.

Quae Jamsid calicem versantem tecta videbant,
nunc dammas nixas lustraue vulpium habent.
Tu, Bahram, modo membra ferarum morte petebas . . .
Aspice: nunc animam Mors petit ipsa tuam!

31.

Res cum disposuit mundanas ordine Rector,
cur tandem leto cuncta voranda dedit?
Si bona erant: quo pertinuit pervertere? Si non,
unde venit nobis, dicite, causa mali?

43.

Quisnam finxit in effigiem me, fictile durum?
Num caeleste dedit pectus an ex Erebo?
Nescio. Sed cyathum, citharamque et savia habere
mi satis est lucri: tu paradison eme!

Metre: elegiac couplets

Translation:

Omar Khayyam, four rubaiyat (quatrains)

‘Honour—they say—God’s words above all things!’ They say, yet they recite the words of God only in parts. But under the rim of the goblet there flow some gleaming words, that you can constantly recite: ‘Do drink!’

The palaces that saw the king Jamshid turning his grail, keep now breeding deer and foxes’ hiding spots. Oh Bahram, you were just now running after the life of wild beasts; mark now how Death itself runs after you!

When the Ruler arranged all cosmic things, why did He leave all to be devoured by doom? If things were good, what was the need to break them. If not, tell me, then whence came wrong to us?

Who shaped me in this form of jar undone? Did he give me a pure or damned heart? I do not know, but wine, music and love are good enough for me: you buy your paradise!

Notes:

No. 7, line 1: *Jamsid*: mythological king of ancient Iran, often assimilated to the Koranic Salomon. He is known for being well versed in magical arts, and for having a miraculous goblet on which he foresaw the future and all the secrets of the universe.

No. 7, line 3: *Bahram*: another mythological king, known for being nonchalant and fond of hunting.

Mulanae Rumii

ghazela sive ode 648

in eos qui peregrinationem religionis ergo suscipiunt

O, qui sacra petis templa et peregrinus oberras,
huc venias ubi adest Delicium! Huc venias!
Est prope quem flagras; vos murus dividit unus:
ergo sub caelo cur properas alio?
Si potis es faciem sine forma cernere Amici, 5
tunc in te Dominus vivit et ipsa domus.
Iam fanum decies visisti emensus harenas.
Quin semel ascendis tecta videre tua?
Quam sit pulchra domus narrasti saepe, sed umquam,
obsecro!, de pulchro mentio fit Domino? 10
Sunt animi flores, sunt conchae, dummodo noris
hortis atque mari quaerere dona Dei.
Attamen opto tibi lucro ut sit sudor eundi
neu sis divitiis carbasus ipse tuis.

Metre: elegiac couplets

Translation:

Mowlana Rumi, Ghazal no. 648, 'Against those who perform the pilgrimage'

Oh you, who seek the holy temple and wander in pilgrimage, come hither, where your Beloved lies. Come hither! He, whom you ardently desire, is near: there is only a wall between you. Therefore, why do you haste under a foreign sky? If you are able to behold the shapeless face of the Beloved, then both the Master and his house lie within you. [7] You have already visited the temple ten times, walking through the sands of the desert. Why don't you climb once to your own roof? You have told us many times how beautiful the abode is, but, tell me: Have you ever mentioned the fair owner of the house? There are flowers and pearls within the soul, as long as you know how to look for God's gifts in the garden and the sea. Still, I wish that the pain of your travel will prove useful, and that you don't end up being the veil of your own treasure.

Two Translations and an Imitation

Timothy Adès

Introduction:

I was taught to write Latin verse from 1953, aged eleven. Starting out, we were told about dactyls and spondees, and shown the words to be fitted into the pattern. ‘Sir, *magnum* is just the job’, said a boy. No, before a consonant, *-num* was long: the right answer was *posse*. ... Soon we were translating the English ourselves, to write elegiacs every week, or eventually hexameters, sapphics, alcaics. By then a new member of staff had taught four of us Greek, and from age 13 I also wrote Greek iambics: I can't do it now. We never questioned any of this, or reflected that most children were doing nothing of the kind.

After decades doing no writing of Latin verses, I now send out a monthly challenge, alternating with Anthony Vickers-Collins, asking over fifty people what poem was the source for a translation into Latin. But I am mainly a rhyming translator of French, German, and Spanish poems into English.

(1)

After Oscar Wilde (1854 – 1900)

- A: tristia fata iubent: similis fit femina matri:
non fit vir similis (tristia fata!) suae.
J: nonne sapis? A: pulchro modulator! sat vera loquela est:
haud nimium veram suavibus esse decet.
J: quippe salis taedet. coepit iam quisque lepores: 5
occurrit lepidus, quicquid inibis iter.
laeditur immenso lepidorum publica damno
res. date, di, stultis posse manere! A: manent.
J: nosse velim certe. quo more loquuntur? A: inepti?
de lepidis. J: o mens stulta et inepta gregis! 10

Metre: elegiac couplets

From Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*

Algernon: All women become like their mothers. That is their tragedy. No man does. That's his.

Jack: Is that clever?

Algernon: It is perfectly phrased! And quite as true as any observation in civilised life should be.

Jack: I am sick to death of cleverness. Everybody is clever nowadays. You can't go anywhere without meeting clever people. The thing has become an absolute public nuisance. I wish to goodness we had a few fools left.

Algernon: We have.

Jack: I should extremely like to meet them. What do they talk about?

Algernon: The fools? Oh, about the clever people, of course.

Jack: What fools.

(2)

After W. B. Yeats (1865 – 1939)

vi subita ignaram ferit ille, alasque tremendis
ictibus en supra, dum labat ipsa, ciet;
collum inhibet rostro, femora et cute mulcet opaca,
et gremium gremio prendit inerme suo.
num manus imbellis pinnatum arcere nitorem, 5
territa num fluido tollere crure potest?
labitur incursu niveo; mirabile sentit,
qua iacet, ad costas, cor resonare suas.
confractos muros, ustam cum culmine turrim,
et motum ile necem gignit, Atrida, tuam. 10
sic ferus aurarum sanguis superavit amatam,
rostraque sic captae denique laxat iners.
num mihi Thestiadae dedit et prognoscere fatum,
quod dederat caeco corpore ferre Tonans?

Metre: elegiac couplets

Yeats, 'Leda and the Swan'

A sudden blow: the great wings beating still
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed
By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,
He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.

How can those terrified vague fingers push 5
The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?
And how can body, laid in that white rush,
But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?

A shudder in the loins engenders there
The broken wall, the burning roof and tower 10
And Agamemnon dead.

Being so caught up,
So mastered by the brute blood of the air,
Did she put on his knowledge with his power
Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?

(3)

An epigram inspired by W. H. Auden (1907 – 73)

profuit, heu! puero discenda licentia nulli:
sanius, heu! linguae, Graece, Latine, tuae.

Metre: elegiac couplet

Translation:

Permissiveness in learning has been of use to no boy, alas! Alas, your tongues are a saner thing,
o Greek, o Latin!

Editor's note:

Compare Auden, 'Doggerel by a Senior Citizen', lines 41-44 – the stanza 'Dare any . . . Greek
and Latin.' Copyright is an obstacle for *Vates*, but perhaps not for your search engine.

Nursery Rhyme Translations

Julian Tunnicliffe

1. Humpty Dumpty

vertice considit muri Teres atque Rotundus
tum ruit occasu; iamque momordit humum.
regis equi toti et procera caterva virorum
iungere perfectum non potuere Terem.

Metre: elegiac couplets

Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall
All the king's horses and all the king's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again.

Note:

Line 1: cf. Horace, *Satires* 2. 7. 86: 'teres, atque rotundus'.

2. Mary Had A Little Lamb

parvus erat niveo Mariae cum tegmine balans,
qui certe errantem sequitur quocumque puellam.
cum comite in scholam iit pius agnus iure vetante;
at iuvat interea spectare infantibus agnum.
quamvis a domina pulsus circumstetit ille,
et Mariam opperiens mansit mox agnus ituram.
exclamant iuvenes 'tantum cur diligit illam?'
'scis ne' magistra inquit 'Mariae balantis amorem'.

Metre: dactylic hexameters

Mary had a little lamb,
Its fleece was white as snow
And everywhere that Mary went
The lamb was sure to go.
It followed her to school one day
Which was against the rules.
It made the children laugh and play
To see a lamb at school.
And so the teacher turned it out,
But still it lingered near
And waited patiently about
Till Mary did appear.
'Why does the lamb love Mary so?'
The eager children cry.
'Why, Mary loves the lamb, you know',
The teacher did reply.

Translating Callimachus' epigram on Heraclitus

Peter Hulse

Introduction:

How do you express sympathy, when someone brings you sad news about a friend? I had to do it recently and it's not easy. Callimachus of Alexandria did it exquisitely more than two thousand years ago:

Εἵπε τις, Ἡράκλειτε, τεὸν μόρον, ἐς δέ με δάκρυ
ἤγαγεν· ἐμνήσθην δ' ὅσσάκις ἀμφότεροι
ἥλιον ἐν λέσχη κατεδύσαμεν. ἀλλὰ σὺ μὲν που,
ξεῖν' Ἀλικαρνησεῦ, τετράπαλαι σποδιή,
αἱ δὲ τεαὶ ζῶουσιν ἀηδόνες, ἦσιν ὁ πάντων
ἀρπακτὴς Αἴδης οὐκ ἐπὶ χεῖρα βαλεῖ.

“Someone told me, Heraclitus, of your death, and brought me to tears. I recalled how often the two of us in conversation put the sun to bed. Perhaps, my friend from Halicarnassus, you have been dust for a long time, but your nightingales live on. Even Hades, the one who seizes all, does not lay a hand on them.”

This was one of the first passages of real Greek that I read, when I began my struggle to learn the language. It was one of the reasons that I kept going. The English translation above is plain and simple. A Victorian schoolmaster named William Johnson Cory did it with a bit more feeling:

They told me, Heraclitus, they told me you were dead,
They brought me bitter news to hear and bitter tears to shed.
I wept as I remembered how often you and I
Had tired the sun with talking and sent him down the sky.
And now that thou art lying, my dear old Carian guest,
A handful of grey ashes, long, long ago at rest,
Still are thy pleasant voices, thy nightingales, awake;
For Death, he taketh all away, but them he cannot take.

When I decided that I would try to learn how to compose Latin verses – I rejoice that *Vates* is going to continue to encourage that very pleasant occupation – one of the books that helped me was *Latin Verse Challenges* by Colin Sydenham who was a master of the trade. One of the ‘challenges’ that he undertook was to turn Callimachus’ Greek into Latin elegaic couplets:

*Te quanto didici luctu, Heraclite, perisse;
donec nos pariter condere saepe diem
colloquio memini, non te deflere pudebat:
heu quater antiquus pulvis, amice, iaces.
vox sed adhuc vivit volucris, tua verba canora,
quae mors omnirapax non rapuisse valet.*

“With what grief I learned that you had died, Heraclitus; I remember how we often used to spend the day together in conversation, and it was not shameful to weep for you: alas, four times ancient dust, my friend, you lie. But your swift voice still lives, your melodious words, which all-seizing death has no power to seize.”

I found this very inspiring, when I was struggling with my own ‘longs and shorts’, to the point that, after I’d made some progress, I thought I’d have a go. This was really a cheeky thing to do as Colin Sydenham was Chairman of the Horatian Society for many years and also a master composer of Chess Problems! My effort follows below:

Nuntius, Heraclite, tuae mortis mihi venit,
Et lacrimis vultus immaduere mei.
Solis ad occasum quotiens sermone solebam
Tecum multiplici detinuisse diem!
Nunc, Halicarnassi civis, iam pulvis et umbra es,
Antiquo pridem conditus ipse rogo.
Sed tuae in aeterno Philomelae tempore vivunt,
Quae raptor nequeat tangere Pluto manu.

Metre: elegiac couplets

Translation:

News of your death, Heraclitus, has come to me, and tears have moistened my face. How often until sunset with conversation I used to detain the day with you in manifold discourse! Now, citizen of Halicarnassus, you are already dust and shadow, long ago buried in the ancient pyre. But your nightingales live through eternal time, which the plunderer Pluto cannot touch with his hand.

Note:

Sydenham’s version is, I believe, much superior and more in the spirit of the original Greek, but I leave it to the judgment of the reader. I hope that I don’t score too many γ’s!

The Trout

Philip Burton

Introduction:

The German poet C. F. D. Schubart (1739 – 91) published his poem *Die Forelle* in 1783. That it is familiar today is largely due to Franz Schubert's 1817 song setting, on which his well-known *Trout Quintet* is based. Schubert did not set the final stanza, and his judgement has been widely approved, with many seeing this as a piece of heavy-handed finger-wagging. This is perhaps unfair on Schubart. He was an interesting character and spent ten years in prison on account of his political views. Some critics have suggested that the final stanza is in fact a sort of meta-allegory: the fish and the angler stand for the maiden and the seducer, who in turn stand for the rash poet-politician and the tyrant.

A Passer-by on a Country Walk Observes a Trout and an Angler

Adstiteram fluvio, viridique in margine rivi
aspicio, ut placide lucida lymphæ fluat.
Miranti subito obvenit mihi parvula tructa,
quæ modico tenuis gurgite ludit aquæ.
Mobilis hac illac liquidas micat illa per undas; 5
lentius, ut credo, missa sagitta volat.
Spes fuit illa suæ longeque et maxima gentis
gloria, cunctorum squamigerumque decus.
Sed piscator adest, saevus prædator aquarum,
explicat et facili lina dolosa manu, 10
pisciculis hostis quo non infestior alter,
qui vada vivaces impavidique secant.
Fatus eram: 'Frustra puro piscaris in amne;
arma nihil, nihil ars proderit ipsa tibi.
Fallere vix poteris, fluvio si proximus adstas; 15
piscibus, en! plane conspiciendus eris.'
Tempore sed taesum est operis, taesumque morarum,
consiliumque novat callidus ille latro:
Turbat aquas; celant incertam turbida ripam
aequora: fatalis piscibus hora fuit. 20
Excipit ille escas, infigit harundine; piscis
fallitur infelix simplicitate sua.
Haec doleo spectans, ferventi et sanguine plango
deceptæ tructæ tristia fata meæ.
Vos, quæ securæ cessatis ad aurea vitæ 25
flumina, quasque parum cauta iuventa tenet,
Illa sit exemplo vobis tristissima tructa,
festino fugite, heu, visa pericla pede!
Hoc iuvenale malum est, nec conscia culpa; puellis
saepe animi vis deest provida, mensque bona. 30
Retia ne capiant curvatæ canna, cavete,
sanguine ne sero commaculentur aquæ.

Metre: elegiac couplets

Translation:

I stood beside a stream, and from the green verge of the bank I looked at how the calmly the bright water flowed. As I gazed, suddenly my attention was caught by a tiny trout, that sported in the little eddies of the shallow water. Quickly she darted this way and that through the clear waves; more slowly, I think, flies an arrow from the string. She was the hope of her tribe and by far its greatest glory; the adornment of all the scaly race.

[9] But a fisherman was there, the savage despoiler of the waters. He deployed his deceitful nets with skilled hand. No other foe was there more hateful to the fishes who cut through shallows, lively and unfearing. I spoke out: 'It is in vain that you fish in a clear river; neither your gear nor your very skill will avail you aught. You can hardly be hidden if you stand right next the stream; the fish will see you clear as day.'

[17] But in time that wily thief tired of his work and of his waiting, and changed his plan. He disturbed the waters; the shimmering bank was hidden in their confusion. That was the moment of doom for the fish. He took the bait, and fixed it on his rod; the luckless fish was fooled by her own naivety. All this I watched with grief, my blood boiling as I wept at the tricked trout and her sad fate.

[25] You ladies who loiter carelessly by the golden streams of life, possessed as you are of heedless youth – let this wretched trout be a warning to you! Flee on swift foot any dangers that you see! This is a fault of youth, not a deliberate sin; maidens often lack foresight and good sense. Take heed that the nets catch you not, nor the arcing rod, lest too late the waters be tinged with blood.

In imitation of Schubart, *Die Forelle*:

In einem Bächlein helle,
Da schoß in froher Eil'
Die launische Forelle
Vorüber wie ein Pfeil.
Ich stand an dem Gestade
Und sah in süßer Ruh
Des muntern Fischleins Bade
Im klaren Bächlein zu.

Ein Fischer mit der Rute
Wohl an dem Ufer stand,
Und sah's mit kaltem Blute,
Wie sich das Fischlein wand.
So lang dem Wasser Helle,
So dacht ich, nicht gebricht,
So fängt er die Forelle
Mit seiner Angel nicht.

Doch endlich ward dem Diebe
Die Zeit zu lang. Er macht
Das Bächlein tückisch trübe,
Und eh ich es gedacht,
So zuckte seine Rute,

Das Fischlein zappelt dran,
Und ich mit regem Blute
Sah die Betrogene an.

Die ihr am goldnen Quelle
Der sichern Jugend weilt,
Denkt doch an die Forelle,
Seht ihr Gefahr, so eilt!
Meist fehlt ihr nur aus Mangel
Der Klugheit. Mädchen seht
Verführer mit der Angel!
Sonst blutet ihr zu spät.

On Avoiding the Christmas Run

William Inge

Introduction:

These hendecasyllables originated in a response to a challenge to translate into Latin a poem William had just written in English. The comment was reported that ‘He should have written it in Latin’ – and he put it into verse. The resulting poem was shown in draft form to the new *Vates* editor, who advised that a number of alterations were required to make it scan properly. The version below is the result of some extensive revisions by the editor: we hope it may entertain readers, alongside William’s original English below, of which it is now a somewhat loose translation.

Hos agros hodie perambulabo
Frigidos digitis pedum gelatis;
Mox stabunt glacie nova capilli,
Sensum nec poterunt habere nares.
Iam currens prope me puella finem 5
Aspectu misero petet remotum:
Ignem nonne petet, petet calere
Post cursum rapidum: domi tepebit.
Tandem conveniemus: aula plena
Fumabit, facient ioci vaporem. 10
Dentes accipient merum trementes
Optatamque diem vacationis.

Metre: hendecasyllables

Translation:

I’ll walk over these chilly fields today with frozen toes; soon my hairs will stand rigid with fresh ice, nor will my nose have any feeling left in it. [5] Now a girl running near me will seek the far off finishing post with a sad face; surely she will seek the fire, she will want to get warm after the rapid race – back at home, she can warm up. [9] Finally we shall meet together; the full hall will smoke and our jokes will turn into steam. Trembling teeth will accept a cup of wine – and the longed-for day of vacation.

The original English verses:

I’ll go for a walk in the snow today –
I’ll be chilled to the tip of my toes –
My hair will be ice, my lungs burn with cold,
I’ll lose touch with the end of my nose.

A girl running by will have gone to the wire –
You can tell from the look on her face –
She’ll clearly be longing to get to a fire
And defrost at the end of the race.

Then in celebration we’ll gather en masse
And, while steam fills the air in the hall,
As our teeth chatter we’ll all raise a glass
To holidays, Christmas and all!

Paul Murgatroyd

Metre: accentual trochaic tetrameters

Peace, Peace, she cannot hear
Lyre or sonnet,
All my life's buried here,
Heap earth upon it.

Vates Resurgit

Raúl Lavalle

<i>Vates</i> , hic et nunc, vocábulum singulare pro plurali a me indocto intelligetur. Certe magnum opus Marci Viatoris ad omnes vates hodiernos extendebatur.	5
“Omnia finiunt” est quod dicunt – et vere dicunt – sapientes. Est pallida Mors, confíteor, sed est quoque Horatiana immortalitas sui géneris.	10
Sic etiam amicus noster, quem Davidem nuncupamus (Pecunia cognominatus, etsi pecuniam non déperit)	15
ἀνάστασιν donat <i>Vati</i> , ut omnes Latini vates (inter eos ego, péssimus, minoris artis quaesitor) linguam sacram Latialem sapientissime colant.	20

Metre: accentual trochaic tetrameters. (Sometimes the final foot has a dactylic rhythm, marked with an accent, as in the first line, ‘vocábulum’.)

Translation:

‘*Vates* rises again’

The word *vates*, here and now, will be understood by me as singular for plural. Really Mark Walker’s great labour was directed to all *vates* of today. [7] ‘Everything ends,’ is what the wise men say, and rightly. I know that ‘pale death’ exists, but it’s also a kind of special Horatian immortality. [12] And so now our friend whom we call David (his surname is Money, but he loves money not strongly) gives resurrection to *Vates*; so all Latin *vates* (I’m the worst of all, because I seek out a minor form of art) wisely will write in the holy language of Latium.

An Epigram on the Revival of *Vates*

Barry Baldwin

O quam laetus sum: redivivus numine *Vates*.

Post longum spatium temporis: ecce locus
Carminibus nobis scriptis noctuque dieque.

Sic visum superis, nostraque Musa iuvet.

Metre: elegiac couplets

Translation:

O, how happy I am: *Vates* has been revived in its spirit. After much time has passed, look, here is the place for our poems, composed night and day. Thus have the gods decreed, and may the Muse assist our efforts.

Amnis Felix

Bethany Abelseth

Felix me circumfluit illa fluentibus – ecce!
verbenas portans amnis aquis madidis.

Metre: elegiac couplet

Translation:

That happy river flows around me – look!
Carrying greenery with wet flowing waters.

Hendecasyllables: Vix Nervos Lyricos ...

Thomas McMath

Introduction:

While I intended to write things far more wanton, I penned this poem under duress, as a spectre accosted me for abusing his ancient tongue. These words playfully express a real anxiety and tension I feel when composing Latin verse, which is, perhaps quite obviously, a *lingua aliena* for me.

Vix nervos lyricos tetenderamus,
cum manes subito manus capessunt!
Vivum funus adest mihi canenti;
“Vos” inquit “trahitis meam quietem!
Vates priscus eram, recens renatus, 5
tu tortor nimium, parum poeta!
Plectro plangere desinas strepentes
chordas et chelyn ad solum cadentem
dirumpas, quoque barbaros repellas
singultus foribus viaque vocis!” 10
Fatus sic mihi; tum gradi videtur
sub umbras. Ego commoror superstes.
Quid nunc hendecasyllabos creemus?
Quare nec mea verba me relinquant?
Ite, versiculi licentiosi! 15
Dele perpetuum canendi amorem,
quisquis Musa, tenaxve quaeque Erinyes,
me cogas alienam amare linguam!

Metre: hendecasyllables

Translation:

Scarcely had I stretched my lyric strings,
When suddenly ghosts grasp my hands!
A living corpse stands before me as I sing;
‘You,’ says he, ‘are dragging off my repose!
I was a bard of old, freshly have I been reborn, 5
You are torturer too much, too little the poet!
Desist from plunking with pick the screeching
Chords, and as it falls to the earth shiver
Your shelled-lyre, and yet drive back your barbaric
Gaspings from the doors and path of your voice!’ 10
Thus he spoke to me; then he seems to step
Down beneath the shades. I, the witness, tarry a while.
How am I to make hendecasyllables now?

Why shouldn't my words leave me behind?
Go, my bawdy little verses!
Destroy my undying love of singing,
O whichever Muse, or each unyielding Fury,
You whosoever forces me to love a foreign tongue!

15

Note:

I have endeavored to keep most of my primary caesurae at the regular positions of the fifth and sixth syllables. In line 3, 'mihi' is read as an iamb, | u – | (e.g. Catullus 10.32, 15.5), although 'mihi' at line 11 is subject to the more common iambic shortening, | u u | (e.g. Catullus 10.3, 10.8, 10.18). While the initial two anacipites are most often Aeolic, | – – |, I have utilized | u – | (line 12; cf. Catullus 1.2) and | – u | (line 15; cf. Catullus 1.8).

Occasional Verses

Hirosius Harada

Editor's Note:

This selection of occasional verse has been put together from a number of earlier poems which Hiroshi kindly showed to me, as well as a few epigrams addressed to me personally in the course of our correspondence. Hiroshi has the habit of replying to practical messages with a nicely turned couplet: a habit which might have its limitations, but which is certainly distinctive.

(D. M.)

I

New Year Poems

1. Ad virum hodierno quoque tempore vere colendissimum (2014)

‘Roterodame’ vocant, ego te ‘Mundane’ vocabo:
omnibus usque tuo gentibus ore faves.
Chiliades veterum memoras collectaque verba;
colloquium quantum, littera quanta docet!
Nec minus amplector celeberrima prela Frobeni,
totque libris felix mergor, Erasme, tuis.

Metre: elegiac couplets

Translation:

‘To a man who truly deserves respect, even today’
They call you ‘Man of Rotterdam’, and I shall call you ‘Man of the World’: you always bless all nations with your eloquence. You recall the thousands of collected adages of the ancients. How much do your dialogues and letters teach! No less do I embrace the celebrated press of Froben; and I am happily submerged in so many books of yours, Erasmus.

Notes:

3: Erasmus, *Adagiorum Chiliades Tres* (Venice, 1508) contained 3,260 entries.

5: Johann Froben, printer of Basel; worked closely with Erasmus.

2. Ad amicum (2021)

Eheu per orbem claudimur impii
iustique, terret cum nova febrium
cohors: tibi invisum tumultum et
multiloquam fuge, care, mensam!

Metre: Alcaic stanza

Translation:

‘To a friend’

Alas, throughout the world both unjust and just are imprisoned, when a new set of fevers frightens them: dear friend, avoid the tumult that you hate and gatherings full of talk.

3. Epitaphium Hirosii ab ipso compositum (2025)

GENTE IAPO DIDICI LATIVM VENVSINAQVE AMAVI
CARMINA, NVNC ETIAM PACE SEPVLTVS AMO.

Hoc suum epitaphium vivus sibi praeparavit Kal. Ian. a. MMXXV Hirosius Harada annos natus LXX.

Metre: elegiac couplet

Translation:

‘A self-written epitaph for Hiroshi’

A Japanese, I learned about Latium, and loved the songs of Venusia; and still love them, buried in peace.

Hiroshi Harada prepared this epitaph for himself while still alive, January 1, 2025, at the age of seventy.

Note:

Venusia: birthplace of Horace.

II

Notes to the Editor

Selected e-mail correspondence from early 2025, ‘Hirosius Davidi Nummario s. d. p.’ (Hiroshi sends greetings to David Money).

Metre: elegiac couplets

1.

Nomine care tuo, simul et carissime lingua,
qua loqueris: grates accipe, amice, meas!

Translation:

Dear in name, most dear in choice of language: my friend, accept my thanks.

2.

Noli, docte, meos ridere et spernere versus,
quos mitto et mitti me voluisse pudet.

Translation:

Do not, learned sir, laugh at and scorn my verses, which I am sending – though ashamed that I wanted them to be sent.

3-4. On William Cooper’s anthology *Poematia Moderna*

3.

Carmina Villelmi studio tibi nota Latina
parva mei calami corrige, amice, precor.

Translation:

Please correct, my friend, the text of these small poems of mine, known to you through William's work.

4. To William Cooper

Musa recens surgit, surgit liber optimus omni
orbe gerens artes, auctor honeste, tuas.

Translation:

The modern Muse rises, and a fine book rises containing your skilful choices from all parts of the world, as its honest author.

5. On the death of Queen Elizabeth II, September 2022

Stella tuae gentis dudum, regina, fuisti.
nunc tecta es nebula, terra relictā gemit.

Translation:

You were the star of your people, dear queen; and now you are covered by a cloud, the earth that is left behind groans.

6.

Anglica lingua meis interpres versibus adsit!
auxiliisque tuis, editor alme, iuva!

Translation:

Let there be an English translation for my verses: kindly editor, please help me out with that!

7.

Me scripsisse iuvat potius quam scripta videre
edita: non quaero, quae tibi sumpta sient.

Translation:

It pleases me to have written things, more than to see things published: I do not enquire about whatever you may have selected.

Two Poems: Hendecasyllables and a Villanelle

Michiel Sauter

Introduction:

Maybe it's just my pet peeve but some compatriots have a tendency to flaunt their table manners or rather their lack thereof by blowing their nose in their napkin. To make matters worse, they leave their used napkin on the table or on their plate. I can't help but think of the ultimate consequences of this habit. Hence the satirical hendecasyllables of the first poem.

As for the second poem: I love formal poetry, so inspired by Dylan Thomas's poem 'Do not go gentle into that good night' I wrote my own villanelle on one of my favourite topics.

1. De mappa et vappa

Urbanum esse putas et eruditum
quod monstrare libens velis aperte
namque emungere te soles acute
personans epulas, fugans amicos
ac mucum mihi linteo relinquis;
immo, taeter, amore linteorum
culum tergere vis tuum, cacator!

5

Metre: hendecasyllables

Translation:

'The napkin and the parasite'

You think you are so civilized
which you are eager to show off
because you always blow your nose loudly
ruining the dinner party, chasing away my friends
and leaving your snot in my napkin;
even worse, admiring my napkins,
you want to use them to wipe your ass, you awful shithhead!

5

2. Diabolus me tenet

Diabolus me tenet vinculis
at tamen omnes fero cruciatus;
me mulcet miserum blanditiis.

Ac semper suis vincit vitiis
cum sim mea virtute violatus;
Diabolus me tenet vinculis.

5

Etsi non tantae magnitudinis
subigit iste daemon apparatus;
me mulcet miserum blanditiis.

Quandoque me castigat stimulis, 10
 resurgo quamvis grave vulneratus;
 Diabolus me tenet vinculis.

Rarissime videtur nobilis,
 amabilis, divinus et stellatus;
 me mulcet miserum blanditiis. 15

Sic patiens exsulto gaudiis
 dum fascinet me cattus iste gratus:
 Diabolus me tenet vinculis
 me mulcet miserum blanditiis!

Metre: accentual iambic pentameter, rhymed in the form of a villanelle. A villanelle is an accentual fixed verse form consisting of nineteen lines: five tercets and one final quatrain. It has only two rhymes (a and b) with alternating repetitions of the first (A) and the third (A') line along this strict pattern: AbA' abA abA' abA abA' abAA' e.g. 'Do not go gentle into that good night' by Dylan Thomas.

Translation:
 'The devil holds me'

The devil holds me in chains
 but yet I bear all the tortures;
 he soothes me, a wretch, with his flattery.

And always conquers with his vices
 when I am violated by my own virtue; 5
 The devil holds me in chains.

Although not of such great magnitude
 this charming demon subdues me;
 he soothes me, a wretch, with his flattery.

Whenever he chastises me with goads, 10
 I rise again, although gravely wounded;
 The devil holds me in chains.

He very rarely appears noble,
 lovable, divine and starlike;
 he soothes me, a wretch, with his flattery. 15

Thus patiently I exult with joy
 As long as this lovely cat fascinates me:
 The devil holds me in chains
 he soothes me, a wretch, with his flattery!

Haicua Tubingensia: Five Tübingen Haikus

Marco Cristini

Introduction:

Conferences and lectures are often a source of poetic inspiration, for me at least, especially when the subject is unable to command my undivided attention. Of course, writing a long poem in hexameters or even a decent elegiac couplet while trying to follow someone's musings on e.g. early medieval siege warfare or Lombard brooches is out of the layman's reach, but a good solution to turn a boring lecture into a pleasant hour is represented by haikus. Haiku is a type of short poetry that originated in Japan, consisting in poems of seventeen syllables, in three unrhymed lines of five, seven, and five syllables. Traditionally, haikus should evoke images of the natural world, but nowadays the range of subjects has expanded well beyond nature. There is a thriving tradition of Latin haikus, which has been investigated academically since the dawn of the third millennium (see e.g. S. Perkins, *The Heresy of Latin Haiku*, in *Classical Bulletin*, 78 [2002], pp. 67-70; A. Sacerdoti, *Haiku in latino: poetiche, codici e metodi di due esperimenti* (1999, 2016), in *Lingue antiche e moderne*, 6 [2017], pp. 33-53), and groups of people have been experimenting with haikus written in the language of Vergil in both Belgium (T. Deneire, H. Kempeneers & F. Terryn [eds.], *Orionem tangere. Latijns-Nederlandse haiku's. Lustrumbundel Harundine 1995-2010*, Antwerpen 2010) and Italy (J. Rubini, *De novo sodalicio Opaca Fronde quantumque conferat ad sermonem Latinum firmitus tenendum haicua (haiku) Latine pangere*, in *Salesianum*, 83 [2021], pp. 381-399).

Here, I would like to share with *Vates'* readers the results of a small poetic experiment of mine, which I carried out during my post-doc at Tübingen. While listening to a not-too-captivating late afternoon lecture about Philo of Alexandria in December 2021, I composed five haikus, two about the passing of time and three about the lecture itself.

1. Twilight

Dies quo fugit
hodiernus, laxatis
habenis Solis?

Where has the present day gone,
after slackening
the bridle of the Sun?

Note:

Beware of poetic licence: I had not seen the sun for a fortnight when writing this poem.

2. Nightfall

Verba quis audit
nox cum venerit atra,
astra dum latent?

Who can listen to a lecture
after dark night has come,
when stars are hiding?

Note:

As invariably happens in Tübingen in December, the sky was cloudy on that day.

3. A Loquacious Tautogram

Loquitur loquax,
loquaciter largiens
longam loquelam.

The loquacious (speaker)
dispenses loquaciously
her long talk.

Note:

This haiku is a tautogram, i.e. a text in which all words start with the same letter. It is dedicated to the speaker who entertained me on that day with her talk about Philo.

4. To ask or not to ask?

Quaestionem quis
quaerat quandam, querulam,
quanta querella?

Who may ask a kind of
querulous question,
with how much complaining?

Note:

This is another tautogram, which is dedicated to all people who ask questions to complain about social injustice, life's unfairness, the weather, taxes etc., even if the lecture has been (for instance) about Ostrogothic coinage.

5. In Your End is My Beginning

Acroasis est
acta, cuncti gaudemus,
nunc est edendum!

The lecture is over,
we all rejoice,
now it is time to eat!

Note:

After the late afternoon lectures, the participants used to eat dinner together. On that day, all were eager to carry out a friendly investigation of the restaurant's fillets after hearing so much about unfriendly Philo. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead (e.g. Mary Stuart and Horace, *Carmina* 1. 37) is purely coincidental.

Three Epigrams on Donald Trump

Kwasi Kwarteng

Introduction:

I first attempted Latin verse composition more than thirty years ago and I have practised this skill sporadically since then. I appreciate that the use of acrostics is more associated with Medieval Latin than the classical canon, perhaps defined as the period between 100 BCE and 150 CE. Yet there are instances found in Virgil and Horace, and more research, I understand, is being pursued in this area. As a versifier, I enjoy the challenge posed by incorporating acrostics in Latin verse. Such a stricture adds a note of whimsy and playfulness to this medium.

The second inauguration of Donald Trump was an event of which the whole world took notice. The bombast and showmanship of the President were well known. Much of the media were in anguish. I wrote two epigrams, one in elegiacs, the other in hendecasyllables, which perhaps reflected the mood of the President's MAGA followers. My third epigram is not really an epigram in terms of metre. It's a short three-stanza poem composed in Alcaics. It is more sombre and is less sympathetic to the President. The faults of language, style and diction are all my own. The English translations are somewhat stilted, but I felt it was important to aim for clarity in the translation, at the expense perhaps of elegance and euphony.

1.

Tu, puto, nunc aptus mores renovare priores,
Oppresso populo eT RUMPerē vile iugum,
Dicere namque potes bene quae sit femina nobis,
Et pariter tandem dicere quis sit homo.

Metre: elegiac couplets

Translation:

You, I think, are now suited to renew old values and to break a sordid yoke for an oppressed people. You can well tell us what a woman is, and, at length, you can tell us what a man is too!

2.

Urbs divisa fuit per omne tempus:
Sed tempus mihi peius hoc videtur.
Nam dux, qui Capitolio sedebit
Summo, creditur esse vir superbus;
Crudis aggreditur malisve verbis, 5
Ardescens agitare semper orbem.
Multi illum quotiens vocant tyrannum,
Infensis odiis metuque moti?
At plures tamen urbis illum amabant,
Cuius nunc populare dogMA GAudent! 10

Metre: hendecasyllables

Translation:

The city has always been divided. But today seems to be an even worse case. For the leader who will sit at the very top of the capitol is believed to be an arrogant man. [5] He makes coarse verbal assaults, in his eagerness to shake up the world. [7] How often do many call him a tyrant, themselves moved by hostile hatred and fear? But many people of the city, however, continue to love him, in whose populist doctrine they delight.

3.

Tu qui putasti, dux populi novi,
Ruptum potentem et iam veterem ordinem,
 Ut civis infracto solutus
 More nimis cohibente nullo,

Pacem requiras non sine gloria:
Tandem in remoto gramine milites
 Rebusque in adversis periti
 Usque petunt relevare bellum.

5

Minax et audax sed tibi Persicus
Persistet urbi ferre simul metus:
 Tu civitatis iam videris
 Ridiculum caPUT IN periclis!

10

Metre: Alcaic stanzas

Translation:

As the leader of a new people, you thought that the powerful old order has been broken with the effect that the citizen is now too free, with custom now breached, without any constraints. You seek peace, not without glory. [6] Finally, soldiers in a foreign field, tried in adversity, continually seek to limit war. [9] But the threatening and daring Persian continues to bring fear to you and to the city at the same time. Now you seem to be an absurd head of state in dangerous times.

In Sacerdotem

Michael Fontaine

Introduction:

I grew up outside New Orleans. One night in 2018 I learned that both – yes, both – the priests of my boyhood were [caught out as pedophiles](#) after I'd grown up and moved away and left religion behind. The one at my middle school was raping altar boys my age when I was a student there. I dodged a bullet but I guess some of my friends didn't.

The good reverend escaped justice by dying a few years before the exposé. I don't know what's become of the other, though I've never seen any evidence he went to jail for his crimes or was even defrocked. I guess he's still out there, maybe at a parish near you.

Facit indignatio versum (Outrage, righteous anger, inspires verse). In a burst of indignation, I wrote the epigram below the next morning. It's in hendecasyllabics (11 beats per line), which is the meter preferred by Martial, Catullus, and others to memorialize an infuriating situation that you're powerless to change. The pervasive wordplay belongs to the tradition of Baroque (northern Renaissance) Neo-Latin. The goal of the wordplay is to create a permanent association, and hence warning, between *praedicator* (preacher) and *paedicator* (pedophile).

Flagitiosum in Praedicatorem

Paedicator, habere praedicator.
Praedicas pueris piis, iis dum
Paedicas animos, et os, et anos.
Percidis pueros eisque κέρδος
Praedicis dare te, sacer sacerdos.
Paedicator, habere praedicator?
Paedicator habere, praedicator!

5

Metre: hendecasyllables

Translation:

‘Against an evil preacher’

Pedophile, you're regarded as a preacher.
You preach to innocent boys, and at the same time
You're bugging their minds and mouths and backsides.
You're raping boys, and yet tell all you're leading
them, you sinister minister, to God's realm.
Pedophile, you're regarded as a preacher?
No! Be known as a pedophile, preacher!

5

Notes:

In lines 1 and 6, *habere* is 2nd person singular passive indicative (= *haberis*, ‘be considered’).

In line 7, it's the passive imperative (‘be considered!’).

In line 4, the Greek word κέρδος (*kerdos*) means ‘gain’. In Christian contexts it implies eternal life (cf. [Philippians 1:21](#) ‘To live is Christ, and to die is gain (κέρδος).’).

Epigrammata Twitteriana

Gerd Allesch

Introduction:

A small selection of recent Twitter epigrams from Gerd Allesch, known in Latin as Gerardus Alesius: (@a_gerardus).

‘Twitter factum est epigrammaticis.’

Anno bis millesimo vicesimo coepi apud Twitter minutissima variis de rebus poemata publicare, quorum longe pars maxima (rariora etiam proverbia, sententiae, Haicua, Tanca, rhythmi, lyrica) sunt epigrammata; exstant iam milia versuum. Ex his paucula huius superiorisque anni exempla ordine chronologico (et quidem inverso) servato libet proferre. Versiones Anglicas fecit vir cum doctissimus tum ingeniosissimus Armand D'Angour (@ArmandD'Angour).

‘Twitter was made for epigrammatists.’

In the year 2020, I began publishing very short poems on Twitter about various subjects, the vast majority of which (with rarer proverbs, sayings, haikus, tankas, accentual poems, and lyrics) are epigrams; there are now thousands of verses. From these, it pleases me to present a few examples from this year and the previous one, arranged in chronological (and indeed reverse) order. The English translations were made by the highly learned and exceptionally talented Armand D'Angour (@ArmandD'Angour).

Metre: all of this selection are in elegiac couplets, except ‘In sepulcreto’, in hexameters.

Ad @grok

O Grok, Pieridum donum te miror adesse,
ipsam vel Musam, quae docet Hesiodum:
nam scis falsa loqui, scis multa simillima veris
et scis vera loqui, cunctaque mixta facis.

O Grok, I marvel at your gift, it is the Muses' treasure:
Perhaps the very Muse who spurs the Hesiodic measure!
For you know ‘how to tell false tales, and lies that seem so true’,
And how to speak true things - but always mixed with falsehood too.

Scurra

A populo praeses quando sit scurra creatus,
nil mirum, si nunc scurra agit id, quod agit.

‘The Joker’

When a joker's made a leader, by the people too,
It's no surprise the joker acts as jokers tend to do.

Ad quendam post divortium cum uxore factum

“Res tibi habeto tuas!” dicens - heu - nonne notabas
ad finem fieri, ut res tibi nulla foret?

‘The Divorcee’

‘Just keep what’s yours’: but did you guess that meant
That in the end you wouldn’t get a cent?

De avaris

Ingrati invisique homines sunt semper avari,
excepto si sunt forte tui proavi.

‘Misers’

Those misers with their money, aren’t they mean and horrid too?
Unless of course they’re relatives who’ve left their cash to you.

Ad Trullum hospitem

Hospes, Trulle, soles semper mihi gaudia ferre:
si minus adveniens, at tamen hinc abiens.

‘The Unwanted Guest’

Trullus, when you visit, you always make my day:
not so much by your coming, but when you go away!

Annus novus

Nonne aliquid nobis longis addiscitur annis?

“Deteriora valent deteriora sequi.”

Interdum econtra bona sed meliora sequuntur;
omnibus et vobis optima quaeque precor.

‘New Year Greeting’

Do we learn anything from our long years?

‘Yes, hard times can give rise to yet more tears.’

But sometimes good more goodness can invest;
And so I wish you all the very best.

Amans repulsus et iratus loquitur

“Numquam tu invenies alium similem mihi, crede!”

Illico et illa refert: “Magna quidem est mihi spes.”

‘The Angry Lover’
Says the angry rebuffed lover:
‘You’ll never find another man like me!’
To which ‘I really hope you’re right’ says she.

De Aulo

Assidue totam per noctem lucubrat Aulus.
Cur? ut devitet coniugis officium.

‘Avoidant Tactics’
Allcock stays up and burns the midnight oil.
Why? Conjugal desire’s gone off the boil.

In sepulcreto

Turba dolens barbīs demissis statque capillis.
Mortuus est quisnam? facile est id credere: tonsor.

‘Long haired Mourners’
The mourners throng with unkempt beards and hair.
Whose grave is it? Of course: their barber’s there.

De ducibus quibusdam

Dux senior cedit, quod mente est debilitatus,
alter at ille senex semper erat stupidus.

‘U. S. Elections’
Now mentally infirm, the older leader has resigned;
That other one is old and always was of fitful mind.

Ad M. de S.

Te laudat semper. Tu contra despicias illum.
Dicere ad hoc quid vis? – “Iure id uterque facit.”

‘Mutual Appraisals’
He’s always praising you, but you spurn him on sight.
What do you say to this? ‘We’re both behaving right.’

Ad Sextum

Non licet aedibus in nostris maledicere, Sexte:
non ergo de te dicere, Sexte, licet.

‘The Unmentionable’
Sextus, in our home we may not swear.
That’s why we never speak about you there.

Pacis amans

“Pacis amans tam pacificusque ego - crede mihi! - ut te
occidam, qui me pacificum esse negas.”

‘Aggressively Pacifist’
‘I’m such a pacifist, such love for peace I’ve got,
That I will kill you if you say I’m not.’

“Disce aut discede!”

Si “Disce aut discede!” iubes, discedere coges.
Dic potius: “Discas ut bene, lude simul!”

‘Learning with Fun’
‘Learn or leave!:)’ they’ll leave, if that’s your rule.
Better to say ‘Learn *and* have fun’ in school.

Poems of Nature and the Seasons

Takahiro Omiyama

Introduction:

Presented here are several poems which I previously posted on X (Twitter), and have now slightly revised, the first of which centers on cherry blossoms.

1. Gloria Veris

Gloria veris adest; cerasis plenissima rura
floribus ornantur; sive aethera, Phoebe, serenum
illustras radiis, tenebris seu mundus opacus,
gloria veris adest; veniens at ventus et imber
fundet humi flores; constat genus esse caducum;
vita brevis transit fugiens, ut somnia laeta.

Metre: dactylic hexameters

Translation:

‘The glory of spring’

The glory of spring has come; the countryside, most abundant with cherry trees, is adorned with their flowers; whether, Phoebus, you light the sky with your rays, or night’s darkness shrouds the world, the glory of spring has come; yet as they come, wind and rain will scatter the flowers to the ground; their kind is known to fade; life, brief and fleeting, passes like joyful dreams.

Note:

4-5: I referred to Rajmundo Kunić’s Latin translation of the *Iliad* (6.171-175).

2. Rosarium

Jam Zephyro miti spirante rosaria florent,
Frondebis atque virent montes, aestasque propinquat.
Saecula mutantur: Salomonia regna fuerunt,
lausque fuit regis; sed nunc quoque Chloris odora
en veniens hortis roseos diffundit honores.

Metre: dactylic hexameters

Translation:

‘The rose garden’

While gentle Zephyr’s breeze makes rose gardens bloom, and the hills are green with leaves, summer draws near. The ages turn: Solomon’s kingdom is no more, and the king’s glory has faded; yet even now fragrant Chloris arrives, spreading rosy splendor through the gardens.

Note:

Roses in Kyoto typically reach full bloom in late May.

3. Junius Japonicus

Cum viridi silvis terra caput extulit aestas,
imbribus assiduis florea rura madent;
flumina jam pluviis crescunt torrentia crebris,
mollior et fertur laeta per arva calor.

Metre: elegiac couplets

Translation:

‘June in Japan’

When summer raises its head from the earth made green by forests, the flowering countryside is drenched by ceaseless rains; the rivers now swell and rush with frequent downpours, and softer warmth flows through the fertile fields.

Note:

The rainy season in Japan, called *tsuyu*, occurs mainly in June and brings frequent rains, a motif long celebrated in Japanese poetry.

4. Frigus Amabile

Mane tempestas abiit; quieto
Sirius ponto vitreo lavatus
fulget ac flamma calidus perurit
arva furenti.

At lacu frigus procul urbe mansit;
et nemus Musae gelidum; profanam
vitat aestatem populumque, sacris
abditā silvis.

5

Lucus arcanus viret et vetustus;
hic lyrae dulcis sonus, hic poetam
umbra ramorum tegit, hic Camena
florete in aevum.

10

Metre: Sapphic stanzas

Translation:

‘Pleasant coolness’

In the morning the storm has passed; Sirius, bathed in the still glassy sea, shines and, hot with furious fire, consumes the fields.

[5] Yet by the lake, far from the city, coolness remained; and the Muse’s grove stays chilled; she shuns the profane summer and the crowd, hidden in sacred woods.

[9] A secret and ancient grove is green; here the sweet sound of the lyre resounds; here the leafy shade covers the poet, here Camena [the Muse] flourishes forever.

Note:

Inspired by Horace, *Odes* 1.1, 3.1 and 3.13.

2: Sirius, the Dog Star, associated with the sun’s heat in high summer.

5. Quattuor Anni Tempora

Ver:

Nocte fruens placida, cerasis florentibus, almi
tranquillo veris tempore solus eram.

Aestas:

Condita nube dies uda est, nec Sirius ardet;
imbrequ pulsa sonant tecta; quiete fruor.

Autumnus:

Tempora cum fugerent, libris latuere vacantem;
jamque cadunt frondes; vespere rura silent.

Hiems:

Ningit, et albescunt silvae, tueorque quietas;
flore carens ramus sustinet omnis onus.

Metre: elegiac couplets

Translation:

‘The four seasons of the year’

Spring:

Enjoying a tranquil night, with cherry trees in bloom, in the gentle season of cherishing spring,
I was alone.

Summer:

The day is hidden by wet clouds, and Sirius does not blaze; the roofs resound with beating rain;
I delight in quiet.

Autumn:

As time slipped away, I, lost in books, was unaware. Now the leaves fall; in evening the
countryside is still.

Winter:

Snow falls, and the woods grow white; I gaze at their rest; a whole branch, without bloom,
bears its burden.

6. Nix Matutina

Mane ningebat, nebulisque densis
conditi montis juga luce lustrat
Phoebus; at tellus nivibus geluque
frigida candet.

Metre: Sapphic stanza

Translation:

‘Morning snow’

In the morning snow fell, and the mountain peaks, veiled in heavy mists, are touched by
Phoebus’ light; and the earth below, chilled by snow and frost, shines white.

Sartoria Velox

Nathaniel Hess

Introduction:

The introductory paragraph, text, and verse translation below are taken from *Trivial Latin Poets*, trans. Wardour Street-English (London: Heinemann, 1911). I have supplied a more modern prose translation. Any resemblance to the song 'Blank Space' by Taylor Swift is purely coincidental.

The following elegy, transmitted in some manuscripts with the title *Spatium uacans*, represents at present the only extant verses of the poetess Sartoria Velox. Vanishingly little is known about her life and career. She was previously thought to have been a Republican author, but more recent evidence has cast doubt on this suggestion, and it is possible that she is the poet of this name to whom Martial addresses *Ep.* 1. 110. Quintilian alludes to the moralising severity of her critics ('odium seueriorum simul cum acerbitate false amantium excutere solebat', *Inst. Or.* 10. 1. 132), an indication perhaps of public performances as a *citharistria*, but even on this point we can hardly be certain.

Elegia Sartoriae Velocis

Non cupiunt pueri, nisi quae cruciatur, amorem:

Quae cupias, lacrimis admoneare meis.

Poscit ut aeternus sit amor; si deficit umquam,

Tunc Phaethonteo sorte Cupido cadit.

Tunc, cum finierit, poteris mihi saepe roganti

5

Dicere num fuerint gaudia digna malis.

Longae sunt tabulae, quis adsciscuntur amantum

Nomina: dementem me uocat omnis amans.

Nec false: lusoris amor me cogit in omne;

Tu mauis dubia ludere forte pila.

10

Nos ambo iuuenes, cuncta in temeraria prompti:

Tendimus ultra qua linea finit agrum.

Est uenus haec qualis te linquat semper anhelum,

Quaeque cicatrices addat, acerba, nouas.

Longae sunt tabulae, quis adsciscuntur amantum

15

Nomina: dementem me uocat omnis amans.

Nomine adhuc uocat, en, tabula haec, carissime amator;

Te manet: inscribam nomen, ocelle, tuum.

Metre: elegiac couplets

Translation:

Boys do not want love unless someone is tortured: if you want to love, be warned by my tears. He demands that love is forever; if it ever fails, then by the same fate as Phaeton Cupid will fall. [5] Then, when it is finished, you can in response to my constant questioning tell me whether the joy was worth the pains. Long are the lists in which the names of my lovers are inscribed: they all call me insane. [9] Not wrongly: the love of a player drives me to everything, whereas you perhaps prefer to play with a fickle ball. We are both young, and game for anything

reckless: we go beyond the line that divides the field. This love is such as would leave you breathless, and would pile up bitter new wounds. [15] Long are the lists in which the names of my lovers are inscribed: they all call me insane. The list has space still, dearest lover, for a name. It waits for you: I'll write your name.

Note:

10: *tu mauis*: Nashvillensis Lat. 1989 here reads 'te trauis'. I have retained the vulgate reading.

Verse translation (1911):

Swains want not love save when their lovers smart:

Hark what I wot of, ere thou giv'st thine heart.

Love goeth on for ever and always,

Or goes down else with pinions ablaze.

Tell me, when it is over – over, oh! –

5

If meet the high was to the sequent woe.

The ledger's long, wherein the names are writ

Of lovers past: all wray me out of wit.

Nor falsely, nay: for loves are ne'er the same:

I love the players, thou, I trow, the game.

10

For we are young and, yea, reckon not our rede;

Our heedless steps all bourne and pale exceed.

Till breathless thou art left – elsewise,

Thou bearest, raw and red, a cicatrice.

The ledger's long, wherein the names are writ

15

Of lovers past: all wray me out of wit.

Still yet blank space, my love, mayst thou behold

Remaining: there thy name let be inscribed.

The Eye of a Needle

David Money

Introduction:

Like ‘Two Poems of the Sea’, not a very recent work; I think it was composed in the summer of 2018, while doing some inept mending. My sewing has not improved since, and threading the needle remains a challenge.

Ocellus Acus

Vestibus antiquis peragro loca multa: foramen
Orditur subito rimaque crescit hians.
Consuere est urgens labor, et spes laeta suendi
Mox animum implebat: cuncta parata manent.
Filum habeo validum; fatalis scindere fila 5
In promptu est forfex; parvaque ridet acus.
Ridet acus tenuis: minimum mihi monstrat ocellum;
Perque oculos tales qui suit ire sapit.
Intrepido longum constanter pectore filum
Et manibus firmis insinuare decet. 10
Conor: conatus iterum cum pectore vanos
Iam trepido. Filum tam leve fallit acum.
Crassis rem digitis tento, tentoque per artum
Invita arte mala cogere fila locum.
Vix oculus minimum meus imbecillus ocellum 15
Adversantis acus cernere saepe valet.
Nictat acus: “Dominae sunt me tractare peritae,
Nautaque me rapidam callet acutus acum.
Instrumentorum nam sum regina, virorum
Terror stultorum, pungere corda potens. 20
Adiuvat infirmos homines patientia: celsam
Tandem me cauta tardius arte colent.”
Taliam nictavit mihi, vel nictasse videtur:
Quis nictantem oculum forteprehendat acus?
Conatus repeto lentos, dum denique filum 25
Felice a tactu transit et intrat acum.
Cur de divitibus dicendum est atque camelis?
Miraculi saltem fila tenere satis.
Non bene, sed rapido reparatur rima vigore:
Plura parandi illud tempora sumpsit opus. 30
Tardior at pugna est consutum carmen ineptis
Forsitan e pannis, gratior atque labor.

Metre: elegiac couplets

Translation:

‘The eye of a needle’

I travel around many places in old clothes; a tear suddenly opens up and a gaping hole grows wider. It is an urgent task to sew it up; and a hope of successful sewing soon filled my heart, as everything I need is to hand. [5] I have some strong thread; the fatal scissors are ready to cut threads; and a little needle laughs. The thin needle laughs, and shows me its tiny eye. Through such eyes as this, the man who sews knows how to go. [9] One needs to slip the long thread through with a constantly fearless heart and firm hands. I try to do it; I repeat my vain attempts with a heart that is now fearful. So light a thread escapes the needle. [13] I am trying to do this thing with fat fingers; and I am trying to force unwilling threads through a narrow place with inadequate skill. My eye can often hardly see the tiny eye of the recalcitrant needle.

[17] The needle winks at me: ‘Ladies are skilled at dealing with me; and the sailor is sharp enough to be good with me, a fast needle. For I am the queen of tools, the terror of foolish males, powerful enough to pierce their hearts. Patience assists unskilled people: they will at last cultivate my majesty more slowly, and with cautious art.’ [23] That is the sort of thing she winked to me, or seemed to wink: for who, perhaps, is able to catch the winking eye of a needle? I repeat my slow attempts, until finally the thread, by some happy touch, goes through and enters the needle.

[27] Why do people talk of rich men and camels? It is enough of a miracle for me for a needle to hold thread. The hole is repaired, not well, but with rapid vigour: that business of getting things ready took more time than the actual task. [31] But it has been a slower battle to sew together this poem, perhaps from inept patches: and also a more pleasing labour.

What Excites Me

Various Authors

Introduction:

Contributors were invited to consider the question, ‘What excites me about reading Latin verse (of any period)?’ Responses should be brief, around 200 words (minimum 150, maximum 350).

As readers will see, these initial responses take a wide range of approaches; it is hoped that future contributors will offer still further variety, and that taken together, these short pieces will make up a fascinating tapestry of the enduring attractions of Latin verse.

Items are numbered (and can be referred to as *Vates* WEM 1 etc); authors’ names are at the end of their contribution.

1. Brevity, sharpness, musicality. I noticed all three, in three words: ‘Sceptra tenes meritis’ (‘you hold the sceptre(s) on your merits’). They were written to a king, William III of England, who may never have read them, by a much more obscure William, Worts (or Woorts), undergraduate of St Catharine’s Hall (later College) in Cambridge, as a contribution to a book of verses commemorating a peace treaty of 1697.

In three words, this summed up a highly controversial political situation. (And one need not take sides on old quarrels, to admire the poetry.) It is the essence of what became known as the ‘Glorious Revolution’ in England: a king who did not deserve power was removed; one who could indeed control several kingdoms replaced him, though not without bloodshed. A noun (neuter accusative plural); a simple verb; and a one-word description of how and why he managed it: together, they make an attractive dactylic half-line (the first part of a hexameter, before the caesura). I don’t know a great deal about Worts: he was the son of a university official, earned an MA in 1702, and died sadly young in 1709, leaving generous benefactions (including to build a causeway, still named after him). But I salute those three words.

See: David Money, ‘Political Poetry from late Stuart Cambridge: Cambridge poems on the peace of 1697’, in Gesine Manuwald and Lucy R. Nicholas, eds., *An Anthology of Neo-Latin Literature in British Universities* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), pp. 271-98 (passage 5, line 5: p. 286, note on pp. 295-96).

David Money

2. Implication. An epigram, preferably a distich, particularly when combining brevity and colourless vocabulary with interpretative ambiguity. Take, for example, John Owen 2.146 *ad quendam, quod nullos sibi similes liberos gigneret, conquerentem*:

*visne tibi similem generari ex coniuge prolem?
uxorem primo quaere tibi similem.*

A neat poem, ironically countering the literal meaning of *coniunx* (the wife is joined to all but the husband) and effectively repeating and reworking the adjective *similis* (first understood as “similar in appearance”, later, as “similar in character / appearance” according to interpretation). No metaphors, learned periphrases or other diversionary occlusions. A situation briefly and simply sketched in the opening line, receives its supposed solution at the conclusion. Lessing’s famous *Erwartung / Aufschluß* division perfectly employed. But what is

the solution? A good example of this type should contain more than one, a better should allow the imagination further licence.

Solution 1 (ethical kinship) – Here the reader is to imagine that the cuckolded husband is advised to replace his adulterous spouse with a faithful wife, both then sharing a complimentary sexual continence guaranteeing legitimate offspring.

Solution 2 (apparent kinship) – Here the reader assumes that as the husband will inevitably be cuckolded, he should pick a wife similar in appearance to lend some credence of legitimacy to her children. This reading naturally provokes interest in the unstated cause. Is it misogynistically suggesting that women are habitually unfaithful and cuckoldry is the inevitable outcome of marriage? Or does it rather attack some perceived flaw in the husband: impotence or general unattractiveness, etc.?

So far, so good. But Owen has rather gilded the lily. The provision of unnecessary background details in the title has restricted the range of readings that the couplet might suggest. As the poem itself merely states that the couple are childless (although the title shows that a number of bastard children have been produced), it could have suggested that one or either was uninterested in (or naively incompetent at) the type of coitus that would result in pregnancy or that the wife's age prohibited it (prepubescent / wealthy *vetula*). Less is certainly more in the world of epigram.

Keiran Carson

3. Looking at present-day history through the prism of Neo-Latin poetry. Nowadays, we are used to thinking that contemporary events can be approached through a great variety of means, ranging from academic books to newspaper articles, films and even YouTube videos. I think that most people would not consider Latin verse in this context. However, from a historical perspective, this would be a notable exception, as Latin works of poetry have been one of the main gateways to historical events for many centuries. Why? Because history does not have two dimensions, like a photograph, but is made of the people, by the people, for the people, to paraphrase Lincoln. So, it is also about love, hate, hope, fear, regrets, memories and – why not? – imagination. All these emotions are more easily conveyed through poetry than through traditional prose. Neo-Latin poetry offers twenty-three centuries of literary depth to add emotional and intertextual layers to what we experience.

Two examples will suffice. The first is 9/11, the first historical event which I clearly remember (I was a child at the time). John K. Newman (1928 – 2020), Professor of Classics at Illinois, described the fall of the Twin Towers in a moving Latin poem entitled *Novi Eboraci ruinae*, whose opening lines are modelled after Venantius Fortunatus' *De excidio Thoringiae*. I discovered Newman's verses after studying the sixth-century poem by Venantius and think that they convey the feelings of those who lived through that terrible day more powerfully than countless books. The same goes for the Austrian poet Martin Freundorfer's verses about the army trucks that carried away the bodies of those killed by COVID in Bergamo (Italy), echoing Horace, *Carmina* 3. 30 in the opening line. *Raedarum series incedit longa silensque / horridaque it vacuis miraue pompa viis* ('A long and silent procession of lorries advances, / and it moves, dreadful and wondrous, through the empty streets'). This is how I will always remember the pandemic.

Bibliography: John Kevin Newman, *Novi Eboraci ruinae*, in *Latinitas* 50 (2002), pp. 135-140; Martin Freundorfer, *Raedarum series incedit*, in *Carmina Hodierna* 7 (2020 [actually 2021]), p. 5.

Marco Cristini

4. For someone who has spent most of his professional career working on the poetry of ancient Rome, a literature that has been known and discussed for many centuries, it is exciting indeed to encounter Latin texts which engage with and imitate that poetry but are completely unknown and unstudied.

A nice example is a short poem by the Veronese poet Angela Nogarola (1380 – 1436) in Latin hexameters, transmitted in a single manuscript, recently discovered in an Italian library by a young colleague who kindly sent me a copy of the text. It is addressed by Nogarola to her tutor, the poet Antonio Loschi, and is likely to date to the early years of the fifteenth century.

In it Nogarola hails Loschi as a poet whose talents are much greater than her own and who is capable of reviving the great classical verse of Vergil, Horace, Lucan and Statius, or (as she puts it) ‘renewing the shrines of the sacred Muses, / Long now (shame to tell) disgracefully dilapidated,/ Easing their grating doors long oppressed by rust’; she ends by asking him to share his poetic capacity with her (‘do not decline to open your fountain to me’).

This elegant poem shows that she did not ask in vain, with its refined and classicising language and its allusions to a range of major classical Roman poets. It is a key piece of evidence for early active participation by a female poet in the poetic project, begun by Petrarch in the previous century, of fully reviving classicising Latin poetry in Italy. Here we have a memorable moment in the history of the recreation of Roman poetry in the new context of the age of Chaucer as well as in the history of writing by women in Europe – exciting indeed.

Stephen Harrison

5. Taking the whole tradition of Latin poetry into consideration, from Plautus (d. 184 BCE), to Pascoli (1855 – 1912), and beyond to the present moment, the first thing that excites me about Latin poetry, and especially the writing of Latin poetry, is that it allows one to enter into, and to participate in, a literary/cultural conversation that has been going on for more than two thousand years, and over an immense range of cultures and geographical locations (including virtually all of Europe, North Africa, the Americas, Russia, and Japan), and to participate in the same language in which this conversation has been conducted.

There are three other elements in the writing of Latin poetry that particularly fascinate me. The first is simply the challenge of conveying a modern sensibility, as well as the conditions of modern life, in an ancient language. A fine example of the former is Ericus Livonius (1937 – 2004); of the latter, Harry Schnur (1907 – 1979), especially his Menippean satire on the Berlin Wall.

The second element of Latin poetry that fascinates me is a technical one. Latin offers a dazzling variety of meters, far beyond anything found, for instance, in English. As one reads or works with these meters, one learns that each has its own individual ‘personality’. Getting to know these metrical personalities, with all their expressive possibilities, is a great treat for the reader, and working with them is a great (though challenging) pleasure for the versifier.

The third special feature of Latin poetry is the freedom of word order. As the words of a Latin sentence can be placed in almost any order whatever, one can orchestrate them into extraordinary patterns of sound, image, and meaning. This freedom is maximally exploited in poetry. It can result in verbal patterns of amazing expressiveness and beauty. Horace in his *Odes* is perhaps the supreme master of this remarkable linguistic feature.

These three aspects of Latin poetry make it endlessly fascinating for me.

Brad Walton

6. Horace's wonderful *Odes* are a magnet for Latinists, but it is not always obvious why they inspire such love. One reason for me is that what they tell us can be both transparent and mysterious. So in *Odes* 1.11, for instance, Horace is talking to a young woman, Leuconoe ('white thought'), and saying that she should enjoy the moment – *carpe diem*. Is this a piece of innocent philosophical advice? Or is it more of a chat-up line? The imagery of being safe indoors while the storm outside batters the shore adds to the sense of place. It excites me to translate the poetry into straightforward English verse. I have done so in this case, replacing the addressee's name with 'Bianca' ('white'):

Don't ask, Bianca, since we may not know,
 what end the gods decree for me or you:
 don't try to read the future in the stars.
 It's better to accept whatever comes:
 whether we're bound for many winters more
 or whether this one, pounding on the rocks
 that line the Tuscan shore, will be our last.
 Be sensible and strain the wine instead,
 and cut back long-term plans. While we converse,
 ungenerous time runs by. Enjoy today!
 And place no trust in what tomorrow holds.

Armand D'Angour

7. My example is one of many that could be taken from John Milton's endlessly fascinating Latin verse. In 'Mansus', Milton is enthusing to his new Italian friend, Manso, about an epic poem he wants to write, to bring him fame. It will tell of the ancient kings of Britain, from the Trojan Brut to Arthur of the Knights of the Round Table. The passage foresees obstacles to fulfilment but ends on a vision of success. The closing line embodies his excitement, because in it he joins in Arthur's presumed triumph. 'I shall smash those Saxons . . .' Read the whole sentence aloud, and you can feel the obstacles closing in on the poet, like the clauses of an insurance policy, only for him to feel the clarity of purpose, which then glides into Milton joining in the triumph, the Saxon-bashing. Feel the lovely release of zest in the last line of the passage (line 84).

O mihi si mea sors talem concedat amicum
 Phoebaeos decorasse viros qui tam bene norit,
 Si quando indigenas revocabo in carmina reges, 80
 Arturumque etiam sub terris bella moventem;
 Aut dicam invictae sociali foedere mensae,
 Magnanimos Heroas, et (O modo spiritus adsit)
 Frangam Saxonicas Britonum sub Marte phalanges.

"O may it be my good luck to find such a friend, who knows so well how to honour Phoebus' followers, if ever I call back into poetry the kings of my native land, [81] and Arthur, who set wars waging even under the earth, or tell of the great-hearted heroes of the round table, which their friendship made invincible, and – if only the inspiration would come – smash the Saxon phalanxes beneath the impact of the British charge."

John Hale

8. What excites me about Latin poetry has changed over the years, and as I've learned more about it. In the beginning, it was the excitement of starting to hear ancient voices. Soon it became the ability to experience through poetry ancient sights, sounds and feelings – and learning that the last of these are not so different from our own. I remember the excitement of discovering the world behind and around the poem, but also the solemn truth that the poem would remain a work of art regardless of our ability to say who wrote it, when and why. I can't remember when I began to wonder seriously about how the Roman poems which I had studied in school had made it all the way through history down to us; they seemed so small, and to refer at times to such oddly specific things – a handkerchief, a sparrow, the purple ponytail of a king – that it seemed all but impossible that people should have preserved them for so long.

And a new excitement came with the romance of transmission – of monks and manuscripts, of humanists and printing presses, and the ways in which Latin poetry spread its tendrils through all of them. Because, it seems, wherever Latin poetry went, there will more Latin poetry be found, and that this proves true across time as well as space. My encounters with later Latin poems remain exciting for the same reasons as before, for the windows they offer onto worlds of thought and sensation, but also for the added patina of poetic memory they all bear.

Latin poetry is always referring to itself, to its monuments, and this echoing opens up a rich world of striking poetic effects. In the Latinate poetry of the Renaissance, which includes the vernacular works written by humanistically trained poets, 'it is possible for one to perceive, while looking at one object only, diverse images of many things simultaneously' (Marco Girolamo Vida, *De Arte Poetica* (1527), III. 62-63, trans. Ralph G. Williams (1976): 'Nam diversa simul datur e re cernere eadem / Multarum simulacra animo subeuntia rerum.'). At the heart of early modern poetics is a drive to repurpose images and words from ancient models for modern contexts. Perspectival inversions, transferred imagery, and the overlaying of connotations across a gap of centuries bear witness to an art of writing conceived as an ongoing conversation across time (itself a suitable definition of the humanities as a whole). For me, then, what excites me about Latin poetry is on the one hand the journey the poems have made, the worlds they left behind and those they passed through, and on the other, the family they form through the centuries, calling each to each.

Anton Bruder

. . . and a contrary view:

What *fails* to excite me

9. I told the editor I was more mystified than excited by Latin poetry, but he asked me to write something anyway to explain why. No doubt it is mainly because I am lazy and Latin poetry is hard. In place of the lucidity of Tacitus and the plain-speaking lies of Caesar, the student is faced with tortured, or at least torturous, word ordering and endless footnote-spewing allusions.

Then there is the subject matter. *Arma virumque cano* – strong opening, but not true. Aeneas isn't a man, he's a superhero, and superhero stories rapidly incur diminishing returns. As for all the other mythology, there's way too much of it. Like T20 cricket or relationship

podcasts, and equally memorable. Love poetry? A double blind trial may be impossible, but research could surely illuminate whether people are more likely to find love by writing poetry or despite doing so. I suspect the latter.

‘Carmina Burana’ is (are?) fun to sing, but like Bob Dylan’s Nobel-winning lyrics, does it really work without the tunes? I suppose one has to admire the public schoolboys of Georgian England who could dash off a publishable paean to the latest military hero. How did they do it? Was it the corporal punishment, or not having to learn chemistry at the same time?

As for today’s Neo-Latin poetry, I know I am not fit to comment. In that regard, I am *magnas inter opes inops*, as (I am told) wrote Horace.

Richard Rook

A Letter to Readers

Marco Cristini

Towards a Conspectus of the Latin Poets of the Twenty-First Century

I would like to inform you about a project I have undertaken, which I intend to bring to completion in the coming months. I am currently collecting contemporary Latin poems (i.e. those published from the year 2000 to the present day) in order to compile a conspectus of the Latin poets of the twenty-first century, so that I can bring up to date the overview of Latin poets from the twentieth century that was written by Jozef IJsewijn and later expanded by Dirk Sacré.¹ In my conspectus, I intend not only to list the names of the authors, but also to include the title of each poem, its metre (except for the minor ones), and the book or journal in which the verses were published. In this way, all people interested in contemporary Latin poetry will immediately find the poems they are looking for and learn where they were published.

I have already listed all the poems that appear in the main present-day Latin periodicals (both those that are still in publication and those that are no longer active), such as *Epistula Leonina*, *Latinitas*, *M.A.S. (Memento Audere Semper)*, *Melissa*, *Pro Lingua Latina*, *Renascens*, *Rumor Varius*, *Vates*, and *Vox Latina*. I have also consulted many books published by living Latin poets, marveling at how many Latin verses have been written from the year 2000 to the present. Indeed, I have found nearly 400 poets and more than 7,000 poems, and the number continues to grow daily.

However, I fear that many poems may have escaped my attention, having been published in newspapers, local periodicals, university newsletters, or *Festschriften*. For this reason, I kindly ask you to write to me (in Latin or English, as you prefer) if any of you have published Latin verses from the year 2000 to the present day. My email address is marco.cristini92@gmail.com

I look forward to hearing from you.

Epistola Lectoribus

De conspectu poetarum Latinorum saeculi vigesimi primi conscribendo

Marcus Cristini lectoribus candidis s.p.d.

Certiores vos facere velim de incepto quod adgressus sum quodque mensibus proximis futuris ad finem ducere velim. Statui enim carmina Latina recentissima (ab anno 2000 usque ad diem hodiernum edita) colligere et conspectum poetarum Latinorum saeculi vicesimi primi componere, ut conspectum illum de poetis Latinis saeculi vicesimi a Iosepho IJsewijn olim conscriptum et dein a Theoderico Sacré auctum pro virili parte ad diem hodiernum perducerem. In conspectu meo non solum nomina auctorum, sed inscriptionem quoque cuiusque carminis, metrum (minoribus exceptis) et librum commentariumve, quo typis versus traditi sint, ab

1 J. IJSEWIJN, *Conspectus poetarum Latinorum saeculi vicesimi*, in *Euphrosyne*, 3 (1961), pp. 149-190; J. IJSEWIJN, *Conspectus poetarum Latinorum saeculi vicesimi: auctarium*, in *Palaestra Latina*, 34 (1964), pp. 384-389; D. SACRÉ, *Conspectus poetarum Latinorum 1900-1960: Supplementum*, in *Humanistica Lovaniensia*, 39 (1990), pp. 328-339; D. SACRÉ, *Conspectus poetarum Latinorum 1900-1960: Supplementum alterum*, in *Humanistica Lovaniensia*, 51 (2002), pp. 301-310.

oblivione vindicare in animo habeo. Hoc modo lectores futuri Latinae poesis cupidi titulos carminum et ubi foras dati sint statim cognoscent.

Iam laudavi poemata omnia, quae leguntur in commentariis periodicis Latinis et adhuc exstantibus et vita functis maioris momenti, qui sunt *Epistula Leonina*, *Latinitas*, *M.A.S. (Memento Audere Semper)*, *Melissa*, *Pro Lingua Latina*, *Renascens*, *Rumor Varius*, *Vates* et *Vox Latina*. Libros quoque poetarum Latinorum recentiorum legi et accurate recensui, miratus quam multi ab anno 2000 usque ad diem hodiernum versus Latinos pepigissent. Nam fere 400 poetas, carmina vero plusquam 7000 inveni et numerus cotidie crescit.

Timeo autem, ne carmina haud pauca in actis diurnis, commentariis periodicis vernaculis, ephemeridibus universitatum studiorum vel miscellaneis ad doctum quendam celebrandum (vulgo *Festschriften*) edita me effugerint. Qua de causa vos oro, lectores maxime honorabiles, ut mihi scribatis (sermone Latino vel Anglico), si quis vestrum versus Latinos quavis ratione exaratos ab anno 2000 usque ad diem hodiernum publici iuris fecerit. Inscriptio mea electronica est marco.cristini92@gmail.com.

Curate, ut optime valeatis.

Opportunity Knox

Barry Baldwin

Ronald Knox (1888 – 1957) was an outstanding classicist, a distinguished (and fashionable) Catholic priest and theologian, most reputed for his translation (1950) of Jerome's Vulgate Bible, a pioneering writer of detective stories, prolific broadcaster, essayist, and journalist, plus occasional trilingual poet.

For his full story, Evelyn Waugh's 1959 biography – indeed veering frequently towards hagiography – still leads the field. Literary matters not of primary concern to Waugh are richly dealt with in David Rooney's *The Wine of Certitude: A Literary Biography of Ronald Knox* (2009). These are complemented by (online) papers issued from The Ronald Knox Society of North America.

Knox has several claims on the attention of *Vates* readers. He was educated at Eton, where he published (1906) his first volume of verses (*Signa Severa*, see below) in English, Greek, and Latin, and at Oxford (Balliol), whence his second collection, *Iuxta Salices* (1910), winning *en route* all the major classical scholarships, including the Gaisford Prize for Greek Verse Composition (1908) and (most to the point, here) the Chancellor's Prize for Latin Verse Composition (1910).

In 1911, Knox was hired as private classical tutor to future friend and prime minister Harold Macmillan. Macmillan entered Eton in 1906, coincident with Knox's departure. When Knox was dismissed by Macmillan's mother, suspected of trying to convert his pupil to Papism, a new classics tutor was hired, in the shape of A. B. Ramsay (often spelled 'Ramsey' in books and articles). Known as 'The Ram', he had been Macmillan's chief classics beak at Eton. When Macmillan had to leave Eton for health reasons, Ramsay would go weekly or more up to London to correct his Greek and Latin verses. Macmillan would later attribute any success in composition to Ramsay's teaching.

Macmillan is, of course, famous for reading Aeschylus in Greek whilst in the trenches of the Great War. Knox in his *Spiritual Aeneid* (and Waugh) always referred to Macmillan as 'C'. Why? No explanation in Waugh. Certainly not to be confused with the 'C' who was Neil Burnside's boss in *The Sandbaggers*. The easiest presumption to the outsider (always in danger of missing something intimate) is to see it as relating to Catholicism, the creed to which Knox was allegedly nudging his pupil. By the way, is there any chance that any of 'Supermac's' efforts lurk in some undetected repository?

'The Ram' deserves extra attention. He is described in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* as 'Probably the most significant British Latin poet of the twentieth century.' He also had a good press in Leicester Bradner's *Musae Anglicanae: A History of Anglo-Latin Poetry 1500-1925* (1940, with Supplement in *The Library* 22, June 1967), summing up 'The quality of his work is another tribute to the success of the Eton classical tradition in producing Latin poets'. Ramsay, who moved from Eton to a controversial appointment as Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, published *Inter Lilia* in 1920, followed (1925) by *Ros Rosarum*. Both celebrated Eton boys and Eton life. Bradner speaks warmly of both, dubbing *Inter Lilia* 'delightful', providing lavish quotations. The first was also celebrated with concomitant specimens as an 'accomplished example of the ancient and honourable Eton tradition of verse-writing' in the *Spectator* review (July 3, 1920, p. 29, available online).

Subsequently (and beyond Bradner's cut-off point of 1925) Ramsay published *Frondes Salicis* (1935 – willows are also celebrated in Knox's second collection, *Iuxta Salices*), *Flos Malvae* (1946), and *Ros Maris* (1954) – all of Ramsay is on offer (at the usual inflated prices)

on Amazon. Of Ronald Knox and his Latin verses in Bradner there is no trace – *habent sua fata libelli* ('books have their destinies').

However, Knox and Ramsay would once again combine. In 1920, there appeared what purported to be *Q. Horati Flacci Carminum Liber Quintus*. Waugh (p. 187) claims without naming names that this publication 'hoaxed some critics', surely hard to credit – did these gullible people not ask where the poems had suddenly come from? This was the brainchild of no less than Rudyard Kipling, described at length by David Page in *The Kipling Journal* (June 2003, available online), along with A. D. Godley (see my piece on him in the inaugural issue of *Vates* (2010)), and J. U. Powell, a notable composer, winner of the Gaisford Prize for Greek Verse, albeit the present item is omitted from his notice in the *Dictionary of British Classicists* (2004). Knox and Ramsay completed the team. Extra amusement was provided by the Latin preface by Knox and Godley, with its litany of such supposed 'authoritative sources' as the codices *Grosspaniandrumpinacotheca* and *Padoviensium Trentunosettembrense*.

Waugh (pp. 47-48, 50, 64, 74-75, 89, 147, 149, 187, 210, 222, 336, 350) has various observations on Knox's classical verses, beginning 'He wrote in Latin because he enjoyed it, and if this uncommon pursuit caused pride to his father, he enjoyed that too.' At the tender age of ten, with a serial Latin drama *Publius et Amilla* already under his belt, he hit off a lengthy propempticon to Florence James, a friend of his sisters. Waugh quotes the first stanza from the family magazine, the *Bolliday Bango*, produced and edited by brother Eddie:

Florens Jacobi cara sororibus
Fortuna qualis mobilis, hinna abis;
Hic affuisti quinque soles
Tempus et esse breve en videtur.

Then, in Waugh's words, 'bribed with chocolates, he reluctantly and laboriously produced an English version':

O Florence James to both my sisters dear
Like fickle fortune hence you go away
You here were present during five long days
And lo! the time doth seem to be right short.

The Boer War would presently supply rather weightier themes. Along with various English poems, Knox came up with:

Est a militibus iam capta Pretoria nostris
Nec minus hinc longe denique Kruger abest
Oribus Anglorum laudentur nomina Bobbis...

('Pretoria has already been captured by our troops, and Kruger is just as long gone. Let English mouths praise the names of Bobby...') *Bobbis* refers to Lord Roberts, whose victories Knox would celebrate in an English ode beginning and ending with a familiar 'Bobby'.

A 1903 letter to his episcopal father includes *sperabam meliora sed et peiora timebam* ('I was hoping for the best but fearing the worst'), billed as 'a line of my own'. Knox the scholar can be seen in action expunging from a chapel wall the line *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori* ('It is sweet and fitting to die for one's country'), this famous Horatianism being here 'attributed, by an oversight, to Ovid'.

As a school teacher, Knox realized that for older boys waiting to go into the trenches, 'it was hopeless to try to interest these in Latin verses.' However, for the junior boys, he tried

harder. Along with jingles in the manner of Kennedy's *Latin Grammar*, he followed a procedure described thus by Waugh: 'There is always an element of the jigsaw puzzle in schoolboys' Latin verses. Ronald emphasized this by giving each of his form an envelope individually addressed to him, containing hundreds of Latin words, typed on separate slips of paper, and a summary of the story which the words could be arranged to tell. The boys, the cleverer ones at any rate, "beheld" in the words of one of them, "Latin verse being created before our incredulous and fascinated eyes".' (We would be glad to hear from *Vates* readers about how they were taught Latin verse composition.)

Knox encountered similar difficulties when preaching to congregations. In Waugh's words, 'Very few could appreciate his classical verses,' adding in parentheses, 'indeed from 1926 he let that talent lie almost idle,' a very misleading statement, as shall later be seen. No space for lengthy quotations of the poems. Mercifully, both *Signa Severa* and *Iuxta Salices* are available online. Slim pickings, though. The first volume (its title is from Lucretius 5. 1190) has but two Latin efforts, both in Asclepiads, one on the College Debating Society, the other – as far as it has a point – some kind of parody of the *Floreat Etona* genre. There's also a Greek poem, 'The Eleven', complete with a jokey critical apparatus note on a textual lacuna.

No Latin poems at all in the second collection, its classical content limited to a long and tedious Greek one, 'Proper Names'. The riches come in the posthumously published *In Three Tongues* (1959, edited by L. E. Eyres, friend and fellow schoolteacher). Colin Leach provides a detailed survey, with lashings of quotations, in his enthusiastic review ('This book is all jam, with no bread-and-butter') in *Classical Review* 10 (1960), 263, a panegyric leavened only by the correction of one apparent small metrical slip. Knox's range was astonishing, from Greek versions of 'Auld Lang Syne' and 'Jabberwocky' to an Astinol Pine Bath Advertisement in Latin elegiacs. The brevity and wit of a limerick provides us with a finale:

'There was a young man of Devizes,
Whose ears were of different sizes;
The one that was small
Was no use at all,
But the other won several prizes.'

(Readers may know an alternative version in which 'balls' replace 'ears'.)

Visas erat; huic geminarum
Dispar modus auricularum;
Minor haec nihili;
Palma triplici
Iam fecerat altera clarum.

Editor's Note: Judging the Ram

David Money

Barry Baldwin was kind enough to submit the short piece above, originally drafted in 2018, soon after the revival of *Vates* was suggested. In reading through the draft, I was struck by the description of A. B. Ramsay cited from the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*: 'Probably the most significant British Latin poet of the twentieth century.'

‘Really? Is that so.’ I thought. And a moment or two later: ‘I probably wrote that myself.’ It is now some time ago: the new *DNB* appeared in 2004, and articles were obviously submitted before that. So it is well over twenty years since I gave the ‘Ram’ that compliment. Do I still agree with it? Yes, I think so. Though perhaps more for lack of serious competition, than because I would rate the ‘Ram’ especially highly, by the standards of Neo-Latin from other centuries or countries.

I wonder (slightly) if others would agree with that; and I wonder (rather more) what people from other countries might say in answer to the question: ‘Who was the most significant twentieth-century Latin poet from your country?’ The answers might make an interesting series of short articles for *Vates*. How one judges such things perhaps depends quite a lot on the criteria one uses. For me, being prolific, and a good classicist, and metrically competent are not necessarily enough; I am more impressed by those writers who have something genuinely original to say, and an imaginative way of saying it.

One might make a case, for example, for Thomas Gray as being the ‘best’ British poet of the eighteenth century, in either English or Latin, or both – I am not saying that I would agree with it, just that the argument could be made – despite his relatively small output in both languages, compared to some other really productive authors. The question seems more about quality than quantity, though a certain minimum output might be required to qualify as a serious Latin poet, and people will inevitably disagree on assessments of poetic quality.

I am not suggesting any kind of competition between nations – some sort of EuroLatin Song Contest, complete with telephone voting and amusingly biased national juries – but within the national Latin community of each country, the question might produce some worthwhile results. Perhaps it is more like a local agricultural show, where we can each judge our own local rams, in the knowledge of the performance that can be expected in the circumstances.

Another observation that occurs to me is this. If the ‘Ram’ is the best that twentieth-century Britain can offer, will the twenty-first century do better? I hope it might, especially if *Vates* can help nudge writers of Latin towards greater confidence and originality. The best may be yet to come. I would certainly hope that the best British female Latin poet has not yet appeared on the scene. If she is reading this: please get on with writing something; please do it better than the men; and please send it to *Vates*.

For Better or for Verse

Barry Baldwin

The great Hellenist Kenneth Dover once reckoned that time spent in composition was worth twice that spent on reading texts. Dover was by nature a provocateur; he no doubt expected and relished vigorous dissent, especially at a time when the place of verse composition in the classical syllabus was being much debated.

Perhaps also, he was writing in the spirit of John Conington, first holder of the Corpus Professorship of Latin at Oxford in the mid-nineteenth century. In his *Miscellaneous Writings* (1872, p. 233), Conington claims that the best aid to textual conjectures is composition, described as a British speciality. He goes on to wax rhapsodic about ‘manly, vigorous hexameters’ – ‘Manly’ is an ubiquitous compliment in Victorian prose: it has no meaning that I can see (elsewhere, p. 257, Conington bumbles about the ‘manly simplicity’ of Lucretius), and no function beyond annoying feminists.

One devout practitioner of composition was P. G. Wodehouse who once wrote in a letter ‘I did reams of Greek and Latin verse and enjoyed it more than anything else.’ This was at Dulwich College, where he just missed overlapping with famed American crime writer Raymond Chandler, who always attributed his laconic English style to his school classical background.

On ‘Plum’s’ linguistic skills and a rather odd example of his Latin Verse, see Barbara C. Bowen’s ‘P. G. Wodehouse Linguist?’, *The Quarterly Journal of the Wodehouse Society* 21.2, 2010, 1-6, available online. *The Oldie* (February, 2025) printed a copy of Wodehouse’s timetable for the Remove Classical in 1899. It enjoins a formidable list of Greek and Latin texts. Composition is not mentioned, so presumably was regarded as an extra task. My own Remove Classical timetable at The Lincoln School (1952-53) was severe enough, but nothing like Wodehouse’s – Thank Jupiter!

I began Greek and Latin Verse Composition (Prose came earlier) in my third year in the Classical Sixth. I was coached on the Latin side by the Reverend Reginald Percy Baker, who had learned his Classics at the Wolverhampton School and University of Birmingham. He always had with him when instructing a copy of *Versus Wufrenses*, a so-called ‘Vulgar Book’ containing Latin verse renderings of English poems jointly hammered out by Wolverhampton Sixth-Formers and their master, Mr Alfred Robinson. Back in 2014, thanks to the kindness of Lynne Johnson at the School, I was presented with a complimentary copy of ‘Baker’s Bible’. It has a treasured place in my library.

Rev. Baker was sparing with compliments. Only once did I receive some words of praise. These were for the line *Depereunt pariter reges et gloria regum*, which he deemed ‘Not unworthy of Ovid’ – I positively glowed.

Metrically speaking, we largely stuck to elegiacs, the Ovidian disyllabic pentameter ending being insisted upon – I appealed in vain for the licence indulged in by Catullus and co. On occasion, we did hexameters and, very rarely, I managed an Alcaic or Sapphic.

I memorialized Rev. Baker and his verses in the Old Lincolnians magazine; the result has crept on to the internet under the title ‘Wolverhampton Wanderings’ – football fans will catch the drift. (On the website lincolnrchristshospitalschool.co.uk)

Greek Verse was inculcated by Mr J. A. Baxter (a Methodist lay preacher – two men of God teaching composition in two tongues – inevitably known as ‘JAB’). An unvarying diet of iambs – Thank Goodness! The lyric metres would have been quite beyond my limited powers.

For Latin Verse, we employed a little blue book compiled by Etonian teacher A. C. Ainger, titled *Clivus* – suitable title. For Greek, we had J. Jackson’s (a St Paul’s teacher) *Iambica*. I was no great shakes at composition, but looking back quite enjoyed it. However,

again in retrospect, I see a connection with the approach to versifying as set out in *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. Four systems are set out. Tom, the book's hero, followed the 'traditional method'. With the aid of Gradus and Vulgus Books, he patched together eight lines (the required minimum) that would scan, though careless of sense. He would regularly append two extra lines beginning *O genus humanum*, better quality ones cribbed from a Vulgus Book. His reckoning was that the master, if failing to recognize their recurrence, would be impressed by their quality and so overlook the preceding limp eight.

His classmate, Martin, used the 'dogged method'. Having no Vulgus Books, he would write out eight lines in English, then with his Gradus convert them into lines that scanned, regardless of sense. Arthur, the form 'Swot', would seek (in Hughes' words) to clothe his verses in appropriate Greek or Latin with as little as possible recourse to the Gradus, then polishing and re-polishing them until satisfied. I'd like to think I occasionally rose to these artistic heights, but . . .

The fourth method, the 'vicarious' one, did not apply to us. It consisted of bullying clever small boys into writing your verses for you. Since we only embarked on verse composition in the Classical Sixth, no such precocious little ticks existed.

O VATES VATES, tibi donem carmina pauca

Editor's Note: Learning to write verse in the early 1980s

David Money

I thought I would add to Barry's reminiscences of learning in the 1950s some comments on how it was for me, about three decades later. (As mentioned above, *Vates* would like to hear from others on this topic.) It was no longer a formal and regular part of the classical classroom, at my school (and I imagine at most others): I don't suppose it will ever return. Indeed, those looking back from the twenty-first century are likely to look upon the kind of class exercises described by Barry as completely alien to their own experience.

I was at Tonbridge School (from 1979 to 1983), where some of the teachers would have experienced Barry's kind of tuition, even if they were no longer allowed to practise it. When I expressed some interest in writing verses, therefore, they were in a position to help and encourage. I remain most grateful to Geoff Allibone ('R. G. A.') – to whose memory this issue of *Vates* is dedicated – for taking the time to help me make a start by myself, and for correcting early attempts. As far as I recall, we didn't use any textbooks: just selected some English poetry for translation into hexameters and elegiacs.

When I expressed a desire to try Greek verses too, Geoff passed me on to his very learned colleague Dr Chris Wilson ('C. H. W.', died 2015); and then we did use a textbook, Arthur Sidgwick and F. D. Morice, *An Introduction to Greek Verse Composition*. A very thorough and useful guide to iambics (which, as in Barry's case, was the only metre I risked), this book was going through its nineteenth (revised) printing in 1955. At Tonbridge, the copy I used had been issued in the classroom in 1962 and 1965 – in the latter case to C. J. Reid (the English poet Christopher Reid, born 1949). How many copies were issued in any schools, I wonder, after the early 1980s? As noted above, Barry had relied on *Iambica: An English-Greek and Greek-English Vocabulary for Writers of Iambic Verse*, by J. Jackson (1928).

The other invaluable tool issued to me in my 'Lower Sixth' year (1981-82) was *An English-Latin Gradus or Verse Dictionary* by A. C. Ainger (the same Ainger mentioned by Barry) and H. G. Wintle. It's not essential to use a Gradus instead of (or as well as) a normal dictionary when beginning to write verses; but it makes things easier, because the compilers of the Gradus focus on the needs of composers to know how words will scan, what vocabulary is suited to verse, and what alternatives might do, when the word you really wanted isn't going to fit. That, and R. G. A.'s advice, helped me on the way to being a part of *Vates*.

On Johannes Bissel (1601 – 1682)

Peter Hulse

The poet, preacher, and historian Johannes Bissel S.J. (Bisselius) must be one of the most prolific and least known Latin authors of the Baroque. He seems never to have stopped writing! His *Illustrium ab orbe condito Ruinarum decades quatuor*, which one might translate as ‘Four decades of famous ruins since the World’s creation’, contains 4,700 pages, in six very fat volumes.

Apart from what one might term philosophical history, he wrote prose of many kinds. Perhaps his most important are his *Icaria*, a satire on the wars raging in Europe at the time and his *Argonautica Americanorum*, a reworking of the Argonautic legend in terms of the seventeenth century exploration of South America.

Johannes Bislin, his original name, was born on August 20th, 1601, the son of Nikolaus Bislin and his wife Ursula Mänschorn in Babenhausen. At the age of four, young Johannes attended his father’s school, and at five he received instruction in the basics of Latin. By the age of 11, he was reading the Latin classics. He is said to have kept a diary in Greek during this time. His talents were noticed and he was allowed to attend the Jesuit University of Dillingen as a scholarship recipient starting in 1617. There, he studied rhetoric and philosophy and was one of the first to earn the degree of Magister. At the same time, on July 15th, 1621, he joined the Society of Jesus. Thereupon he embarked upon a life of teaching, preaching and writing.

Along with the poet Jakob Balde (1604 – 1668) and the playwright Jakob Bidermann (1578 – 1639), Bissel became one of the most significant Neo-Latin writers produced by the Jesuit order in the 17th century. Balde praises his fellow Jesuit as a man who was second to none in fame for his eloquence. Unlike the two aforementioned writers, Bissel’s work has received much less attention in subsequent times.

It is his poetry that claims our attention here. Perhaps his best work is contained in the *Deliciae Veris* (published in Ingolstadt in 1638), a series of elegies depicting the joys of Nature, retelling Biblical stories and reworking the lives of the Saints and the World of Myths. An influential [critic and poet](#) of the nineteenth century wrote of it: ‘Bissel’s *Deliciae Veris* ... it makes me half-crazy with pleasure. What a lovely, lovely little book.’ It opens with this lovely poem:

PARVUS eram, trimóque minor: tamen ubere pulsus;
Et, duce jam nullo, carpere doctus iter:
Longa vacillantem turbabant carbasa gressum,
Tardabátque breves invida ralla pedes.
Balba reluctantem trudebant guttura vocem, 5
Ibat et infanti blaesus ab ore sonus.
Magnus Arundo labor, magnúsque erat, otia, pulvis:
Déque luto structae, maxima Troja, casae.
Tantillo genitrix dubitabat dicere: IANE!
Ianelli tantùm nomine dignus eram. 10
In nebulis tumulata suis Dianoea jacebat.
Esse quod Ingenium debuit, umbra fuit.
Est tamen Vmbrae etiam sua Lux, sua Noctibus astra;
Et stata Cimmerius sidera nauta videt.
Nec minùs in Puero mentis scintillat Opacum: 15
Et Ratio è Cunis quantulacunque nitet.
Non sola haec Ithaci, non sola est Hectoris aetas;

Hic etiam Astyanax, Telemachusque vigent.
 Consulere Infanti, non et Meminisse, negatum est.
 O Superi, primos mihi refricate dies! 20
 Quem primum Annorum memini (juvat ire retrorsum)
 Annus erat Scythicae barbarus axe nivis.
 Triste solum, gelidi Boreae, rigidissimus aer,
 Compulerant ipsos tecta sub alta Deos:
 Compulerant (quid nempe novum?) mortalia membra: 25
 In thalamos homines, in stabula arcta greges.
 Tunc ego prae reliquis colui Dis atque Deabus,
 Lignivoram celebrem religionem Deam.
 Omnibus antetuli Sacra Fornacalia Sacris:
 Hic sedi, hic latui. Vita, CALERE, fuit. 30

“I was small, not yet three years old, already weaned from my mother's breast and capable of moving forward without a guide. The long dresses still confused my staggering steps, and the envious garment hindered my tiny feet. My stammering throat still produced a resisting sound, and only babbling tones escaped my childish mouth. [7] A blade of grass signified great effort, a sand pile was immense in idle play, and your huts, noble Troy, were still made of clay. My mother hesitated to call the little upstart ‘Hannes’. Only the name ‘Hänschen’ suited me. My capacity for thought was still buried in its mists. What was to become mind was still shadow. But even shadows have their own light, the nights their own stars; even the Cimmerian sailor sees his guiding constellations. No less does the shadow of intellect already shimmer in a child, and reason, however small, already gleams in the cradle. [17] This is not only the stage of life for an Ithacan or a Hector. Here too, an Astyanax and a Telemachus gain their strength. Though the ability to deliberate is denied to the child, the capacity to remember is not. Oh gods, bring back to my memory those earliest days! The first year I can recall (how joyful it is to look back) was a barbaric year under a sky of Scythian snow. [23] The frozen ground, the cold northern winds, the biting air drove even the gods beneath high roofs: no wonder they drove mortal limbs together, men into their rooms, and herds into sturdy barns. During that time, I revered, above all other gods and goddesses, only the goddess celebrated in the wood-devouring cult. Of all rites, I preferred the cult of the oven goddess: there I sat, there I hid myself. To live meant to be warm.”

The poem presents a poignant and introspective reflection on early childhood, beginning with vivid images of a small, unsteady child learning to walk without guidance, struggling with speech, and finding wonder in simple childhood games like building houses of mud that become, in the child's imagination, mighty Troy. Bissel skilfully uses classical allusions – comparing childhood to the youth of Telemachus and Astyanax – while simultaneously creating a deeply personal narrative. The transition from the child who can barely be called by his full name (‘Iane’ instead of ‘Ianelus’) to reflective adulthood is masterfully rendered. The latter portion shifts to a specific childhood memory of a harsh winter that drove everyone indoors, where the child found comfort by the hearth (the ‘Lignivora Dea’ or ‘wood-devouring goddess’ being the fire). The final half-line ‘Vita, CALERE, fuit’ (‘Life was to be warm’) beautifully captures both the literal warmth by the fire and the emotional warmth of childhood security. Bissel's command of classical metre is impeccable, and he infuses traditional elegiac form with tender, intimate observations about human development and memory. The poem balances scholarly classical references with genuine emotional resonance – a hallmark of the best Neo-Latin poetry of the period. The Bavarian Jesuit scholar deserves to be more widely read.

Macbeth in Latin

David Money

Review of Giacomo dalla Pietà, *Macbettus: Melissa*, issue 239, 15 April 2024

I should start by saying that this is not a normal review, for several reasons. It is not reviewing a book, but something from a journal, which is obviously unusual: though *Macbettus* occupies an entire issue of the Latin-language journal *Melissa*. It should also not be considered as completely independent, since Giacomo dalla Pietà is a contributor to this issue of *Vates* – and, I very much hope, to future issues as well. It is at his own request that we are reviewing his version of *Macbeth*.

I will also take this opportunity to offer some reflections on the likely nature of reviews in the revived *Vates*. I don't see much point in being over-critical, in the smallish world of modern Latin. In general, I can rather enjoy reading a harsh review in the newspapers – what is sometimes called in English a 'hatchet-job' – especially when it is a fair comment on a target prominent and commercially successful enough to be suitable for such treatment. It's most unlikely that *Vates* will want to do anything like that, or that any such targets will present themselves. On the other hand, I don't see much point in a gushing review, that says how wonderful it is that an author has managed to write some good Latin. We will take it for granted, in *Vates*, that authors can do so; anyone ambitious enough to write substantial works in Latin will be expected to do so with reasonable competence.

As for reviewing a work from another journal: I would like *Vates* to have good relations with the Latin-language journals, and any other relevant publications. From time to time, it would be good to bring to the notice of *Vates* readers items of interest which have appeared elsewhere. While in theory people who are prepared to read the Latin verse in *Vates*, and accompanying English explanations, are also capable of reading articles in Latin prose, I suspect that in practice many don't take the trouble to do so; and that while our audience undoubtedly overlaps with that of Latin-language journals, they are far from identical.

Giacomo dalla Pietà's version of *Macbeth* is heavily abridged; it runs to twelve pages of verse text (pp. 5-16, 380 lines), preceded by a three-page Latin prose introduction which discusses such matters as the Senecan models of Shakespearean tragedy, and the rationale behind the choices he has made in presenting a shortened version to a Latin-reading audience. In choosing what to cut, he wanted 'multas truculentas res omittere' (p. 3) – 'to leave out many cruel events', to avoid showing murders on stage. Macbeth himself does die on stage, two lines from the end (Shakespeare has a whole scene, 41 lines, after the death of the title character).¹

A lot of *Macbeth* is indeed exceedingly nasty. Is it appropriate to underplay such nastiness in an abridgement? English readers may think of the term 'to bowdlerise', which is almost invariably pejorative: though perhaps this is unfair to Thomas Bowdler (1754 – 1825), whose *Family Shakespeare* (1818) gives rise to the expression. There is a place for a children's version of any challenging adult text: not to replace the proper text for adult readers, but to make it accessible and less problematic for a different audience. In that sense, it can be quite reasonable to bowdlerise. Readers of Latin are not children who need protection from unpleasantness. But in choosing this approach G. D. P. presents his own coherent, more sanitised idea of what is essential to the tragedy.

¹ My references to *Macbeth* will use the text in S. Wells and G. Taylor, eds., *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (1999).

It is a natural question to ask, how well *Macbettus* might work on stage. I am not sure that I am well placed to answer: I don't have experience of putting on Latin verse plays (only, many years ago, a much abridged version of the prose comedy *Ignoramus* by George Ruggle). It would be interesting to hear from anyone who does have relevant experience of producing verse drama, what they think about the practical aspects of the matter. How well can G. D. P.'s drama, or other modern Latin plays, whether original or adaptations, be appreciated by an audience? Does the use of verse work to the play's advantage? Much might depend on the performers' skill at verse-speaking.

The effects of compression are seen especially in the second of G. D. P.'s unequal acts (the first has 280 lines, the second only 100). His final scene, the confrontation between Macbeth and Macduff, gives each of them two speeches, five lines in total for Macbeth and eight for Macduff. Macbeth misses out on 'Why should I play the Roman fool ...?'; Macduff rather laboriously explains he was 'untimely ripped' (in more words than Shakespeare's); we miss most of the tense and impassioned rhetoric that leads up to 'Lay on, Macduff'. Macbeth's last words 'audax occidam' ('I shall die boldly') are immediately confirmed by events, and Macduff wraps things up in two lines.

A little earlier (Shakespeare's act 5, scene 5) we get the essence, but lose the poetry.

Seyton: The Queen, my lord, is dead.

Nuntius: Excessit en Regina.

The simple information is conveyed in very similar style. What is lost is almost all of the great speech 'She should have died hereafter . . . Tomorrow, and tomorrow . . . It is a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing.' All of that boils down to:

Macbettus: Adest tempus mori
quo sit necesse. Quælibet monstrat dies
mortis viam tremendam et atram et horridam.
Novi quid affers?

One might have thought that more could have been made, in the language of Senecan tragedy, out of one of the most famous and powerful passages in all of Shakespeare. Even the effect of 'horridam' is weakened by the repetition of the word in the very next line, with the messenger's announcement about the moving wood, 'Vidimus silvam horridam . . .'. We lose, too, the characterisation of Macbeth that comes from his aggressive reaction to this bringer of bad news, 'Liar and slave!'

One understands, though, that hard choices have to be made when compressing a work of literature. G. D. P. has chosen clarity of narrative here, keeping things moving so that they can be followed by a reader on the page, or a spectator in a theatre. And the incidental loss of so much Shakespearean language, lamentable though it is to anyone familiar with the original, must perhaps be accepted as an unavoidable consequence of that decision.

When he allows himself more scope, in his first act, G. D. P. can indeed retain more of the complicated vitality of the original. In Macbeth's speech contemplating the king's murder (Shakespeare act 1, scene 7, lines 1-28; *Macbettus* lines 248-60), 'If it were done when 'tis done . . .', a complex series of moral arguments assails his conscience. These are shortened in the Latin, but overall dealt with clearly and effectively. Many considerations argue against the betrayal of a kinsman, monarch, and guest: in its favour, 'I have no spur / To prick the sides of my intent, but only / Vaulting ambition . . .' – 'Sola est ambitio fera / favere qua immani queat

sceleri meo.’ At its best, G. D. P.’s method can offer a simplified Shakespeare that does focus on the key elements of the drama, and adapts them to the needs of Latin iambic verse.

The ensuing dialogue with Lady Macbeth is central to the tragedy, the tipping point after which the Macbeths are doomed to ever deeper descent into evil. G. D. P. allots twenty lines to it (261-80), and ends his first act at the moment of decision. For his vision of the play, this seems appropriate. Most of his effort has been devoted to the lines that precede this; what follows is, if not an after-thought, at least taken much faster. Shakespeare’s vision is rather different; in the edition I am using, five pages (of small print in two columns) bring us here, while the rest of the drama occupies eighteen. The relative proportions are more or less exactly opposite: in Latin, three quarters of the action precedes the murder of Duncan, in English, three quarters comes afterwards. That is not to suggest G. D. P. is wrong to shift the focus to an earlier point in the story. It may be a bold choice, but it comes from confidence in the ability of a Latin adaptation to stand as an independent drama.

In that crucial scene, lines 261-80, G. D. P. gives enough room to each spouse to argue, without being able to retain much of the harshness of language that makes their argument so vicious, before they can agree on the crime. Sometimes the brevity of Latin is to G. D. P.’s advantage here, as he can invest a single word like ‘times?’ (‘are you afraid?’) with much of the weight of a longer phrase in English. At line 270, split between Macbeth and his wife, he expresses his fear: ‘Ne fallar ipse, cara, iam timeo’ (‘my dear, I am now afraid that I may fail’). She ends the line with ‘Times?’, before explaining how the plot will succeed. In Shakespeare this is:

Macbeth: If we should fail?
Lady Macbeth: We fail!
But screw your courage to the sticking-place
And we’ll not fail.

For once, the Latin is more verbose than the English, with the addition of ‘cara’. I am not sure that endearments like that would spring to the lips of Shakespeare’s Macbeth at such a tense moment; G. D. P.’s version of the character is rather more polite and gentlemanly, as well as needing another word to fill up the middle of the iambic line. But there is no explicit screwing up of courage in the Latin: we pass over that silently, as Lady Macbeth moves on to three brisk lines of explication (eleven much more flowery lines in Shakespeare).

Do we want Shakespeare turned into Latin at all? It’s not for everyone. But I can imagine that quite a few Latinists, for a variety of reasons, might wish to turn to this adaptation. Those who know *Macbeth* well in English will find that much has changed, and some justly revered passages are missing or mutilated (the ‘disiecti membra poetae’, if not of Macbeth’s victims?); but also that the change may be refreshing, and help them to reimagine the tragedy as a much shorter and cleaner Senecan drama. And those who come to it fresh, without any preconceptions except a general awareness that Shakespeare is rather famous, may be able to enjoy it entirely on its own merits, as a new Latin play that efficiently extracts what its author wants to retain from a complicated Renaissance witches’ brew.

List of Contributors to *Vates* Issue 15

ABELSETH, Bethany: She is a Latin teacher in Virginia and a PhD Candidate in Latin and Roman Studies through the Distance Classics Program at the University of Florida. She has been writing poetry in Latin since she was an undergraduate, and now gathers her pieces into collections on her website for anyone anywhere to read.

ADÈS, Timothy: He was about 22 when the penny dropped that Latin is a dead language. Forty years on, he found his vocation as a rhyming translator-poet, with books and awards, from French, Spanish, and German. He is on Facebook and YouTube.

ALLESCH, Gerd (Gerardus Alesius): He is a lecturer in Latin at the University of Vienna and has been writing and publishing Latin poetry since his early student years. His work includes collections of odes and epigrams, published both in book form and, more recently, online via Twitter (now X).

ARMELLA CHÁVEZ, Ignacio (Ignatius): Born in Mexico City, where he studied Latin and Greek. For almost fifteen years he has taught philosophy and Latin composition at the Accademia Vivarium Novum; more recently he has become interested in Persian literature, and has started to learn that language: he is happy to share the first fruits with *Vates* readers.

ATKINSON, Michael (Mike): He studied Classics at Cambridge University, trained as a coal-miner and an accountant, and later worked in the UK Treasury and Department of Energy. He now lives in Sussex. His Latin is growing rusty with neglect, but he remains a great fan of Horace and is a keen reader of Greek plays and poetry.

BALDWIN, Barry: Born in Lincolnshire, now living in Canada. Before retirement he was a professor of Classics at the University of Calgary; he has published numerous books, articles, and stories on a wide range of ancient and modern themes.

BOLOGNA, Orazio Antonio (Horatius Antonius): Born in 1945. He has taught Latin and Greek at various high schools and at the Università Salesiana in Rome; and has received awards at the *Certamen Capitolinum* and the *Certamen Vaticanum*. His Latin poems are collected in two volumes: *Carmina Latina* (2022) and *Latina Siren* (2024).

BRUDER, Anton: He read Modern and Medieval Languages at Cambridge, where he first encountered Neo-Latin. His doctoral thesis looked at the reception of medieval poetry during the French Renaissance. After completing postdocs in Utrecht and Wolfenbüttel, he now works at Utrecht University Library.

BURTON, Philip: He works in the University of Birmingham. This is his first public foray as a composer of Latin verse, and he would like to thank in particular Stan Wolfson, John Henderson, and Harold Guite for their encouragement at various times.

CARSON, Keiran: He studied Classics at Cambridge and Durham. He is currently completing a monograph on Martial and works as a Classics teacher.

CRISTINI, Marco: Born in 1992: lecturer in Medieval History. Apart from looking for bright subjects in the Dark Ages, he is also interested in Neo-Latin. He has published a book about the First World War in Neo-Latin literature, a couple of papers on the Neo-Latin poet François Xavier Reuss, and some articles on Tolkien and Latin.

DALLA PIETÀ, Giacomo: Born in Venice in 1976. He has researched on late antique and medieval culture (earning a doctorate from Bari, 2006); and has published numerous Latin poems in *Latinitas* and elsewhere.

D'ANGOUR, Armand: He teaches Greek and Latin Literature as a Professor of Classics at Jesus College, Oxford, which is the only College in the UK that gives students the chance of speaking active Latin and Greek in tutorials. He is also a regular composer of verse in Latin, Greek, and English.

DOWLASZ, Barbara: Born in 1985 in Szczecin (Stettin), Poland. She studied Latin and Greek in Kraków (Cracow) and Vienna. She wrote her doctoral thesis on the reception of Catullus in recent Latin poetry. She lives in Vienna, where she works as a teacher in a gymnasium (high school).

FEHÉR Bence (Benedictus): Born in 1968: Hungarian classical philologist and epigraphist. Until 2018 a professor of ancient history in Budapest; since 2019 the director of the Research Center of Classical Philology, Institute of Hungarian Research. He has published three books of Hungarian poetry translated into Latin.

FONTAINE, Michael (Mike): He has taught Classics at Cornell University since 2004. He led the Paideia Institute's Living Latin in Rome summer program in 2014 and 2016, and is a regular contributor to Princeton University Press's series *Ancient Wisdom for Modern Readers*. His latest, titled *How to Get Over a Breakup*, is a translation of Ovid's *Remedia Amoris*.

HALE, John: He lives in New Zealand, and writes mainly on Milton's Latin poems these days, after books on the Sonnet, on Shakespeare, and six on Milton.

HARADA Hiroshi (Hirosius): Born in Japan in 1955. He was taught Latin by Aritsune MIZUNO (Arituneus) of Kyoto. He enjoys daily recitation of Horatian odes from memory.

HARRISON, Stephen: Professor of Latin Literature at the University of Oxford and Senior Research Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and author/editor of many books on classical Latin literature and its later reception.

HESS, Nathaniel: He read Classics in Cambridge for the best part of a decade, where he was taught verse composition by the late and much-missed Neil Hopkinson. Since then he has become a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow at the Warburg Institute in London, and spends his time trying to persuade Early Modernists to read more Latin and Greek verse. He is working on a book on Greek-to-Latin verse translation in the Renaissance.

HULSE, Peter: Retired school teacher, born in Stoke-on-Trent, studied and taught in Sheffield. After retirement, he went back to finishing a PhD started many years ago, and was also

fortunate to remake the acquaintance of a brilliant teacher from school, with whose encouragement he has made some progress at verse-writing.

INGE, William (Bill): Classics graduate and teacher of Latin, Greek and Classical Civilisation, heading up the department at Moreton Hall school in Shropshire.

KWARTENG, Kwasi: He studied Classics and History at Trinity College, Cambridge; went to Harvard, then back to Cambridge to complete a PhD in economic history. After some years working in financial services, he was elected an MP in 2010; in cabinet (2019-22), as Business Secretary and Chancellor of the Exchequer. He left the House of Commons in 2024, and now works in the private sector.

LAVALLE, Raúl (Radulfus): Born in 1953 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He was a professor of literature, teaching Latin and ancient Greek. Now he edits a small review called *Carmina hodierna*.

McMATH, Thomas: He is a former middle and high school Latin teacher and a current doctoral student in Classics at the Ohio State University.

MONEY, David: Born in London, 1966. Studied at Oxford (MA) and Cambridge (PhD). He has previously taught Classics and Neo-Latin literature at the University of Cambridge, and English literature at the University of Sunderland. Editor of *Vates* from 2025; contributor to various issues from 2010 to 2018.

MURGATROYD, Paul: He was a professor of Classics, specializing in Latin and Greek literature. After retiring he took up creative writing and has had numerous poems (in English), prose poems and short stories published. At present he is working on a readable and reliable translation of the major tragedies of Euripides.

OMIYAMA Takahiro: He is a doctoral student at Kyoto University in Japan, working on Classical and Neo-Latin literature, from Homer's *Iliad* to Latin texts related to Japan.

RADKE, Anne-Ilse (Anna Elissa): Born in 1940, she studied philosophy, classical philology, archaeology, medieval Latin, Protestant theology, and Slavic studies in Hamburg and Marburg. She has taught at a secondary school, a Waldorf school, and a university. Her works include Latin poetry, dramas, and a literary magazine, *Alaudae*.

ROOK, Richard: He read Classics at Oxford University in the 1980s. Unsuccessfully. He now lives at St Leonard's in Sussex.

SAUTER, Michiel: Teacher of Latin, Greek, German and Dutch in Nijmegen (The Netherlands), where he also works as a multilingual tourist guide and as a translator (Latin to Dutch). He writes both accentual verse and quantitative poems in Latin. His work has appeared in *Latinitas*, *Vox Latina*, *Melissa*, *Vates* and *The Vates Anthology of New Latin Poetry*.

TUNNICLIFFE, Julian: He went to the Perse School and Trinity College, Cambridge, where he had ample opportunity to learn Latin verse composition. Having failed to do so, he has tried to teach himself.

WALTON, Brad: He grew up in Toronto, Canada. His academic studies were in Latin, Greek, and Christian theology. He has contributed Latin prose and poetry to several publications over the years, including *M.A.S. (Memento Audere Semper)*, *Melissa*, and *Vates*. He has also written some plays in English, as well as a comic opera which was performed in Toronto.

WEBER, Clifford (Cliff): He joined the Classics department of Kenyon College, Ohio, in 1969, and remained there until his retirement in 2003. In 2020, reacting to Donald Trump's Presidency, he emigrated to Japan, where his new illiteracy appears to refute *nihil novi sub sole*, offering a fresh experience for a quondam academic.

ZELENY, Karin (Chloris): She lives in Vienna and Borgo d'Oneglia, studied Classical Philology at the University of Vienna (PhD on accent rhythms in Latin poetry), specialised in humanist Latin, and now works as proofreader for the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. She loves to sing and play Renaissance polyphony on the bass viola da gamba and other string instruments: things which her alter ego 'Chloris' would have done, too.

Notes for Future Contributors

Vates will be interested in all of the following:

new Latin poetry;

reviews of contemporary Latin verse;

short articles on Neo-Latin verse (of any period from the Renaissance onwards);

very short pieces (150-350 words) on 'What excites me' about reading Latin poetry of any period, including classical and medieval as well as more recent verse;

contributions for a *Vates* teaching anthology, as discussed in the introduction to issue 15.

Poems should come with:

Brief introduction (optional); translation (essential); brief note on metrical form (essential); endnotes to explain any details that may help readers (optional).

All contributors should supply a brief biographical note on themselves (two or three lines will suffice).

Brief guide to preferred style:

References: as long as you are internally consistent, and fully clear to any reader, you may use any reasonable system. I don't want to waste the time of contributors (or the editor) by insisting on conformity to a particular style. For articles, use footnotes (when necessary); single inverted commas are preferred for quotations. If in doubt, MHRA style will do fine (<https://www.mhra.org.uk/style/>). It is better to provide fuller rather than shorter references, for example:

Author, *Book Title* (Place: publisher, date), pp. 120-30

Author, 'Article' [or 'Poem title'] in A. N. Editor, ed., *Collection* (Place: publisher, date), pp. 120-30

Author, 'Article' in *Journal Title* 15 (date): 120-30

Latin spelling: whatever you are happy with. The editor's personal preference is for capital letters at the start of lines, and 'v' rather than 'u': 'Arma virumque' rather than 'arma uirumque'. *Vates*' previous policy of imposing uniformity will not be continued.

Users of American English spelling may retain their normal forms; the only exception will be the word 'metre' in the description of metres after each poem (only), for which we will use the British spelling throughout.

Are poems which have appeared on the internet eligible for *Vates*?

Yes, in general. We wish, in normal circumstances (and apart from in the teaching anthology) to focus on previously unpublished verse. We will count as 'unpublished' items which have been made public on Facebook, X / Twitter, or private websites: they may indeed have achieved a wide audience already, but not the permanence of formal publication in a journal. (We may take as a guide the *conspectus* of twenty-first century published verse under preparation by Marco Cristini, which will make a distinction between published items in books or journals, and more ephemeral places on the internet.) We may also consider republishing items which have appeared in places likely to be inaccessible to English-speaking readers.

How regularly will *Vates* appear?

The precise details may depend on the editor's energies, and the degree of enthusiasm shown by contributors. It would be much appreciated if contributions could come in regularly and spontaneously, rather than being extracted with difficulty and endless editorial labour.

The intention, however, is that *Vates* will now be a regular publication, and will remain so with a reasonable degree of permanence: a recognised journal, with an ISSN, that readers and contributors can use with confidence.

We will aim to publish a new issue at least once a year; possibly more often than that – perhaps about every eight months – if the level of interest justifies it. That should mean that people do not have too long to wait before seeing their work appear.

What kind of articles are we looking for?

Whatever might interest readers – who may be assumed to be open to hearing about any kind of Neo-Latin verse, but who would prefer to stay awake while doing so.

Please try to be briefer and more entertaining than is normal in some academic journals. *Vates* is not trying to duplicate existing journals in this respect. If your work is too dull for them, it is too dull for us. Please keep in mind the question: 'Why should readers of today's verse take an interest in this?' Please avoid the jargon of modern literary theory. We can be flexible about length: but two or three thousand words would generally suffice. You need not take the few brief articles in issue 15 as a guide: it would be good to have some more substantial contributions too, and to hear from younger scholars and graduate students about their research. They are earnestly encouraged, however, to tear themselves away from the nearly unreadable style which they may feel is required by their theses, and attempt to communicate clearly in ordinary language with ordinary readers. Academic rigour is not enhanced by obfuscation.

Please discuss reviews with the editor first, if you wish to write one, or have an item you would suggest for review. In the latter case, when dealing with hard copies, it may be best for the editor to find a reviewer first, to whom a book may be mailed directly. We may consider having some longer review articles: an example is David Money, review of Stephen Coombs' *In Perendinum Aevum* in *Vates* 10 (2014), pp. 39-48. In that article, besides some detailed discussion of Stephen's work, I also attempted a more general discussion of some issues related to the publication of Latin poetry today; I think some of those points retain a relevance. For those who may wish to look up Stephen's book: please note that although my review was of an earlier privately printed edition (Stockholm, 2014), there was a subsequent commercial edition: Portlaoise: Evertime, 2015.

Breves notae scriptoribus

Editor est David Money (Anglus: 'Nummarius', Latine, si vis): vateseditor@gmail.com
Inspicias, quaeso:

"*Vates*: the journal of new Latin poetry": 1-14, 2010-18 (et nunc 15, 2025):
<https://vatesblog.wordpress.com/>

Ephemeris nostra renovata erit similis: sed, ut spero, variis modis melior. Linguam Anglicam retinebit: locus Latinitati sine interpretatione Anglica non erit. Plures tamen omnium gentium scriptores hortari editor valde cupit. Si in lingua Anglica scribenda non vales, nulla sit difficultas. Primo, scribe editori Latine, si non placet Anglice loqui; aut si es Anglice loquendi capax, sed imperfecte, nullius erit momenti. Si versus tuos volumus, auxilium ad eos Anglice transferendos dabitur.

Minime autem nobis est propositum, ut carmina Latina ab hominibus linguae Anglicae imperitis condita respuamus. Etenim versus Latinos, nulla comitante interpretatione Anglica, a talibus hominibus accipere poterimus, conaturi aliquo modo efficere ut aliunde suppleatur interpretatio Anglica, quae eorum versibus apte congruenterque respondeat.

Omnes igitur Musarum fautores, quoscumque verba Latina pedibus delectat claudere, enixe hortamur, ut opuscula sua ad nos mittant. Versus enim Latinos quibuslibet pedibus structos, sive syllabarum mensura, sive ictu quodam vel verborum accentu nituntur, modo adsit lepor, modo insit quaedam concinnitas, modo mentes legentium delectare aliquo pacto posse videantur, ephemeridis nostrae fasciculis perlibenter divulgabimus.

Formam ephemeridis academicae riteque constitutae sequemur; sed cum mica salis.
Numerum "ISSN" a bibliotheca Britannica iam habemus: *Vates*: ISSN 2976-9671
ISSN valebit et ad *Vates* 1-14, et ad *Vates* 15 etc in futurum.

Notae breves:

De orthographia: ut tibi placet.

Editor ipse malit: "Arma virumque cano" potius quam "arma uirumque cano".

De forma libros indicandi: ut tibi placet, sit saltem semper eadem, omnibusque clara lectoribus.
Si dubitas, stylus "MHRA" sufficiat: <https://www.mhra.org.uk/style/>

De annotationibus: si lectorem iuvabit, adde, quaeso; Anglice. Leporem cupimus; noli tamen oblivisci iocos tibi manifestos aliis fortasse obscuros esse, ac si dubitas, rem explica.