

VATES

The Journal of New Latin Poetry

Issue 9, Spring 2014

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Edited by Mark Walker
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Editorial

Elegiac Tweets

Arguably Latin poets have never had more outlets for their work than they have right now in the 21st century. A modern-day Leicester Bradner seeking to update his *Musae Anglicanae* survey of Anglo-Latin poets would surely spend most of his time trawling the internet. Which got me thinking: if Catullus were around today I suspect he'd be a regular on Twitter. Think of *Odi et amo* or *Non amo te, Sabidi* or *Nil nimium studeo, Caesar* – pithy, sarcastic, heartfelt, witty, all in less than 140 characters – it's as if they were tailor-made for tweeting. In exactly the same way Twitter could provide contributors to *Vates* with an entirely new outlet for their own Latin verse. Twitter as a vehicle for new Latin poetry? No more daft an idea than an online journal dedicated to the same pursuit.

I've dipped a highly metaphorical poetical toe in already (you can find me [@vatesthepoet](#)). There's something delightful, almost subversive, about the idea of using the very newest form of publishing to promote one of the oldest forms of writing. Instead of using social media to relate pointless celebrity gossip or telling an indifferent world what you had for breakfast, why not tweet as Catullus or Martial (or for that matter, Vincent Bourne, Samuel Johnson or Walter Savage Landor) might have done: why not tweet in Latin elegiacs?

If you just want to keep in touch with news about this journal try [@vatesjournal](#) instead, where I encourage you to add your thoughts.

* * *

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

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

Mark Walker, Editor
Twitter: [@vatesthepoet](#) / [@vatesjournal](#)

Carmina Latina

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

Ante Diem X Kalendas Decembres
MMDCCLXVI A.U.C.

Lucius Alter

Lucius Alter writes: A short epigram. Note that *illudere* = *illusio* = *ironia*.

iudicio facto peiorum illudere magnum est,

historiae quamquam iam quibus actus erit.

* * *

Metre: Elegiac couplet

Translation: November 22, 2013. Judgments of lesser men are irony, though there are some will call it history.

* * *

Non Credo

Mark Walker

Mark Walker writes: My own backwards take on a *Credo*. The word *caduca* (“earthly things”) is typically used pejoratively as a contrast to *aeterna*, the higher and the heavenly. But for me, that’s just the wrong way round.

in nullosque deos, in nullaque numina credo,

inque caduca magis credere uiua uolo.

.

* * *

Metre: Elegiac couplet

Translation: (paraphrase) I prefer to believe in this living world than invisible spirits in the sky.

* * *

Monita

Lorenzo Viscido

Lorenzo Viscido writes: This poem, here and there now retouched, was already published in my *libel* entitled *Poematia* (Soveria Mannelli 1987).

*numquam consimiles tibi, mortalis, bene nosces
perbene ni cordis noueris ima tui.*

*numne potest Musae quisquam sentire calorem
si uatum in cantum permanet usque rigens?*

*nec pietate hominum poteris gaudere parumper
illûm ni totiens uerbera passus eris:*

*umbris quot caelum nocturnis ante tenetur
lumine quam roseo grata resurgat Eos?*

*cuidam concedas tandem benefacta caveto:
qui bene cumque facit, crimina multa creat.*

* * *

Metre: Elegiac couplets

Translation: Counsels.

You'll never know, mortal, those who belong to your same race if you'll not know very well the depth of your heart. Can somebody feel the warmth of the poetry if he is always cold towards the singing of the poets? Nor will you have the possibility to enjoy a little of men's pity if you'll not endure so often their hits: of how many shadows the sky is covered before the pleasant dawn rises again with its rosy light? Finally don't give benefits to anybody: who does good, commits many crimes.

* * *

Tithonus & Lotophagi

Paul Murgatroyd

Paul Murgatroyd writes: In both these poems my narrative follows the simultaneous technique found in ancient art, presenting together a few significant moments in the story (with links and contrasts). In the first, the handsome youth Tithonus was loved by Dawn, who won immortality for him, but forgot to ask for eternal youth, so that he lived on but grew very old and decrepit. In the second poem, on his return from Troy Odysseus reached the land of the Lotus-eaters. He sent some men to reconnoitre, and they were offered the flowery lotus fruit, which made them forget all about home. Odysseus dragged the back to their ship in tears and sailed off with them.

(1) Tithonus

garrit perque solum serpit pulcherrimus infans,

quem despectat amans mater amansque pater.

ardet diua decens, iuuenis pulcherrimus ardet,

facundas fundit blanditiasque hilaris,

mox uenerem iungit uehemens et amatus amator

suauia diuinae sauia dat dominae.

obsitus aeuo est perque solum iam serpere non quit;

despectus garrit, tristis, iners, fragilis.

foetida cui pellis madidique infantia nasi.

tabida membra dolent; mentis inopsque iacet.

*purpureaeque manus et lumina lucida diuae
ambrosiaequae comae labraque rara latent.*

* * *

Metre: Elegiac couplets

Translation:

A very handsome infant, at whom his loving mother and loving father look down, babbles and crawls across the floor. An attractive goddess is in love, and a very handsome young man is in love and joyful(ly) pours out eloquent blandishments, soon he strenuous(ly) makes love and, a beloved lover, gives sweet kisses to his divine mistress. He is smothered by old age, and now cannot crawl across the floor; despised he babbles, sad/repulsive, feeble/incapable of movement/with no spirit, frail/brittle. To whom [there is] a stinking hide and the childishness of a wet nose; his emaciated limbs ache; he lies there, devoid of wits. The goddess' rosy hands and bright eyes and ambrosial hair and exquisite lips are unnoticed [by him].

* * *

(2) Lotophagi

*insolita in miro scintillant sidera caelo,
dum uenti languent, lunaque solque nitent.
undis tunduntur lapidosaque litora mutis;
e tenerisque rosis rorat amoenus amor.
usque inter lustra amnis iners pergitque reditque,
usque sub arboribus frigus et umbra iuuant.*

*lotos luxuriat dulcis per pinguia rura,
Lotophagis laetis pomaque odora placent.
otia lotos alit, suauissima somnia gignens;
incantans animos, otia lotos alit.*

*Lotophagi Danais donant errantibus almi
mellitos fructus floridulosque cibos.
dux uulgari mente tamen mox detrahit illos
deliciis raris ambrosiaque plaga,
ad porcos rediens catulos et pulice plenos,
stercoris ad cumulos congeriesque fimi.
illi flent. fletus nunc primum funditur illic
et multo maculat gramina multa sale.*

*de salsis lotos lacrimis perit herbaque cuncta,
iam miseri pereunt Lotophagique fame.
omnia sunt deserta, situ senta, exanimata.
pullo sub caelo saepe sonant gemitus.*

* * *

Metre: Elegiac couplets

Translation:

In an amazing sky unfamiliar stars glitter, while the winds languish, and the moon and sun shine. The pebbly shore is pounded by silent waves, and charming love is distilled from tender roses. Constantly amid the woodland a sluggish stream moves onward and flows backward, constantly beneath the trees the cool and shade give delight. The sweet lotus flourishes throughout the fertile countryside, and its fragrant fruit pleases the happy Lotus-eaters. The lotus nurtures leisure/relaxation, producing very pleasant dreams; enchanting minds, the lotus nurtures leisure/relaxation. The kindly Lotus-eaters give wandering Greeks their honey-sweet fruit, their flowery food. But the leader, endowed with an ordinary/common mind, soon drags them from the exquisite delights and ambrosial region, returning to pigs and dogs full of fleas, to heaps of manure and piles of excrement. They weep. Tears are now shed there for the first time, and spoil lots of plants with lots of salt. As a result of the salty tears the lotus and all the vegetation is perishing, and now the poor Lotus-eaters are perishing of hunger. Everything is deserted, rough with decay, dead. Beneath a sombre sky groans often ring out.

* * *

Certamen Choronzonis et Morpheos

Kyle Gervais

Kyle Gervais writes: In issue 4 of Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman* our hero Morpheus, The King of Dreams, travels to Hell to retrieve his stolen helm, which he finds in the possession of the demon Choronzon (High Duke of the Eighth Circle, Captain of the Horde of Lord Beelzebub). Dream wins back his helm in a remarkable contest. The idiomatic metre for amoebian verse like this is probably dactylic hexameter (cf. Virgil, *Eclogues* 3), but I had galliambic metre on the brain (cf. Catullus 63) when I tackled this translation. And really, Hell seems like an appropriate place for a duel in wild galliambics, whose basic Catullan form (- - - - - | - - - - -) can shift dramatically via resolution, contraction, and anaclasis (- - - - - | - - - - - ; - - - - - | - - - - - ; etc.). My rather free translation is followed by Gaiman's original.

Acherontis in profundo certant dei duo,

daemon Stygis Choronzon Morpheusque callidus:

[C] *'ego sum malus lupus qui praedam sequitur atrox.'*

[M] *'feriam ut lupum furentem, uenans ego eques ero.'*

[C] *'ego sum tabanus asper: rabido ruis ab equo.'*

[M] *'ego asilum itaque momordi, crebro pede retinens.'*

[C] *'ego araneam comedi: tibi toxica bibita.'*

[M] *'bos sum, pedes graues sunt, serpentem et obterunt.'*

[C] *'letale uirus, anthrax, animas ego aboleo.'*

[M] *'ego tellus, chaos interlabor, foueo animas.'*

[C] *'noua sum, ruina cunctis, orbi crematio.'*

[M] *'ego cuncta comprehendo, cunctas teneo animas:
cuncta uniuersitas sum.'*

[C] *'Mors Iudiciaque ego,
ego in exitu omnium nox, ego diuum, ego orbium,
ego sum uniuersitatis finis. quid itaque tu
eris?'* incola Erebi atrocis sic sibilat.

[M] *'ego spes.'*

* * *

Metre: Galliambic

English original:

- [C] 'I am a dire wolf, prey-stalking, lethal power.'
[M] 'I am a hunter, horse-mounted, wolf-stabbing.'
[C] 'I am a horsefly, horse-stinging, hunter-throwing.'
[M] 'I am a spider, fly-consuming, eight legged.'
[C] 'I am a snake, spider-devouring, poison-toothed.'
[M] 'I am an ox, snake-crushing, heavy footed.'
[C] 'I am anthrax, butcher bacterium, warm-life
destroying.'
[M] 'I am a world, space-floating, life nurturing.'
[C] 'I am a nova, all-exploding, planet-cremating'.
[M] 'I am the Universe—all things encompassing, all life
embracing.'
[C] 'I am anti-life, the Beast of Judgment. I am the dark at
the end of everything. The end of universes, gods,
worlds . . . of everything. Sss. And what will you be
then, Dreamlord?'
[M] 'I am hope.'

Text © Neil Gaiman

* * *

Ad Alexandrum

Patrick Paul Hogan

Patrick Paul Hogan writes: This poem is addressed to a Greek student of mine who recently entered graduate school in Classics. In it I wish him well in his future studies and reflect on the constant campaigns of scholarship. I would like to thank Dr. Kristopher Fletcher for reviewing drafts of the poem and for his perceptive comments.

Alexander auare priscioris

doctrinae (uitium quod optimum esse

declaro et mihi iamdiu aestimatum),

eras discipulus laboriosus:

docto macte animo! sed hinc eundum est

ut discas aliunde pleniusque.

nec curae tibi cursus est honorum

neque est scaena decora nec coronae

quas Mars militibus dedit salutans.

nil noui, iuuenis, nihil pudoris!

audi ueridicum: libens senesco

magister modo tot libris legendis

saepe discipulis tot edocendis

sed semper quasi lege perseuera

omnis est mea uota litteris mens.

*nam me terribilis tenet cupido
illarum ex puero meum ad sepulchrum.
yali amore uideris illaqueri
ut in reticulo lepus latenti.
hoc times? agedum timere noli!
nam dulcissima nostra seruitudo
qualem olim facile Hercules ferebat
cum texebat in Omphales diaeta.
neque umquam timeas struem librorum:
ille cum Macedo ducis Philippi
stabat filius ipse in Asianis
ripis, eminuere regna magna
quae solus poterat deus tenere
Bacchus imperio suo patrisque,
regna non numeranda mente fessa.
at fuit cupidus laboris omnis
ut illustris in aeuu gloria esset.
sic par nisus idemque nomen insunt:
tunc ad ultima uincere orbis illi,
nunc transis mare tu libens librorum.
et Musae tibi opem ferant canorae*

*atque Mnemosyne det uber album
ut istam satiet sitim perennem.
si placet tibi, nuntios remitte
inter proelia magna, miles audax,
cum rare ueniant breues quietes.
at noli tamen huc remittere illos:
scito me abfore. num putas magistrum
nos Aristotelem domi restare?
uix! stipendia longa demerebo
nec umquam rediturus ipse uictor.
nam nos inuenient benigna Fata
discentem sine termino et quiete.*

* * *

Metre: Hendecasyllables

Translation:

Alexander, hungry for the ancient learning (a vice which I declare to be the best and valued by me for a long time now), you were a hard-working student: well done for your learned mind! But now you must go away to learn from another teacher and more fully. The pursuit of offices is of no concern for you nor the glorious stage nor the crowns that saluting Mars has given to soldiers. This is nothing new, young man, nothing shameful! Listen to one who speaks the truth: gladly do I grow old as a teacher now in the reading of so many books, often in the instructing of so many students, but always as if by a very rigorous law my whole mind is devoted to letters. For a terrible desire for them holds me from boyhood to grave. With such a love you seem to be

ensnared as a hare in a hidden net. Do you fear this? Come now, don't be afraid! For our servitude is most sweet like the one that Hercules once bore easily when he was weaving in Omphale's apartment. Nor should you ever fear the heap of books: when that Macedonian, the son of the general Philip, stood on Asian shores himself, great kingdoms loomed before him, ones that the god Bacchus alone was able to hold with his own power and that of his father, kingdoms not to be numbered by a weary mind. But he was desirous of every labor so that he might have illustrious glory forever. So you and he have an equal striving and the same name: back then it was his aim to conquer to the ends of the earth, now may you cross the sea of books gladly. May the singing Muses bring you aid and Mnemosyne give you her white breast so that she quench your perennial thirst. If it pleases you, send back messengers amid the great battles, brave soldier, whenever brief moments of rest rarely come. But yet do not send them back here: know that I will be away. You don't think me to be the teacher Aristotle staying at home, do you? Hardly! I will earn my pay for long service nor will I ever return a victor. For the kindly Fates will find me learning without end or respite.

* * *

Duo Carmina Ad Dies Natales Amici et Amicae Celebrandos

Herimannus Nouocomensis

Herimannus Nouocomensis writes: These two short poems are really private. They are dedicated to two friends of mine, with whom I spent the most beautiful years of my life in Ferrara, where I attended the Liceo Ludovico Ariosto in the '70s and built up my knowledge of classical languages. In the first poem *Die natali Andreae* you will find a topographic reference to the monastery next to the small church of Santa Monica, where my classroom was located in my first two school years: in those times too many young people aspired to take classical studies and the building was not large enough. Also other dear schoolfellows and friends are named. I tried to recall the mood of familiarity and mutual trust in the wonderful scene of the Estensi's town.

The second poem *Die natali Isabellae* pays honour to my dearest friend, whose height reminded me of a poplar: these trees are the usual background of that part of the Po River Basin and in an ancient myth are Phaeton's sisters mourning on the river banks. But her physical beauty moved my soul only a bit: I did not fall in love, and that is why our friendship is so lasting. The only persons who have read these verses until now are the dedicatees.

(1) Die natali Andreae

quot decurrerunt hiemes et lucida uera,

Andrea, ab autumno quo puerum ad Monicae

diuinae templum me contulit Aeneadarum

in ueterem sermonem immoderatus amor!

tunc te cognoui, grati tunc inuicem eramus,

ortaque mox dulcis mutua amicitia:

quam ualde augebant permulta uerba iocosa

doctrinae studia et seria colloquia.

o quotiens mater mea uel tua Fabriciue

siue Petri Marci dulcia amica tulit!

o quotiens rapide tota est Ferraria diua

lustrata a nobis uere hieme in nebula!

quae tempus rapuit: nouum et ignotum incipit aeuum,

nec iuuenes quae nos maluimus legerent.

atqui durat adhuc lapillus amicitiae tot

post annos, aequae splendor atque adamas.

Nouocomi, V die ante Nonas Octobres MMIII

* * *

Metre: Elegiac couplets

Translation: On Andrea's birthday

How many winters, how many sunny springs have passed, since the autumn when my immoderate love for the old speech of Aeneas' descendants moved me, a boy, to the church of Saint Monica! Then I knew you, we used to be in a good relationship and soon a nice mutual friendship began: this was considerably increased with facetious jokes, school studies and grave conversations. How many times my mother or yours or Fabrice's or Peter Mark's brought us flavoured sweets! How many times we scoured divine Ferrara speedily in spring, in winter, in the fog! Time took away all this: now a new unknown age is beginning, and young people would not like to read what we used to love. Nevertheless the small stone of our friendship is still lasting after so many years, as bright as a diamond. Como, October 3rd 2003

* * *

(2) Die natali Isabellae

*quot uera atque hiemes, amica, et aestus
post nos liquimus a diebus illis
cum primum timido mihi Isabella
cognita est! Coma erat fere aurea, alto
corpore ut Phaëtontidum sororum
micabant ueneres cupidinesque
paululum quae animum mouere possent.
propter hoc (puto) et arduis diebus
saeculi noui, ut aurum in aurea arca,
nostra amicitia integra inuenitur.*

Nouocomi, XI die ante Kalendas Octobres MMII

* * *

Metre: Hendecasyllables

Translation: On Isabella's birthday.

How many winters and summers, my friend, we left behind our shoulders, since those days when for the first time Isabella was introduced to me, who was so shy! Your hair was almost golden, in your body, as tall as Phaethon's sisters, gracefulness shone that could move my soul only a bit. That is why (I believe), even in the hard days of the new century, our friendship is still entire like gold in a golden case. Como, September 21st 2002

* * *

Ablata

Valentina DeNardis

Valentina DeNardis writes: This poem focuses on a point in a relationship when one person is admiring or thinking of the other during a moment when interaction is not possible, for whatever reason. I recall Sappho's (31) and Catullus' (51) poems of an admirer longingly watching the object of his affection, who is occupied with another, and also the elegies of Catullus (83) and Ovid (*Amores* 1.4), when the admirer is at a dinner party watching his beloved and her husband. In my poem, the admirer is in a classroom, not paying attention to a lecturing professor, since she is distracted by thoughts of another student in the class.

doctore assidue dictante audis bene uerba

distringi nullis quod licet alteriis;

sede ac in aduersa uideor sentire tuum risum

et tenerum in collo basium ablata meo.

* * *

Metre: Elegiac couplets

Translation: Carried Away.

With the professor continuously lecturing, you listen to the words well because it is permitted to be distracted by no other things; but in seat opposite [you] I seem to perceive/feel your laugh and tender kiss on my neck, I having been carried away.

* * *

De Discipulorum Reditu Ab Otio Aestivo

Lydia Ariminensis

Lydia Ariminensis writes: I wrote this short poem in autumn 2013, thinking of the mood of many students who, coming back to school without enthusiasm, long for the summer amusements on the beach of Rimini and for the fellowship of friends, many of whom live far away.

*aestas autumno cedit uario nebulisque
cuncta albent fuis, pallida humi folia
in strata crepitant saeuo cumuli pede fracti
ui uentus magna fert spolia arborea
sub Foebo tenui uoluuntur uortice torto
paruo circuitu peruolitant leuiter:
discipuli ut studiis se dent maesti reuocantur
otia dimittunt, laetitiae comites
- Sol et litora amoena aer feruensque ualete!-
Lintres et cumbae limine in aequoreo
non clamore ioci et ludi laeto resonant iam,
non ardens splendet litus apud pelagus,
orae incultae adstant peregrinis aere fusco:
hic illic rari conspiciunt abeunt
sub pluuiam risus pulchras memorantque puellas
quas alias alio cura paterna refert.*

ad tempus redeunt grauiora ad munera alumni

emptum concurrunt en tabulas calamos

libros et peras - dulces coetus ualeatis ! -

ecce magistri illis ardua munera dant

- Vergilius docet - at labor improbus omnia uincit

libris dummodo dent illi operam adsiduam

dum redeat iucunda aestas omnesque cachinni!

* * *

Metre: Elegiac couplets

Translation: The Return of Students from their Summer Holidays

Summer gives place to colourful autumn and everything is white for the spreading mist, pale leaves crackle on the ground on the street, heaps crashed with cruel feet, the wind carries away tree spoils with great strength, under the weak sunshine they whirl with circular eddies, fly here and there gently drawing small turns. Students, in a sad mood, are recalled to their studies. They leave leisure, fellow of joy. 'Sun and pleasant beaches and hot weather, farewell!' On the seaside boats do not echo any longer for funny screams of jokes and games, the scorching beach does not shine anymore next to the sea, wild shores lay in front of travellers under a cloudy sky: here and there few of them look around and go away under the rain, remembering laughters and nice girls, whom the care of their fathers brought back to different places. For the present, students go back to harder duties, they crowd to buy notebooks, pens, books and sacks. Farewell, sweet companies! Look, teachers assign hard homeworks to them - Vergil says - but hard work wins everything, if they just work sedulously, until funny summer and all laughters come back!

* * *

Basia Enumerata

Jonathan Meyer

Jonathan Meyer writes: This poem is a tribute to two Latin poets for whom I have the greatest admiration. The first is Catullus, whose poems on kisses – numbers 5 (*Vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus*) and 7 (*Quaeris quot mihi basiationes*) in the corpus – require no introduction. The second poet is Janus Secundus (1511-1536), the Dutch neo-Latin poet and prodigy who composed (in addition to elegies, epithalamia, and other poetry) the *Basia*, a cycle of nineteen short poems celebrating the kiss. The seventh *Basium* in the cycle (*Centum basia centies*) draws directly on the magnificent Catullan creations mentioned above – and is magnificent in its own right.

dulcia uesani poscunt quot basia uates!

innumera enumerant: post ea plura petunt!

nam tu mille, dein centum, deinde altera mille

basia, dein centum, docte Catulle, rogas –

nec iam finis adest – dein milleque et altera centum

adiungis: summam quis reputare potest?

heu! opus est abaco. numerantur milia terna,

ter centum. sunt haec satque superque uiro?

ille negat: “Lybico quot sunt in litore harenae,

quot stellae, tot erunt satque superque mihi.”

oscula non aliter numerat iucunda Secundus,

alter qui calamo paene Catullus erat.

longe sed cumulum superasti, Iane, Catulli:

*parui ter centum, milia terna putans,
centum tu centena dares, millenaque centum –
felix, ah!, toties pulchra Neaera fuit! –
miliaque imprimeres millena, tot oscula quot sunt
seu pelago guttae, sidera siue polo.
tertius ipse in idem uolui certamen inire,
uates si possem uincere forte duos.
ast ego cum sescenta tibi cantare pararem
basia, sescentis nexa, Diana, modis,
“esne mathematicus” dixisti “an miles Amoris?
suauia dum numeras, suauia ferre nequis!
ter centum ualeant, ualeant haec milia terna!
da mihi suauiolum – non ego plura rogo –
mellitum, rorans, tenerum, sine fine, uenustum:
unum tale, inquam, quale neque ante tuli.”
Iunxi labra labris. superum per numina iuro,
suauius hoc solum mille, Catulle, tuis.*

* * *

Metre: Elegiac couplets

Translation: Counting Kisses

How many sweet kisses mad poets demand! They count out countless kisses: after that, they request more! You, learned Catullus, ask for a thousand kisses, then a hundred, then another thousand, then a hundred—you're not done yet—then you add another thousand and another hundred. Who can calculate the total? Alas! I need an abacus. The grand total is three thousand, three hundred. Are these enough and more than enough for him? He says no: "As many as are the sands on the shore of Lybia, as many as are the stars, so many will be enough and more than enough for me." In the same way Secundus, who was almost a second Catullus with his pen, counts up delightful kisses. But you far outdid Catullus' pile of kisses, Janus. Thinking little of three thousand, three hundred, you would give ten thousand, and a hundred thousand—ah, so many times fortunate was lovely Neaera!—and you would apply a million kisses, as many as are the drops in the sea or the stars in heaven. I wanted to be the third to enter into this contest, to see if I could perhaps surpass the other two poets. But as I was getting ready, Diana, to sing infinite kisses to you, applied in an infinite number of ways, you said, "Are you a mathematician—or a soldier of love? When you count kisses, you can't give kisses! Away with these three hundred, away with these three thousand! Give me a little kiss—I ask for no more—one sweet as honey, dripping with dew, soft, endless, lovely: one kiss, I mean, like I've never had before." I joined my lips with hers. By the gods in heaven, I swear, this single kiss, Catullus, was sweeter than a thousand of yours.

* * *

Romae Occasus

Marco Cristini

Marco Cristini writes: I had the first idea of *Romae Occasus* when studying the Fall of the Western Roman Empire. As a matter of fact we read in almost all books that the year 476 indicates the beginning of the Middle Ages, but very few people understood that in 476 when Odoacer compelled the young Romulus Augustulus to abdicate the situation of Italy was already helpless. On the other hand the sack of Rome of 410 was a real blow for the Latin prestige: Rome had not been conquered since Brennus (390 B.C.). The news (*Roma capta!*) created great anxiety all over the Empire and it was one of the main reason why Augustine wrote his *De Civitate Dei*. So in this poem I try to imagine the feelings of the Romans who saw their world fading before their eyes.

stabat Roma peritura

ante hostes ruitura

barbarorum circumdata

ira a Deis non servata.

spectat Gothos inter fora,

Consul fugit sine mora.

templa Iovis sunt vastata.

domus Sullae populata.

non sunt duces exhortantes,

non legiones oppugnantes.

corda cuncta sine honore,

metus certat cum pudore.

ubi Cato, ubi Titus?

ubi est Romanus abitus?

iam sepulchri antiquorum

gemunt omnes senatorum.

Alarice, quid fecisti?

caput mundi occidisti.

est nunc templum civitatum

prope a gothis iam necatum.

complet fletus matronarum

auram Romae et puellarum.

parcitur non senectute,

nemo est domo sua tute.

fax Latina iam non splendet.

quis nunc orbis lumen prendet?

improvisae nox appetit.

umbra nigra cuncta cepit

*Nova Roma Constantini,
domus Livi et Augustini,
Imperatrix populorum,
serva flammam Romanorum!*

* * *

Metre: Rhythmic Trochaic

Translation: Rome's Sunset

Rome laid, doomed,
Falling, in front of her enemies,
Surrounded by the barbarians' wrath,
Protected no more by her gods.

She sees the Goths in the *fora*,
The consul runs away without delay,
The temples of Jupiter are destroyed,
Sulla's house plundered.

There are no generals who exhort,
No legions who fight,
All hearts are without honour,
Fear struggles with blame.

Where is Cato? Where is Titus?
Where has the Roman gone off?
All ancient senators'
Sepulchres already groan.

Alaric, what have you done?
You've slayed the world's capital.
The temple of cities has been
Almost killed by the Goths.

The weeping of matrons and girls
Fills up the air of Rome.
The old age is not spared,

One is no more secure at home.

The Latin torch has ceased to shine,
Who will now take in his hand the world's light?
The night falls unexpectedly,
A dark shadow has taken hold of everything.

New Rome of Constantine,
Livy's and Augustine's house,
Nations' empress,
Preserve the Romans' torch!

* * *

Uxorí In Italiám Iter Facienti

Raul Lavalle

Raul Lavalle writes: This little poem is written in trochaic accentual verse. Of course, as it's possible to see, my verses have a lot of poetic licences, in accents and in syllables. I beg pardon for my bad "Spanish" English, a language anyhow that I love; of course, for my *delirum sermonem Latinum*. The word *Latinoamnesicanus* of course has a pun. In the radio a journalist used to criticize in that way the forgetful character of Latin American people. I feel that we Argentineans find it very difficult to learn from our mistakes.

ualeas, uxor mea pulchra,

quae reuises Italiam.

miraberis monumenta,

quae gloriosa excellunt.

sed –pro dolor! – Italicus

uir te a me auferet.

certe illi sunt diuitiae

et me tenet paupertas;

illi pulchro est media aetas,

nos opprimit senectus;

sum Latinoamnesicanus,

optimatum est unus.

quoquo modo abi, uxor,

sed memoriam mei habeas:

etsi multi sunt meliores

est in me fidelitas.

etiam dei terras uisitant:

et tu in brachia reuenias.

(uxor mea iter fecit 22 Ian. 2014.)

* * *

Metre: Rhythmic Trochaic

Translation: Good bye, my beautiful wife,

Who will travel to Italy.
You'll admire the monuments
Which are full of glory.
But –oh pain!– an Italian
Will deprive me of your love.
Sure he's very rich
And I am so poor;
He is nice and middle aged
And I am very old;
I'm from Latin America
And he belongs to nobility.
Anyhow, good bye, my wife,
But, please, remember me:
It's true a lot of men are better
Than me, but loyalty is in me.
The gods sometimes visit the Earth:
You too, I pray, return to me.

(My wife travelled on 22 Jan. 2014)

* * *

FEATURES

Who? What? Where? Part III

Barry Baldwin concludes (for now) his search for some lost gems of Anglo-Latin poetry

“The Eighteenth Century represents the height of classical culture in England” (Bradner, 226, devoting his longest chapter to it). Can’t argue with that. Big names (Bourne, Johnson, etc.) and small crowd his pages – Addison came in the previous chapter (‘Building a Tradition’); cf. Estelle Haan, *Virgilius Redivivus: Studies in Joseph Addison’s Latin Poetry* (2006). Due attention is paid to published collections of schoolboy compositions – Eton and Westminster led the way – with Bradner exclaiming over their “quite remarkable quality.”

Bradner’s treatment (despite previously stated reservations, his pioneering work remains the essential starting-point) has recently been supplemented by John Gilmore’s *Musae Anglicanae Anglice Redditae: A Selection of Verse Written In Latin by British Poets of the Eighteenth Century* (2007), and by *Neo-Latin Poetry in the British Isles* (2012), edited by Luke Houghton & Gesine Manuwald.

Gilmore estimates that “several thousand eighteenth-century Englishmen had at least one poem circulating in manuscript.” –

Vates, thou should’st have been living at that hour! To adapt that famous jingle from *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, We seek them here, We seek them there, Baldwin and *Vates* seek them everywhere.

One un-Bradnered place to look is the *Thraliana* of Johnson’s long-suffering friend and hostess Hester Thrale-Piozzi, a fascinating medley of diary and commonplace book, memorably edited (1951) by Katherine C. Balderston. It includes several Latin poems by her mentor Arthur Collier (1707-1777, not in Bradner; cf. Tania Smith’s essay in *Rhetoric: Journal of the Canadian Society*

for the Study of Rhetoric 2 (2007), 1-26 -online), also specimens of their work eagerly brought to her by young gentlemen of her acquaintance – nowadays, they'd be flocking to our Mark.

As Bradner (228) notes, albeit quoting or discussing no examples, a prime publishing outlet for Latin (and occasionally Greek) verses was the *Gentleman's Magazine*, founded in 1731 by Edward Cave, hailed in Alcaics as 'Sylvanus Urban' by Samuel Johnson, whose public bilingual poetic career he thereby launched; cf. my 1995 edition of Johnson's Latin and Greek Poetry (37-41), and for a superb account of the *GM's* role see Emily Lorraine de Montluzin's online 'The Poetry of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1731-1800: An Electronic Database of Titles, Authors, and First Lines - An Ongoing Project,' – long may it go on, as did the *GM* which lasted until 1922 – may *Vates* have as long a run!

Incidentally, the *GM* was located at the site of a coffee house operated by the father of artist William Hogarth. His cultural vision greatly outdid Starbucks: only Latin could be spoken on the premises. It failed.

Bradner's description nicely encapsulates: "The *Gentleman's Magazine* gave evidence of its belief in the popularity of Latin verse by including specimens in almost every issue during its first twenty years. Sometimes these were accompanied by translations, while in other cases a contributor would send in a translation of one which had recently appeared. Some of them, on the other hand, remained permanently obscure to the ladies, who, not being allowed to share in the benefits of a public school education, usually were not in a position to appreciate sentiments expressed in a classical language. The confidence of the editors in their subscribers' interest in Latin verse was further evidenced by a competition which they conducted in 1735 for the best Latin epigram submitted and by the numerous extracts which they published from current books of Latin poems.

Bradner (subjoining the *London Magazine's* contribution – it published Loveling's *Festum Lustrale*, “the best descriptive poem of the century”) has oddly forgotten the likes of Johnson's friend (he liked her puddings as much as her Greek) Elizabeth Carter. In fact, there is ample evidence of female Latin poets in England and on the continent, their full stories being told by Jane Stevenson, *Women Latin Poets: Language, Gender and Authority from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century* (2005), and in *Neo-Latin Women Writers: Elizabeth Jane Weston and Bathsua Reginald (Makin)*, edited (2000) by Betty Travitsky and others. They were not classically deprived by being debarred from the public schools.

There was a time, at least here at the University of Calgary, when to read the *GM* one had to crouch in the Rare Books Room under security as tight as that once maintained in the ‘obscene’ collections of the British Museum's North Reading Room. Nowadays, it is but a mouse-click away.

A few examples of its contents endorses Bradner's eulogy:

- Vol. 4, 1734, 392: Andrew Stone was promoted to Under-Secretary of State by the Duke of Newcastle for his “ingenious” Latin poem on The Queen's Grotto – not an avenue of advancement under the Coalition or New Labour.
- Vol. 71, 1801, 841: An elegiac rendering of Hamlet's ‘To Be...’ soliloquy, by one W. Hanbury of Rugby.
- Vol. 148, 1830, 391: Someone concealed under the initials W. M-NW-G (a common *GM* cloak) proposed a compilation of Latin verses by greater (Cowley, Gray, Johnson, Milton) and lesser names. In cognate vein, W. Durrant Cooper of London suggested (Vol. 189, 1851, 345-347) putting out the published and unpublished verses of Alexander Gill (Bradner, 357-358, lists his original collections), described by Aubrey's colleague Anthony à Wood (*Athenae Oxonienses*, 3. 42) as “One of the best Latin poets in the nation.”

Bradner likewise (367-368) records the Latin verse publications of William Dunkin (?1709-1765), but gives him no discussion, a fate hardly befitting one dubbed “The best Latin poet in this kingdom” by no less a critic than Jonathan Swift. Dunkin published many Latin poems, including a mock epic *Speculum Poeticum* – there’s a complete list with full details online. Most entertaining is his early effort the *Murphaeid*, of which Joseph Cowper published an English translation (1730) under the jaw-breaking title *Technethyrambeia*. This was a mock epic on Trinity College’s porter Paddy Murphy and his encounters with rumbustious undergraduates – I’d like to think it was one of the inspirations for James Joyce’s Circe’s damnation of them as “All prick and no pence.”

Last and in some (not all) ways least, Latin versions from the *Greek Anthology* – a *Vates* staple – said by Bradner (7, otherwise ignored save for glances *en passant*) to have “Exerted the greatest and most persuasive influence on neo-Latin poets.” For the continental records, see the two books (1935 & 1946) by James Hutton, covering France, Italy, and The Netherlands. Also, watch out for Gideon Nisbet’s *Greek Epigram in Reception* (2013).

I do not know under what circumstances C. W. Mellor produced his *Latin and English Translations from the Greek Anthology* (1914), nor for that matter Thomas More’s whose versions were (Bradner, 14) the first Latin poems published (1518) as a literary unit by an Englishman. As to Bradner’s eulogy, well, Up To A Point, Lord Copper. Both Johnson himself and Boswell say he knocked off his translations during bouts of insomnia late in life, as had the younger Scaliger done with his Greek renditions of Martial in 1601, evidently using the *Greek Anthology* as a deluxe Gradus. This ruffled editor and critic Edward Malone: “I doubt whether productions composed in such a state of mind are correct enough for publication.”

Malone obviously wished that the Great Cham had enjoyed better nights. Neither Johnson nor Boswell remarked on their quality. As the Yale editors put it, they are “Neither much better or much worse than the versions by Hugo Grotius. The Latin is good enough but not remarkable.” A bit hard on Grotius, his versions praised by the expert pen of J. E. Sandys (*A History of Classical Scholarship* 2, 318) as “admirable.” I doubt much would have been claimed for them by Johnson, whose *Dictionary* defines Epigram as “A short poem terminating in a point.”

A contemporary who would have despised them was Lord Chesterfield, given this epistolary admonitions to his son (*Letters*, no. 100, January 25, 1745): “ I hope that you are got out of the worst company in the world, the Greek epigrams. Martial has wit, and is worth your looking into sometimes; but I recommend the Greek epigrams to your supreme contempt. Good night to you.” – a nocturnal valediction redolent of *The Two Ronnies*.

And Good Night to you. But, as Ali Oop used to say on ITMA: “I go, I come back.”

* * *

De Gustibus non est Disputandum

Letters to the Editor

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

Dear Editor,

As I write, it is a raw and bitter January. Here in the Sangre De Cristo range the days have often been very cold, and the nights colder still. Early snows, though followed by a long period of dryness, still linger on the ground.

When I was a young fellow, even though mortality then seemed like something that pertained only to other people, I foolishly fancied the Winter months laden with death and barrenness. Of course at that time I didn't understand that the earth was gestating, that even the seemingly delicate white tailed does walked the woodlands with spotted fawns growing in their bellies. In time I came to realize that amid the snow, the fallen leaves, and the bare branches, Alma Venus was working in the buried seeds, the frozen buds, and the steady procession toward the Equinox. As I grew older January and Winter began to emerge less barren and more fruitful.

And this January has been no exception. As the Sun was traversing Capricorn, headed for Aquarius, our Joseph Tusiani came into his ninetieth birthday, a milestone not only for him, but also for literature and scholarship. On behalf of *Vates*, its readers and contributors, I wish Professor Tusiani a very happy and warm birthday and many more joyous and productive years. But he has said it better than I ever might:

*nolite, o iuuenes, uidere finem
diuae mentis in hac humo caduca:
aeternum uiget ac triumphat in me
lucis principium quod in tenaci et
una reste ligat senem et puellum.*

Bob Zisk

Advice for Beginners

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

In this instalment, Mark Walker suggests ...

Start with Trochees

Trochaic verse, an extremely popular form in medieval Latin, is a great place to begin composing in Latin. It has an easy-to-understand rhythm and uses rhyming line endings, hence closely resembles English vernacular poetry. Unlike the quantitative verse of the classical Roman poets, this is all about word **stress**.

A *trochee* is a two-beat metrical ‘foot’ with the stress accent falling on the first beat (so, “dum-de, dum-de, dum-de, dum-de”). Contrast with an *iamb*, in which the stress falls on the second beat. Since Latin generally dispenses with the particles we rely on so much in English (‘a’, ‘the’ etc.) it tends to fall more naturally into a trochaic rhythm. In English, by contrast, an iambic rhythm is more common, e.g. the classic iambic pentameter of Shakespeare: “a horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse” (“di-dum, di-dum, di-dum” etc.).

Perhaps the best and most famous example of Latin trochaic verse is the magnificent *Dies Irae* of the Requiem Sequence. Each highly characteristic stanza consists of three rhyming lines of four trochaic feet each (the underlined syllables are stressed):

Dies irae, dies illa

Solvet saeclum in favilla

Teste David cum Sibylla

[“Day of wrath, that day / When the world will dissolve into ashes / As predicted by David and the Sibyll.”]

For anyone who has wrestled with the intricacies of quantitative verse it will be a relief to notice first of all that word stress is not subject to the same rules as syllable weight. So, the final *-es* and *-ae* of *Dies irae* are unstressed, though they would both count as ‘heavy’ syllables in quantitative verse. (The word *dies* actually scans as an iamb in quantitative verse, but here it is a trochee). Nor does the syllable ending the word *Solvēt* become stressed, despite being followed by another consonant beginning the next word *saeclum*. Nor, for that matter, is the final syllable of *saeclum* elided even though it ends in an ‘m’ and is followed by a word beginning with a vowel. Here word stress is king.

You might notice a preponderance of two-syllabled words. There’s a good reason for that. In a typical two-syllable Latin word the stress accent falls on the first syllable. Hence *Dies irae, dies illa*. So the simplest way to create a trochaic line is to stick with two-syllabled words. Fortunately, many basic Latin nouns and verbs are just such words – making this a verse form that even students with only a rudimentary vocabulary can use very early on in their Latin studies. It’s a fun way for teachers to encourage Latin composition: give students a list of words they already know and see what they can create.

Things get even more interesting if you use three-syllable words. These are stressed on their second syllable if it has a long vowel or is followed by two consonants. So, in the *Dies irae* above we have stress accents on the second syllable of *favilla* and *Sibylla*. Hence, too, *Fortuna* in the opening of the famous *Carmina Burana*:

*O Fortuna,
velut luna*

[“O Fortune, like the moon ...”]

Observe how the opening ‘O’ is necessary to establish the trochaic rhythm. The poet provides variety in the next few lines:

statu variabilis
semper crescis
aut decrecis
vita detestabilis

[“changeable in state, you are always waxing or waning, detestable life”]

Here we have straightforward two-foot trochees (*semper crescis ... aut decrecis*) alternating with longer lines that have an extra syllable at the end (or rather, are missing a final syllable to complete an additional foot) – *statu variabilis ... vita detestabilis* – both of which consist of three-and-a-half feet. Such ‘hanging’ lines are technically known as *catalectic*. Note also how those four lines rhyme in the pattern A B B A.

Thanks to the inflected endings of Latin nouns and adjectives, such rhymes are relatively easy to achieve. Latin verb participles are especially helpful. Here’s how the poet of the *Dies Irae* (probably Thomas of Celano, 1190-1260) uses future participles in the second stanza:

Quantus tremor est futurus
quando iudex est venturus
cuncta stricte discussurus.

[“What dread there will be / When the Judge shall come / To judge all things severely.”]

And he repeats the same trick a little later on:

Quid sum miser tunc dicturus,

quem patronum rogaturus,

cum vix iustus sit securus?

[“What then am I, wretch, to say / What advocate am I to ask to defend me / When the just may hardly be secure?”]

One final example – perfect participles this time. The terrifying fate awaiting the damned described in a brilliant ablative absolute clause. These are the lines so memorably discussed in *Amadeus*, as the dying Mozart asks Salieri to transcribe his immortal musical setting:

Confutatis maledictis

flammis acribus addictis,

voca me cum benedictis.

[“When the damned have been confounded / And sacrificed to the bitter flames / Call me with the blessed.”]

Powerful stuff, powerfully conveyed. Notice particularly the double-stresses in the four-syllabled *confutatis maledictis ... benedictis*.

So, if you are a little put off by the complexities of classical quantity, or even if you want to add some spice to your Latin versifying, try composing a few trochaic lines. If you play around with the rhythm and rhyme (couplets, triplets, catalectic lines, alternating rhymes etc. etc.) you can create remarkable effects using even a basic vocabulary.

* * *

Contributors

Lucius Alter currently lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He has been a restaurateur, and has taught *World Religions* and *Classical Languages*. He has also taught courses on planning and zoning issues and construction and design topics as they relate to community based low income housing development. He was a proposal writer for not-for-profit community organizations involved in poor peoples' housing and in ex-offender training and reintegration, and he did stints as a community organizer, an advocate for the homeless, and Director of Technical Services for New York City's now defunct Division of Homeless Housing Development.

Lydia Ariminensis is the Latin nickname of Lidia Brighi, graduate and specialized with a two year master in Classical Letters at the Università di Bologna (Italy). She teaches letters, Latin and Greek at the Liceo ginnasio Giulio Cesare in Rimini. She writes regularly articles and poems in Latin for the web magazine *Ephemeris* <http://ephemeris.alcuinus.net/index.php> . She obtained a *publica laus* in the *Certamen Scevola Mariotti* , the acknowledgements of which were given in April 2013 at the Università Pontificia Salesiana, Rome.

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

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

Valentina DeNardis earned her Ph.D. in Classics at New York University and currently teaches at Villanova University, where she serves as Director of the Graduate Program in Classical Studies. Her interests include Greek and Latin poetry, ancient astronomy and astrology, gender studies, and the legacy of the classical world. She can't decide what she enjoys more: writing Latin and Greek poetry or writing and performing songs in English. She has been known to bring her guitar to class once a year or so for a brief diversion when her students are looking particularly weary.

Kyle Gervais PhD (Otago), sees no reason why a Doctor of Classics shouldn't spend his days translating comic books into Latin verse.

Patrick Paul Hogan is an independent Classical scholar in the United States. A 2005 graduate of the PhD program in Classical Philology at the University of Michigan, he has taught at colleges and universities in Michigan and serves on the board of *Amphora*, the outreach publication of the American Philological Association. He is also an active member of the Byzantine Studies Association of North America and the International Plutarch Society.

Jonathan Meyer is a devotee of ancient languages with a special interest in neo-Latin literature. He has an M.A. from Yale Divinity School, where he read Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and Coptic. He spent a summer *sub arboribus* with Reginald Foster (OCD) and has been part of the active Latin program at the University of Kentucky, where he earned a second M.A. He spent the past year as the Thomas Day Seymour Fellow in History and Literature at the American School of Classical Studies in Athens. He is currently studying neo-Latin novels at the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Neo-Latin Studies in Innsbruck, Austria.

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

Herimannus Nouocomensis is the Latin nickname of Ermanno Pizzotti, an Italian lover of Latin and Greek living in Como; he holds a degree in chemistry and works in a public chemical laboratory in Italy. He took part in the *Colloquia* held by the Finnish Public Radio YLE for some years, then started to cooperate with *Ephemeris* <http://ephemeris.alcuinus.net/index.php>, a magazine entirely written in latin founded in Warsaw, which soon will celebrate its tenth anniversary. He tries to speak Latin whenever possible.

Raul Lavalle (latine *Radulfus Bonaerensis*) was born in 1953 and teaches Latin in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He wrote several articles, translated some Greek and Latin texts and has a blog devoted to literature (www.litterulae.blogspot.com).

Lorenzo Viscido was born in 1952 at Squillace, Southern Italy. He obtained his Doctor's Degree in Classical Literature from the University of Salerno in 1976 and for a few years taught Italian and Latin in some High Schools. He also was a researcher at the Department of Classics of the same University from 1979 to 1980 and at the University of Calabria from 1980 to 1981. In 1981 he left Italy in order to teach Italian and Latin at the "Scuola d'Italia" in New York City. He is the author of several books on Cassiodorus and many articles about the same author, as well about Clemens of Alexandria, Saint Jerome, Paul the Deacon and Byzantine hymnography. Several of his Latin poems have been published in *Vox Latina*, *Meander*, and *Latinitas*. He received *publicae laudes* at the *Certamen Vaticanum* of 1983 and 1986, the Gold Medal at that of 1985 and the Silver Medal at the *Certamen Catullianum* of 1984.

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

* * *

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