VATES

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Editorial

Welcome to this fourth edition of *Vates*, the free journal of new Latin poetry. I'm delighted that we are reaching an ever wider and increasingly international audience. Poetry in this issue comes from Italy, Argentina the USA, Canada and the UK. We have readers in Europe, North America, Jamaica, Australia … and the generous contributions from our poets around the globe shows no sign of slowing down, either – quite the opposite, in fact, which is a gratifying indication that we must be doing something right!

One issue that prompted me to set up this journal in the first place was the problem of finding a readership for new Latin verse: 'Who reads Latin Poems written in these days!' wrote Walter Savage Landor's exasperated brother in 1820, scarcely able to believe his brother would waste his talents on such a quixotic endeavour, and the situation can hardly be said to have improved since then. It is, after all, one thing to feel moved to write Latin verse, quite another to persuade anyone else to read it.

Hopefully, a quick look at the variety of verse in this issue will tempt any Latinist to read at least something – be it an extract from Brad Walton's epic First World War poem, or Joseph Tusiani's witty musings on old age, or Massimo Scorsone's erudite adaptations of Chinese originals. In just four issues, we've already seen in addition to classical metres, haiku, rhythmic verse, free verse … one thing is clear: new Latin poetry is more abundant and varied than any of us knew.

Vates needs you!

If you like what you see here please take a moment to tell people about it. But most importantly, if reading this inspires you to compose some Latin verses of your own, please don't be shy – share them with us!

Once again, *gratias maximas* to all the contributors without whose kind and generous support this journal would not be possible.

If you missed previous issues, please visit the *Vates* webpage to download your free copies.

Mark Walker, Editor
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Carmina Latina

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

After the Raid

Brad Walton

Brad Walton writes: I have been working on a story poem in hexameters set during World War I on the Western Front. In the following excerpt, a hand-picked group of soldiers from a British battalion has raided a German trench in retaliation for a similar attack. Alfred is a company officer and also the architect and commander of the raid. Walter is one of his sergeants. This raid is Alfred's first experience of close combat.

auia per deserta suis redeuntibus orta
militibus maesta et turbata silentia sensit
Alfredus. nunc hic sistit, nunc ille, uomitque
corpore deflexo. reducem saluere cateruam
plurima gratantes laeti iussere cohortes.
grex uictor presso resalutant corde sodales,
atque ubi rem fortes breuiter retulere, reductas
in caueas umbrasque suas plerique recedunt.
e paucis et adhuc tristi certamine laetis
haud tenui Brennus turbam, momenta, cruorem
enarrat studio, iuuenes tenet atque loquellis.
Alfredo, ut cessit properans ad tecta, biformis
sanguinei ruit in mentem terroris imago.

cernit utrumque sua uigilem uirtute cadentem,

imprudentem alium sica praecordia caesus,

occiput atque alii ruptum liquidasque cerebro

uallorum tabulas. surgit prensaque matella

exonerat diris trepidantia uiscera formis.

Gualterus ora luto sparsus, thorace cruore

fuscata, caueae subit atque aduertit aqualem.

auersis tum dux oculis adfatur amicum,

"cum dedimus, nos si dedimus, bone Gualtere, mortem,

in fusis dedimus facto certamine campis

eminus armati, nobis nec uictima pandit

se nisi uix claram longinqua ex arce figuram,

nec fuimus certi an nostra sit glande peremptus.

hactenus occulta tulimus solamina mente,

missile non nostrum uita spoliasse. propinquus

nunc tamen occidi. submissa uoce loquentem

audissem. uidi faciem cutis atque colores

et motus animi, qui perspicerentur ocellis,

ingeniumque liquens: mitis uigil alter, amoenis

et deditus somnis; audacior alter et acer.

istis me pepulit caesis breuis horror, et illic

actutum capiunt coeptis enata secundis

gaudia, quae incursum clademque tulere per omnem.

nunc paris occisi captum retinentia torquet.

conscia profusi semper mens arguit ultrix

sanguinis immeriti et sacro de crimine damnat."
"patrasti facinus praeclarum," ait optio, "magni
et ducis egisti partes." Alfredus at illi,
"ipse mihi uideor facinus patrasse nefandum."
Gaulterus auertit uultus et "quotlibet," inquit,
"conficiat rigido generosa et fortia bello,
plurimus at miles sibi, cum iugulauerit, etsi
aggredientem hostem iussusque, homicida uidetur.
haec, domine, occulta est Martis res maxima, nullus
quam populo uates enuntiat: esse reuersus
quae secum ferat ad patriam duo uulnera miles,
hostis quod teneris inflixerit artubus, et quod
ipse suae caedendo animae, repetentia saepe
aeternis laceraturum praecordia probris.
flere senes uidi post multa decennia caedem.
non iugulare soles. proprium mandare tribuni,
sed mactare uiros caligae. nunc sanguine tincta
bellantis, ductor, inspexti pectora uulgi."
Alfredo in mentem Brennus uenit. "ut reor," inquit,
"sunt quibus occidisse placet." "placet," optio reddit,
"nonnullis, inter centum fortasse duobus,
qui faciunt caedem, caedem meminere libenter,
atque iterum occidisse petunt. plerique uirorum
sclopeti nocuum uix adducuntur ad usum."

* * *

Metre: Hexameters

Translation: Alfred perceived the gloomy and troubled silence that had emerged among his soldiers as they returned through the wilderness of No Man's Land. Now one man, then another halted, bent his body, and vomited. The troops hailed the returning company with a shower of congratulations. The victorious squadron returned the greeting with subdued spirits and, when they had given a brief account of the business, most withdrew into the dark recesses of their dugouts. Among the few still elated from the grisly combat, Brian described with no little enthusiasm the chaos, the manoeuvres and the bloodshed, and held the youngsters spell-bound with his account.

As soon as Alfred had made a swift return to his quarters, a double image of blood-bespattered horror rushed into his mind. He saw both sentries falling in the midst of their own bravery, one, taken by surprise, cut down by a bayonette to the chest, the other, the back of his head blown out and the walls of the trench streaming with his brains. Alfred jumped up, seized the bed pan and emptied his stomach, which churned with the terrible memories.

Walter, his face spattered with mud and his jacket dark with gore, entered the dug-out and noticed the basin. His officer, having turned his eyes away, addressed him as a friend. "When we killed (if, Walter, it was we who killed), we did so armed at a distance, in an engagement set on a sprawling battlefield. The victim did not present himself except as a distant figure on a far-off rampart. Moreover, we were never certain whether he had been killed by our bullet. Until now we could take this consolation in the secrecy of our thoughts, that it was not our weapon that had taken life. But now I have killed at close range. I could have heard one speaking in a whisper. I saw their faces, the complexion of their skin, whatever feelings could be seen in the eyes, and their personalities as clear as crystal. One sentry was mild and given to pleasant reveries. The other was bolder and fiercer. Their deaths struck me with a brief horror, and immediately, in reaction to our initial success, an elation came over me and carried me through the entire slaughter. Now the memory of that slain pair clutches and tortures me. My guily mind constantly denounces me for spilling innocent blood and condemns me of an accursed crime."

"It was a fine achievement for you. You played your part as a great leader."

"I feel as though I have committed a terrible outrage."

Walter turned his face away and said, "No matter how many fine, brave deeds a soldier carries out in the rigours of war, often, when he has killed an enemy, even an attacking one and under orders, he feels that he is a murderer. This, sir, is the deepest secret of war, which no poet ever tells the people: there are two wounds that a soldier carries home to his country. One is the wound that the enemy has inflicted on his vulnerable body, and the other is that which he has inflicted on himself by killing. This shreds his remembering heart with perpetual reproaches. I have seen old men weep over a killing done decades before. You are not used to killing. An officer's job is to command. Killing is the job of the rank and file. Now, sir, you have seen into a common soldier's blood-stained heart."

Brian came into Alfred's thoughts. "I suppose," he said, "that there are some people who like to kill."

His sergeant replied, "Perhaps two in every hundred like to kill, gladly remember having killed, and seek to kill again. Most men can hardly be persuaded to fire a shot in anger."

* * *

2 First World War Poems

Paul Murgatroyd

Paul Murgatroyd writes: Since I first read some World War One poets at the age of 15 I have always been very moved by such poetry. A few months ago my sister-in-law gave me for a birthday present a selection that contained several pieces which I had not seen before, and which I immediately wanted to translate into Latin.

(1)

non fodisse ualens, non audens despoliare,

ut caperem uulgus, falsa locutus ego.

omnia quae dixi constat nunc falsa fuisse,

inque illos cogor quos ego perdideram.

decepti per me certe feruentque dolentque:

tot quid praetexens conciliem iuuenes?

(2)

in uitam ueni, remeans ex urbe timoris,

ex ferruginea et fracta tellure doloris.

cum nauem caeli subter labentia signa

iactaret pontus, clamaret uentus in armis,

frigidus horrebam; sed carmina, uina, calorem

uersabam mecum, fruiturus talia rursus

per paucos paruosque dies. sum uectus et inde

dormitans raeda, Romamque repente propinquam

uersabam mecum. "Romae nunc nempe puellam

(ut prius) inueniam, facilem uanamque puellam,"

aiebam tacitus, "cuius digitos retinebo;

osque genasque meis contingam deinde labellis;

osque genasque obliuiscar post tempore paruo.

illa obliuiscar certe, cum rursus adibo

tellurem ad ferrugineam fractamque doloris,

res udas, foedas, atque anxia taedia belli."

Metre: Elegiacs (1), Hexameters (2)

Translations:

(1) *A Dead Statesman* (Rudyard Kipling)

I could not dig: I dared not rob:
Therefore I lied to please the mob.
Now all my lies are proved untrue
And I must face the men I slew.
What tale shall serve me here among
Mine angry and defrauded young?

(2) *On Leave* (Gilbert Frankau)

I came from the City of Fear,
From the scarred brown land of pain,
Back into life again...
And I thought, as the leave-boat rolled
Under the veering stars -
Wind a-shriek in her spars -
Shivering there, and cold,
Of music, of warmth, and of wine -
To be mine
For a whole short week...
And I thought, adrowse in the train,
Of London, suddenly near;
And of how - small doubt - I should find
There, as of old,
Some woman - foolishly kind:
Fingers to hold,
A cheek,
A mouth to kiss - and forget,
Forget in a little while,
Forget
When I came again
To the scarred brown land of pain,
To the sodden things and the vile,
And the tedious battle-fret.

* * *

Webicus Bacchus

Joseph Tusiani

Joseph Tusiani writes: I have recently heard of a new on-line magazine, called *BACCHUS*, soon to appear in Italy. The idea of Bacchus online inspired my *Webicus Bacchus*, which I am almost sure will raise a smile.

retibus et liquidis laqueis, Dionyse, dedisti

ebrietatem animi mentisque viris super orbem.

nunc grate genus humanum tribuit tibi donum –

rete immane et deciduum quo tu quoque nosces

ebrietatem hominum vivam sine te, sine vino.

Webicus es Bacchus talisque per aeva manebis,

sed semper, Dionyse, veni bona pocula portans.

Metre: Hexameters

Editor's Translation:

By snares and liquid traps you, Dionysus, gave drunkenness of soul and mind to men on the earth. Now the grateful human race bestows on you a gift – a vast and falling net by which you also shall know that the drunkenness of men thrives without you, without wine. You are Online Bacchus and such you will remain through the ages, but always, Dionysus, come bearing pleasant cups.

* * *

2 Carmina

J. Turner Brakeley

About J. Turner Brakeley: These are in fact new poems, but published pseudonymously by the author's *alter ego*, J. Turner Brakeley. He was a graduate of Princeton in 1862 who, after having his heart broken, spent the rest of his life as a reclusive in his native pine forests studying birds and insects and sending specimens for other men to publish findings. As the natives did not know about his scientific research they called him either the Hermit or the Poet.

(1) De Arboribus Putandis

subtundunt tonsi filices alta ilice rami,

obliuiscentes excutiunt strepitu.

adsunt falcifera Septembris sole Kalendae,

et tempus gryllis debita soluere nunc.

(2) Chrysemys Picta

tu resinati recubans sub stipite pini

misces mussata somnia fontis aqua;

nostra negotia iam nequeunt te tangere tutam;

auro ne piscator, Chrysemys, inuideat.

Metre: Elegiacs

Translations:

(1) On trimming the trees

The branches cut from the tall oak trample the ferns,
And shake out forgetful creatures with their clatter.
September's here with its scythe-wielding sun,
Now it's time to pay our debts, even crickets.

(2) Painted Turtle

Below the branch of resined pine you lie
And mix dreams with the murmuring water of the fountain;
Our present business cannot touch you, safe in your shell;
May the fisherman not envy your gold, painted turtle.

* * *

Eoan Airs
for Hesperian strings

Massimo Scorsone

Poetry by definition is untranslatable.
Only creative transposition is possible.
ROMAN JAKOBSON

Massimo Scorsone writes: My first attempt at freely paraphrasing in Latin – and, as I do confess, in an ingenuous, albeit somewhat Borgesian fashion – some acceptable specimens of Old Chinese poetry was only a few years ago.[1] However, this oriental bee had been buzzing in my bonnet for a good while, at least from the bygone days of my youth (yea, Postumus, for verily the years glide on…) when 'my eyes', to use the words of Captain Charles Ryder, 'were dry to all save poetry'. As an adolescent, mere omnivorous curiosity first led me to some of the most celebrated collections of Chinese verse in various Italian and French renditions, then to English and German translations,[2] and thus I envisioned the possibility of *Latine*, or even *Graece* moulding some exemplary imitations of the originals, and in the same rich vein of a poetic tradition that is as classical as ours, yet so different from the one to which the western *Institutio Studiorum* has accustomed us.[3] My labours continued to produce a fair amount of hotchpotch, even when I at last decided to shed the guise of the learned translator, rather surreptitiously invoking the authority of (more or less) recent precursors to justify the Orientalism *en travesti* of my 're-creations'.[4]

In fact, the pieces I have occasionally gleaned from those fields as a 'bad Laverna of good poetry',[5] though abounding in the untranslatable, are less a deliberate product of personal craftsmanship than the effect of an interpreting (or counterfeiting, if you prefer) practice, primarily intended for my own use, as the only device which enables me to partly understand literary works – and their underlying linguistic and cultural ethos – otherwise impervious to the guileless amateur wandering in the Sinological domain (even if it may well appear in his sight as a land populated by illusions of a 'classicizing exoticism', or 'exotic classicism').

Thus, although there is much in Chinese poetry that is readily enjoyable – from the sheer, fanciful elegance of immortal Li Po (the *Sinensis fidicen lyrae*, in my opinion) to Tu Fu's warm yet discreet tenderness, to the courteous idyllic allusiveness of Wang Wei and P'ei Ti, and so on – and immediately touches responsive chords within us, even when we are unaware of the original framework of

its stylistic conventions, manifest efforts had to be made to adapt the selected prosodical calque – sometimes more Catullan than Horatian in pattern – to the original register, eventually smoothing any too sharp 'Roman' traces but, at the same time, seeking not to lose the peculiarly, or even idiomatically Chinese imprint of the model, beyond any quaintness. I also tried to maintain a distinct tone for each poem, carefully dosing various suggestions, lyrical and elegiac, as seemed meet.[6]

Ultimately, I leave to the cultivated ear the task of perceiving, through the aforementioned game of mutual adjustments and correspondences, the echoes awakened by fleeting impressions on a merry-go-round of whirling chronotopes. Having bartered the Eoan *ch'in* for the Latian *barbitos*, I find that the Eastern Muses sing closer to my heart. And you, can you hear them too?

The dedicatees of this random bunch of flowers, humble yet fragrant with Eastern and Western scents, are a few kindred spirits. Among them are Domenico and Rossana, fellow scholars and patrons; Susan, colleague and confidante; Roberto, friend and former pupil; Xiaoying, *alumna* and sincere sympathizer; Riccardo, comrade and Mentor at the same time. And last, but certainly not the least, Héloïse, faithful companion in more than one venture.

Notes:

1) At the beginning of the millennium, Marc Moskowitz of Arlington, MA hosted some of my 'fakes' on '*Poesis Latina Hodierna* / Contemporary Latin Poetry', a website – already mentioned in previous issues – that 'is meant to be a jumping-off point for examples of modern […] Latin verse' (see http://www.suberic.net/~marc/scorsone.html). I then published a few latinized adaptations of poems by Li Po in the form of another semi-forgery in *Vox Latina* 38, 148 (2002), pp. 183-191. Rather pompously entitled '*De* Li Tai Po *Clarissimo Sinorum poeta, speciminibus quibusdam ejus operis additis*', this new essay of such a jocular inclination was indulgently tolerated by the editors, the late Prof. Fr. Caelestis Eichenseer, OSB and Dr. Sigrid Albert of Trier University, and thus my paraphrases of Chinese verse were ascribed to a fictitious character – one Fr. Kuno Dühring-Ebner, SJ (Berlin 1862 - Peking 1927). Could he have been a pious kinsman of the German social philosopher Karl Eugen Dühring, of Marx/Engelsian memory? In fact, the allusion to an imaginary Jesuit Sinologist should be understood as a simple tribute of admiration for the early pioneers in Oriental Studies, who succeeded in combining a traditional humanistic education with the capacity to penetrate the soul of the Middle Kingdom's literature.

2) Only recently (but not without the friendly help of some initiates and a bit of Ezrapoundian boldness) did I dare face the tangle of the ideograms – a true *selva selvaggia* to the trespasser.

3) I then resolved, as my whimsy took me, to adopt the Ionic dialect only to transpose the venerable, though anonymous, poems and ballads of the Confucian *Shih-king*, or 'Book of Odes' (oh gods and ancestors' ghosts, have mercy on my soul…). But why 'translate' anything from Classical Chinese into Greek, or Latin? Far from simply being arbitrary snobbery, or the serendipitous result of an impressionistic choice (even if, after all, humanistic Latin, with its

soft, timeless indeterminacy, its versatile expressiveness and capability, would seem particularly suitable for such a task), it was an option inspired by a certain compelling analogies between these classical tongues: for they can universally be considered, in fact, as written 'mandarin' idioms, marked (a merely fortuitous convergence) not only for their many peculiarities – from 'their tendency to transcend the limits of national boundaries and time' to 'their prestige, usually in contrast to a "vulgar" spoken medium; their irregular phonological evolution; their role as vehicle for and symbol of a transmitted cultural tradition' –, which *propter similitudinem* we ascribe as a rule to such literary codes, and that can only in part be 'explained as characteristic of written languages in general', but also on account of other important, and perhaps more structural aspects, including 'their reputed resistance to change' (thus far Richard A. Kunst, 'Literary Chinese Viewed in the Light of Literary Latin' [a previously unpublished comparative essay, available online in both PDF/html versions from the website of the Humanities Computing Laboratory of Durham, NC:
see http://www.humancomp.org/ftp/yijing/litchinese_in_light_of_litlatin.pdf
or http://www.humancomp.org/ftp/yijing/litchinese_in_light_of_litlatin.html]).

4) See Massimo Scorsone, '*Serica Delecta*. Cinque cimenti parafrastici', *Semicerchio - Journal of Comparative Poetry* 4 (2006), pp. 37-40 (the contribution, containing parallel Chinese/Latin texts, is easily readable or even downloadable in PDF version at:
http://www.unisi.it/semicerchio/upload/sc34_scorsone.pdf).

5) D. Magnus Ausonius, *Epist.* 14.104 ('*Bonorum mala carminum Laverna*'). A feminine deity of the Netherworld, probably of Etruscan origin, Laverna was imagined by the Quirites as 'patroness of gain, good or bad, and so the goddess of thieves' (Hugh G. Evelyn White).

6) Please note, however, that these neo-Latin rearrangements from Old Chinese poems are meant simply to be 'reading texts', i.e. as literature intended only for pleasure, or enjoyment reading. Therefore, the numerous footnotes and discussions you might expect to find in such texts are missing; in the same way, you will find here no indications of textual hermeneutics apart from those, which are shown, as it were, already crystallized in my interpretations. So, for that sort of things, if you do not wish to consult a standard scholarly edition of classical Chinese verse, you should visit websites or blogs dedicated to the subtle art of poetry translation from the Chinese, such as 'Classical Chinese Poems in English' (see: www.chinesepoemsinenglish.blogspot.com) or 'Chinese Poems in English', an online literary resource of the *Hong Kong Economic Journal* (see:
http://www.hkej.com/template/blog/php/blog_index.php?blog_blogs_id=1751), both run by Andrew W.F. Wong, OBE, JP.

* * *

LEPORIVS (vulgo LI PO / LI BAI)

1. Fannio Chunio, Pierio Gentio, Congio Chophuo poëtis rursus ad montes redituris

"tigridas ille nequit deprendere, sive leones
retia qui lepori modo tendit,"
caeruleis pleno delapsus nubibus ore
prae latebras ita praeco canebat.

o magne ingenio, Fanni, vir, sancte magister,
et facili, probe Pierie, aevi
integritate potis; praeclare at tu quoque, Congi,
tot bene muneribus cumulate,

devoti nebulis, cultores aëris omnes,
montanae super ardua pinus
culmina mens frugi, cordataque robore virtus,
si gracilis prope, tollitur isto:

una tribus lodix sat erat, dum caute grabatum
sternitur accubitis spatiosa,
hiberni fracta glacie qui flumina rivi
frigida saepius ore sumebant;

sic pedibus senis, de consuetudine, binum

sufficiebat item crepidarum
par, cum, ceu vario palantia nubila caelo,
quo libet, errabatis inanes.

mox autem nemorum, mandante antistite, lustra
deseruistis, et hospita saxa,
sibila tollentes, tenui per acumina ferri
constricta, pie coetus, abolla,

saltibus hesterna cui jam per somnia vastis
nocte redire jugoque videtur.
otia harundifera lunae sub sidera cordi
valle, virenteque ludere clivo;

atque Eoa Lycone vale, salveque bibentes
nuper ad ostia triste vicissim
extrema cellis deprompta cernimur urna
hinc discessuri, positaque.

at, quamquam gelido terrarum senta teguntur
uellere, et aspera, fitque caduca
lubrica canitie, dum ningit, equoque labante
semita vepribus abditur altis,

uester fumifici redolens ut caespitis herba

sit tamen ipse mihi memoratus,
quae neque vere suis ubicumque vaporibus aurae
aestifero neque tempore parcit.

* * *

THEOCINETIVS (T'AO CH'IEN / TAO QIAN)

2. Carmen Baccho subiciente vates meditatur

naviter crates casulae salignas
rure praecinctus, populisque texo,
paene plaustrorum strepitu silente,
quadrupedumque.

iure quaerenti tamen haec, amice,
qua tibi detur fieri profabor:
namque cor totis procul hinc facessit
rebus abactum,

donec obtutu Notiale longe
collis adparet, juga densa, dorsum
saepta chrysanthos mihi colligenti
propter Eoa.

dulce montana quoniam sub aura
iam magis lumen, pariterque primo

uesperi nidos repetunt volucres

compare nisu.

talibus sensus, reor, ac profundi

vis inest veri velut ipsa signis:

verba rimantem simul et facultas

deficit, et vox.

* * *

Typhoivs (Tu Fu / Du Fu)

3. Domesticis nuntiis tandem acceptis, animum Musis aperiendo moestitiae ex tempore indulget

en, quas forte peragrante piis hospite, litterae,

valde sollicitus jam manibus commiseram diu

dandas rite domum, sedibus a sordidulis licet

incultaque aliquando redierunt mihi de plaga,

optatisque quidem ex more refertae quoque nuntiis:

quas suspensus ego jure inopinas prope, et anxius,

spe nec denique dejectus, adhuc auspice litteras

dilectae caritate opperiebar subolis parens.

Vrsillus bene pro parte valet, disque juvantibus

nunc pulchre viget, ac, teste tabella, puer omnium

est quem corde foves, Mannule mi, praeter et intimos,
fratres exsuperantem ingenii munere ceteros.

aerumnosa senectus nimium, cui solitudinis
aegre fertur onus! sed trepidis ille molestior
curis angor, homo conficitur quo vagus, a suis
distentum miserae donec eum praepediant morae.

quid vero facerem? aut quid faciam? pessima tempora
distractis modo nos officiis esse simul vetant.
quondam namque, capillo satis incanus, erilibus
irrepsi laribus, sceptra salutatum oriens; rotas

mox sacras subii, Caesareo numine concitus,
phoenicemque; suis attamen urbs imperii potens
atque excelsum Aquilonis caput umbris minime caret,
limes dum niveis Hesperius candicat imbribus.

et, grassante magis jam Borea, saepius advena
huc anser revolat stridulus, udusque feracibus
tot pisces pluviis annus alit, turbidula satos
unda, sedula nec linquit iners munia villicus,

intenta procul acclive solum qui subigit manu
vel deserta fere pensilibus ruribus edita.

supremum o utinam sic obeam, non aliter, diem :

arrepto, mihi sors si qua sinit provida, pastino.

* * *

VANNEIVS et PAETIVS (WANG WEI, P'EI TI / BEI DI)

Ex Amnicis Vanae amoebaeis

4. Agger Arundinum Abundans

[Vanneius:]

celsa cadente nitent sub divo gramina sole

aethera dum referunt, silvaque densa viget,

et lento trepidant undantibus horrida motu

caerula pro foliis, arboreumque mare:

nescio quis Sancum petit – an lignator? –, operta

solus per saltus avia calle means.

[Paetius:]

itque suis sub colle reditque ambagibus amnis

jamjam albente piger, pronior inde, face.

ad clivum viridis crebrescit arundine multa

pergenti, frondis dein tenuatur honor:

absque mora, placidus, resonante canore, supinum

montis iter teneo, culmina nota tuens.

* * *

5. Piperis Arboretum

[Vanneius:]

hanc clarae suboli casia fragrante salutem,
ecce, propinantes dicimus, atque scypho,
per me sincero dum florida datur amico
malva, piperque super gemmea prata merum
offertur (proclive suis de nubibus o si
huc daemon planta convolet ipse levi!).

[Paetius:]

attamen hi rubeis tunicatos, optime, dumi
vepribus, et spina nos remorantur acri.
dulcis odoratis circum te funditur aura
turibus; ut graderis, spirat aroma via.
te cortinarum facient tua fata potentem:
suavia sic costi semina, domne, legas!

* * *

Sosibivs (Su Tung-p'o / Su Dongpo)

6. Nocturna inter pocula, ad amicum

o nitidum tacitis, argentea nox, decus sub astris!
quid aptius nam, candicante luna,
dulce merum genio quam fundere, comiterque paucis

pocilla largus ingerens amicis,

gaudia testari cordis pia? gloriosus ergo,
sequestre laude, falsa ne requiras
famae dona, vorax neu praemia, stulta quae bonorum
tam fluxa semper appetit cupido:

prona quidem in nihilum, ceu somnia vana; ceu tepentes
ab igne, frigent quae modo, favillae
languidus in cineres ut abit vapor; ilicet fugaces
micantis, immo, ceu facis tenebrae.

quid, vel summa, tibi sapientia, quaeve disciplinae,
beatitatem dum cupis serenam?
quin sibi fausta, umbris sine lumina cuique comprecanti
satis, superque nuda sit voluptas.

ipse itaque, ipse domum cum serius, ocius revertar,
nil praeter album nubium maniplum
forte ferens umeris ego, dulceque pectinem sonantem,
plenamque testam laetus hinc abibo.

* * *

Metres: Alcmanian strophe (1), Sapphics (2), Fifth Asclepiadean (3), Elegiacs (4, 5), Fourth Archilochean (6).

Translations:

1. *'But think about old friends the most… '*
2. *In the Busy Quiet.* Kōan *Composed while Drinking Wine*
3. *Reflections in Melancholy*
4. *Amoebaean Couplets I: The Range of the Bamboo Sea*
5. *Amoebaean Couplets II: The Pepper Tree Grove*
6. *A Toast by Moonlight. To Happiness*

1. 'But think about old friends the most… '

'The hunter, who sets snares only for hares, cannot capture tigers or lions': So sang the herald, descending from the blue clouds, at the mouth of the rocky cave. O revered Han, a man of great intellect you are; and you, honest P'ei, you with all the frankness of youth; and you, too, eminent K'ung, with your many merits: ye devotees of the clouds, ye inhabitants of the heights, above the lofty top of the mountain pine this straight heart austere, this strenuous and stout virtue, though simple, is exalted by your patience: a single blanket was once enough to cover all three, when a wide stone was a bed to sleep; and often, you broke the ice on the mountain stream in winter, and drank its cold currents. For three pairs of feet, as was your custom, there were only two pairs of sandals when, light like vagrant clouds in the capricious sky, you wandered everywhere. But then, on the governor's orders, whistling you left the dark woods, and hospitable cliffs, ye happy fellows, dressed in lightweight capes closed with a sharp iron fibula. Last night, you dreamed you had returned there to the wide ravines, and the mountains (for you loved lounging by moonlight in the Valley of Bamboos, and in the mountains green); and today here, in Lu, beside the Eastern Gate we drank a sad toast, bidding each other a mutual adieu, once we had emptied the bottle from the cellar. But though the white frost covers the trees, and the blizzard makes the path, hidden by thick bushes, slippery for the stumbling horse, your memory will be for me as fragrant as a tuft of smoking grass: for, be it spring or summer, it ever exhales its perfume through the air.

[A valedictory ode, addressed by Li Po (701-762 A.D.) to his fellow poets Han Chun, P'ei Cheng and K'ung Ch'ao-fu when escorting them back to the mountains.]

2. In the Busy Quiet. Kōan *Composed while Drinking Wine*

A wattle hut I weave in the countryside, among the peasantry; yet, wheels and mules stay silent. You ask me how I am able to work this miracle? My heart flies away from the world, Nature continues its course. Chrysanthemums at the eastern hedge I pick, while there, to the South, the distant hills turn blue, and in the peaceful shade of the mountain sweet comes the end of the day, as the birds return to their nests. These are the things that reveal the sense of what is real: speaking of them the voice fails, lacking words.

[The poem is the fifth in a series of twenty 'Drinking Songs' written by T'ao Ch'ien, or T'ao Yuan-ming, also known as 'Master Five Willows' (365-427 A.D.), one of the most renowned among the pre-Tang Chinese bards.]

3. Reflections in Melancholy

Thus, at last, has come the answer to the letter I so long ago entrusted to the pious hands of a guest, so that he carry it to my home; thus, finally, a reply has

come to me, though sent from a poor land, from a village wild. It is welcome, nonetheless, rich as it is with its load of news, for until now I had awaited it with the bated breath of an anxious parent, unable as I was to hope too much, and yet still trusting in the love of my dear children: Bear Cub is fine, I learn, and, with the gods' blessing, is growing up healthy; and thus he, my dear Pony Boy, according to your words is the best-loved of your brothers, the cleverest of them all. Ah, how painful is old age for those, whose hearts ache with loneliness! Yet, it is more excruciating still for the trembling worries and distress under which the man oppressed must labour in exile, whilst bitter troubles keep him from his home. Then, what should I have done? Or what should I do, now? Hard times and our different obligations prevent us from being together. Once, in fact, hoary-haired already, I came to the Palace to pay my tributes to the majesty of the Emperor; then, as he commanded, I followed the sacred chariot with its phoenix-embroidered pavilion; now, however, the capital city of the Kingdom, the northern supreme seat is populated by none but ghosts, while the western border is whitening beneath the snow storms; and I see come here, as the north wind rages ever more frequently, the shrilling wild duck, while the wet year with fertile rainfall brings fish, the spawn of muddy waves. Yet, here the industrious farmer neglects none of his work, he who expertly cultivates his hills, his terraced fields, now almost deserted. Oh, but thus may I end my life, and not otherwise! If luck abide with, thus wish to die, hoe in hand.

[A homesick epistle by Tu Fu (712–770), thus celebrating the birthday of his newborn. 'Bear Cub' and 'Pony Boy' are nicknames the poet gave to two of his sons, Tsung-wu and Tsung-wen respectively.]

4. *Amoebaean Couplets I: The Range of the Bamboo Sea*

[Wang Wei:] At sunset, the light from the sky is reflected over the high verdant ridge of thriving bamboo woods, and the leaves' deep blue sways in soft waves, like a sea of fronds. Invisible, someone ascends alone, along hidden tracks, the slope toward Mount Shang – perhaps a woodcutter. No one knows.

[P'ei Ti:] Here and there, already whitening in the moonlight, the meandering river flows: slowly at first, then faster, while the green bamboo grove thickens, though further along thins. Thus, tirelessly, I keep on climbing my mountain path: and I sing, as I walk, the familiar mountain peaks fixed in my sight.

[From the collection of the 'Wang River Poems', or better 'Antiphonal Songs': something like the lyrical trophies of a gentle competition between Wang Wei (699-759 A.D.) and his *confrère* P'ei Ti (c. 714-? A.D.) about several idyllic topics. I am grateful to Andrew Wang-Fat Wong (Huang Hongfa), *vir litteris adprime imbutus*, for the help he gave me, providing a felicitous interpretation of the poem's ambiguous title.]

5. *Amoebaean Couplets II: The Pepper Tree Grove*

[Wang Wei:] Let us drink now, with cups of fragrant cassia, a toast to illustrious offspring, whilst I give mauve flowers to my true friend, offering him peppercorns over the green grass carpet (oh if only thou, venerable spirit, would descend from thy clouds!).

[P'ei Ti:] This bramble hampers us, however, most esteemed sir, catching our clothes with its red thorns, with its sharp spines, while perfumes and scents follow thee as thou pass. To govern the tripods is indeed thy destiny: thus may thou gather, my lord, the augural seeds of sweet-smelling Saussurea.

[The poem is filled with mythical references and symbols, after the manner of Ch'ü Yüan's (c. 332-295 a. C.) elegies. Thus, e.g., the aforementioned 'illustrious

offspring' – alluding to the daughters of the legendary Emperor Yao – hints at the high-mindedness of the wise. In the same allegorical imagery, spices and aromatic plants denote virtues, while the 'red thorns' stand for 'daily life', etc.]

6. *A Toast by Moonlight: To Happiness*

What glorious brightness, oh silver night, beneath this starry sky! What could be better, when the pale Moon shines, than toasting the genius with sweet wine, and witnessing the simple happiness of your heart, as you kindly fill the cups, like a bounteous host ministering to a few friends? Thus, full of pride, long not fame's false gifts, deceitfully pimped by praise! And, in the same way, hunger not for ephemeral prizes, for those things, which the foolish greed for goods ever desires: things that are next to nothing, as vain as dreams, or ashes from a bonfire, warm at first, but soon cold, when the smoke turns slowly to powder; or like shades that flee at the first gleam of light. What is the use of wisdom, even as you strive to climb her summits? What serve its sciences and arts, if you only seek the happiness of a peaceful life? For to all those who seek days serene, without shadows, a simple delight is more than enough. I myself, when sooner or later go home, will take with me nothing but a bunch of white clouds, a sweet-singing *ch'in*, and a wine-filled jar.

[A charming 'Drinking Poem' composed by poet, scientist and statesman Su Shi, a.k.a. Su Tung-p'o (1037-1101 A.D.), the 'Gay Genius' (Lin Yutang) flourished under the Sung Dynasty.]

* * *

Uxor Tiresiae

Paul Murgatroyd

Paul Murgatroyd writes: . I got the inspiration for this from Carol Anne Duffy's poem *From Mrs Tiresias*, and I felt that as a Classicist I could take the basic idea further in terms of wit, allusion and inventiveness (along the general lines of Ovid's *Heroides*).

haec ego nostro scripta uiro sapientia mitto,

uir si noster adhuc ese potest mulier.

montanas pridem placuit tibi uisere siluas;

portabas caeci more senis baculum.

o utinam caecus uero lippusue fuisses!

sed tu serpentes, stulte, coire uides;

nec uidisse satis: baculo disiungere pergis;

plaga grauis colubris, plaga mihi grauior.

namque refers longasque comas faciemque tenellam

et maiora meis pectora pectoribus.

Iunonis speciem, Iunonis grandia membra,

Iunonis nitidos tu superas oculos.

mox rapis armillasque meas strophiumque superbum,

inficis et fucis ora decora meis.

deinde uetas me labra tuis coniungere labris,

ne post audires praua puella timens.

teque ardet multus caelebs multusque maritus;

uxorem fallis, fallis at usque uiris.

ante mihi segnis, peccas per mille figuras,

nunc noua percipiens gaudia concubitus.

optasti tandem dominis ex omnibus unum,

illiusque domum denique fida colis.

mutata forma, quis sis non nouit amator;

quis sit at ille quidem dissimulare nequis.

anne tuum nescis te nunc corrumpere fratrem,

caecus mente, oculis auriculisque tuis?

mox tu frater eris fratri pariterque marita;

mox tu mater eris, moxque amita et patruus.

sed si forte tuae capient te taedia uitae,

mensque erit ad nuptam, nupta, redire tuam,

ne redeas. nam, quod tu diuinare nequibas,

tristis eram tecum, te sine laetificor.

si redeas uero, me iam donisque petentes

multos inuenias blanditiisque procos.

sed potius remeans uideas colubros coeuntes,

feminea rursus percutiasque manu;

tum precor e plaga penem testesque receptes;

denique eas ipsam te futuasque precor.

* * *

Metre: Elegiacs

Translation: *His Wife to Tiresias*

I am sending these words of wisdom to my man, if indeed a woman can still be my man. Some time ago you decided to visit the woods on the mountain; you carried a staff like a blind old man. Oh, I wish you had been really blind or blear-eyed! But you saw, you fool, that snakes were copulating, and seeing was not enough: you proceeded to part them with your stick. The blow was grievous

for the snakes; the blow was more grievous for me. For you came back with long hair and a soft face and breasts bigger than my breasts. You outdid Juno's beauty, Juno's large frame, Juno's sparkling eyes. Soon you stole my bracelets and my splendid bra, and you coloured your pretty face with my cosmetics. Then you forbade me to join my lips to your lips, fearing that subsequently you would be called a depraved girl. Many bachelors and many husbands burned for you; you cheated on your wife, but you always cheated on her with men. Formerly sluggish for me, you committed adultery in a thousand positions, now deriving new pleasure from intercourse. Finally you chose one out of all your boyfriends, and you live in his house, faithful at last. Since your form has been changed, your lover does not know who you are, but you certainly cannot pretend to be ignorant of who he is. Can it really be that you, blind in your mind, eyes and ears, do not know that you are corrupting your own brother? Soon you will be brother to your brother and at the same time wife; soon you will be a mother, soon an aunt too and an uncle. But if you get bored with your life, and have a mind, wife, to return to your wife, don't return. For (something which you were unable to divine) I was unhappy with you, I am delighted without you. But if in fact you were to return, you would find many suitors now courting me with both gifts and endearments. But rather, while coming back home, see copulating snakes and strike them again with your feminine hand; I pray that then you get back your penis and testicles; I pray that finally you go shaft yourself.

* * *

Pro Senectute Mea

Joseph Tusiani

Joseph Tusiani writes: I take the liberty of sending you these few lines. They help me to reconcile my eighty-eighth birthday with this glorious Easter Sunday. [Written Easter, 2011]

imbecille meum est senile corpus

ut sulcata cutis reuelat oclis.

multi, ergo, iuuenes, meum uidentes

gressum lentum, animam putant inertem

et mentem mediis iacentem in umbris.

et fiat! sed amor, iuuentus, ardor

quid sint et ualeant scio et recordor

dum mundi memini uerenda cuncta.

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.

* * *

Metre: Hendecasyllables

Editor's translation: My feeble body is old, as furrowed skin reveals to the eyes. Hence many youths seeing my slow step think that my soul is stagnant and that my mind is lying in the midst of shadows. And let it be so! But love, youth, passion – what they are and are worth I know and remember while I recall all the wonders of the world. Don't, o youths, see the end of a divine mind in this doomed earthly being. Eternity thrives and triumphs in me, the beginning of light which in one tenacious cord binds both the old man and the boy.

* * *

Laus Bacchi

Raul Lavalle

Raul Lavalle writes: I once entered this *carmen* in a Latin poetry competition, not because I expected to win but because I wanted to see my name alongside the other learned entrants. It is written in free verse, a kind of 'visual metric', *ut ita dicam*, by which I mean the verses have the same or similar extension, if you read them. For instance:

> *laudo te, doctissime Marce,*
> *quia res hodiernas Latinas*
> *in Anglia, maris imperatrice,*
> *optime colis.*

Sometimes the last verse is a sort of *pie quebrado*, a kind of Adonic. I write 'my way'.

> *Lenaee, audi me benignus:*
>
> *non sum Tyrrhenus nauta.*
>
> *salue, polyonyme daemon!*
>
> *Omnes tuas gestas laudant*
>
> *populi, quas in Asia et dulci*
>
> *in Europa et in Aethiopum*
>
> *tractibus necnon in India,*
>
> *mirabiliorum terra, peregisti.*
>
> *at praedulce nobis nectar*
>
> *est, quod hominum generi*
>
> *cottidie das. quam tristes*
>
> *essemus, si fortem uitis*
>
> *sucum nos non libaremus!*
>
> *uino curas nostras leuamus;*

uino deitatem pura mente

ueneramur; saliares dapes

uino mitigamus; uino sermo

Socraticus madet, ut subtili

sophorum uoce gaudeamus;

uino corporum constitutio

roboratur et puellas amare

discimus; uino obliuionem

malorum capimus amorum.

ueni, Euhan, mentes uisita

tuorum fidelium!

* * *

Metre: Free verse

Translation: Lenaeus, hear me tenderly:
I'm not a Tyrrhenian mariner.
Hail, god with a lot of names!
All nations praise your deeds,
which in Asia and in the sweet
Europe, in realms of Ethiopians
and in India, land of marvelous
things and miracles, you've done.
Extremely sweet is the nectar
you give to the human races
every day. How sad we should be,
if we couldn't taste the strong
juice that the grapes produce.
With wine we calm our pains;
with wine God in pure souls
pray; the banquets of the *Salii*
we relief with wine; wine needs
the Socratic conversation,
to perceive the wise men's
voices; with wine our bodies
become stronger and we learn
to love the girls; oblivion of our
unhappy loves in wine we obtain.
Come, *Euhan*, and visit the spirit
of your faithfuls.

* * *

3 Carmina ex Hobbito Illo

J.R.R. Tolkien, trans. Mark Walker

Mark Walker writes: A rare chance to write some rhythmic (accentual) verse has come my way recently, since I am currently engaged in translating J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* into Latin (*Hobbitus Ille*) – following with a large degree of trepidation in the illustrious footsteps of the translators of such classics as *Winnie Ille Pu, Ursus Nomine Paddington* and *Harrius Potter et Philosophi Lapis*.

The Hobbit features a number of songs and verses, and I had initially planned to translate them all into classical quantitative measures. However, on reading many of them I began to think that such an approach would not be suitable. In the very first chapter of the book, for example, the dwarves who have gathered at Bilbo Baggins's house sing a very solemn and ancient dwarvish song, *Far over the misty mountains cold*, which does indeed readily lend itself to such treatment. However, immediately before this they have been marching in and out of the kitchen while singing an impromptu ditty about smashing poor Bilbo's precious crockery, and this song, so it seemed to me, worked much better as rhythmic verse.

Further reflection about the notional time in which the story is set – Tolkien's Middle Earth is a sort-of alternate Dark Ages, complete with ersatz Norsemen and Anglo-Saxons – gave the idea of mixing different styles some credence: imagine that the dwarves preserve in their dignified old songs the quantitative verse of the ancients, but when singing off-the-cuff ditties are more likely to fall into the contemporary rhythmical style of vernacular lyric.

Similarly, when Gollum and Bilbo set each other riddles to answer, these lend themselves to quantitative (elegiacs, hexameters) versifying – it is, after all, an ancient game played since time immemorial with very strict rules – but when the gobelins of the Misty Mountains stamp their feet and sing about what they are going to do to their prisoners, an ominous (q.v. *Dies irae*) trochaic beat fits the bill perfectly.

And besides, what a pleasant way to enhance the interest and the enjoyment for the reader. Students studying Latin at school, in particular, may not have been introduced to such glories of medieval Latin as the *Dies irae* or *Stabat Mater*, or even Orff's setting of the *Carmina Burana*, and so will (I hope) be pleasantly surprised to encounter a hitherto unknown species of Latin verse.

Hobbitus Ille is due to be published by HarperCollins in 2012.

* * *

(1) Carmen iocosum nanorum apud Bilbonem Bagginsem (Caput unum)

The dwarves tease poor Bilbo after dinner as they carry his precious crockery into the kitchen at Bag End:

frange uitra et catilla!

cultros tunde, furcas flecte!

Bilbo Baggins odit illa –

nunc et cortices incende!

textum seca, sebum calca!

lactem funde cellae terra!

linque in tapeto ossa!

uinum sperge super porta!

has patellas aestu laua;

has contunde magna claua;

si nonnulla sint intacta,

uolue ea e culina!

Bilbo Baggins odit illa!

caue! caue! haec catilla!

* * *

(2) Carmen lepidum dryadum Domi Familiari Ultima (Caput tertium)

The elves of Rivendell ('The Last Homely House') greet Bilbo and the dwarves with facetious mockery:

quid facitis? quo uaditis?

calcandi manni uobis sunt!

tra-la tra-la fluentia

in ima ualle flumina!

quid quaesitis? quem ducitis?

fumantes fasces cocti sunt!

hi-ho hi-ho hi-ho hi-ha

in nostra ualle lepida,

ha! ha!

quo uaditis comantibus

cum barbis nunc quassantibus?

insciti uos, insciti uos,

cur Baggins atque Balinus

descendant nunc et Dwalinus

in ualle Iunio

ha! ha!

o uultis hic resistere,

aut subito discedere?

de caelo deciditque lux

dum manni errant nunc est nox!

sunt stulti fugientes tunc

iucundi qui manentes nunc

et audientes nostros

ad usque mane modos

ha! ha!

* * *

(3) Carmen horribile gobelinorum Montibus Nebulosis (Caput sextum)

The dwarves and Bilbo, having escaped from the gobelins of the Misty Mountains find themselves surrounded by Wargs (wild wolves) in the forest and seek refuge by climbing trees. But the gobelins are delighted to discover their escaped prisoners in such a precarious situation and sing merrily as they set fire to the trees:

arde silua, filix arde,

sicut faces nunc incende

fiat lux in laeta nocte,

euge!

coque, torre, illos frige

barbae flagrent atque orbes

foede coquas pellem, crines,

sebum, ossa tum liquesce,

soluent illa

in fauilla

subter astra

fiat lux in laeta nocte,

euge!

eugepae!

eugae!

Metres: Trochaic (1,3), Iambic (2)

Translations: See the relevant chapters of *The Hobbit.*

* * *

FEATURES

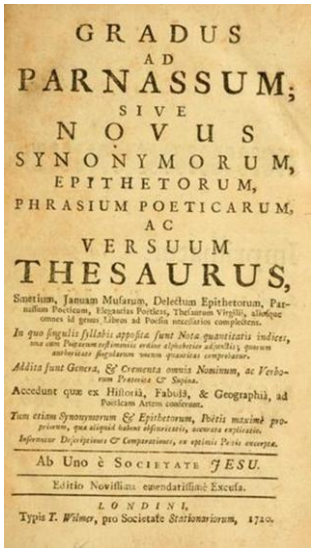
Toiling Up Parnassus

Barry Baldwin muses on Morell's *Gradus*

All British scribblers of Latin verse have occasion to bless the *Gradus ad Parnassum*. Not excluding, I dare say, Samuel Johnson (see my previous *Vates* essay on his), at least in his schooldays. It was the inevitable mainstay of Tom Brown and Martin at Rugby, respectively pursuing their 'traditonary' and 'dogged' methods of composition, while even the swottish Arthur's 'artistic' approach is betrayed by the words "as much as possible without Gradus" as having occasional recourse to it.

Leicester Bradner, *Musae Anglicanae: A History of Anglo-Latin Poetry 1500-1925* (New York, 1940; repr. 1966), p.3, states that the first edition of the *Gradus* was published in 1687 by Paul Aler – misinformation reproduced by Wikipedia. As David Butterfield shows in his meticulously fascinating essay on its history (*Classical Dictionaries: Past, Present and Future*, ed. Christopher Stray, Duckworth, London, 2010, pp. 71-93) to which I direct all *Vates* readers, the Jesuit Paul Aler actually published at Cologne

in 1699 a revised version of the anonymous (Paris, 1652) *Synonymorum & Epithetorum Thesaurus*.


GRADUS
AD
PARNASSUM;
SIVE
NOVUS
SYNONYMORUM,
EPITHETORUM,
PHRASIUM POETICARUM,
AC
VERSUUM
THESAURUS,

Ab Uno è Societate JESU.

Editio Novissima emendatissimè Excusa.

LONDINI,
Typis T. Wilmer, pro Societate Stationariorum, 1720.

An 18th-century Gradus

In 1729, the English *Gradus*, hitherto regularly reprinted from its continental predecessors, was enhanced by the addition of numerical and titular references to all verses cited therein. Although providing no evidences, Butterfield attributes this innovation to Edward Cave, founder-editor of the *Gentleman's Magazine*. If true, this explains why his publication was so hospitable to the Latin verses of Johnson and others.

The second English edition proper (1773) was the work of Thomas Morell, described thus in a letter from David Garrick to James Boswell: "Shall I recommend to you a play of Eschylus, (the Prometheus) published and translated by poor old Morell, who is a good scholar, and an acquaintance of mine?" I leave it to more seasoned Garrickians to expand on why the great thespian should so dub this familiar and their relationship. But, we may echo "poor old Morell" in another context: his omission from the *Dictionary of British Classicists* (ed. Robert B. Todd, Thoemmes Continuum, Bristol, 2004).

Thomas Morell (1703-1784, a death-date shared with Johnson) was, along with a possible bout of pedagogy at Kelvedon School, a

career parson and classicist, a typical eighteenth-century combination. After Eton and Cambridge, where he will have toiled through his fair share of Latin verses, this saddler's son, armed with a triad of degrees (BA, MA, DD) was Curate at Kew before settling down to a long (1734 to death) tenure as Rector of Buckland, Hertfordshire. He also garnered the accolades of FRS and FSA, plus further reputation as a librettist for Handel. His bibliography, far too substantial to reproduce here, may be read in the electronic version of *Bibliotheca Britannica*, volume two. Butterfield prints Morell's Latin preface to what was in essence a much-enlarged version of the *Gradus*, himself only the second editor to have his name sported on the title page. There is no sign of either the *Gradus* or any Morelliana in the inventories of Johnson's personal undergraduate or adult libraries by David Fleeman, David Greene, and Aleyn Reade. The odds are that Johnson will have known or known of Morell's classical publications; whether they had any personal acquaintance (Garrick was a mutual friend) seems unknown and (pending new evidence) unknowable.

Thomas Morell

* * *

Verba Inaudita

Mark Walker on an old problem for new Latin verse

Would-be Latin poets face a number of challenges – not least, the painstaking task of learning to compose Latin verse in the first place. But one often overlooked problem – and one which was a pivotal reason for founding *Vates* in the first place – is that of persuading people to *read* new Latin poetry. Writing for one's own pleasure is all very well; but it is much harder to find an audience for your work.

This is not a new problem for neo-Latinists. As attitudes towards *writing* Latin poetry underwent a change during the course of the nineteenth century, and the number of original poets declined sharply, so too did attitudes towards *reading* new poetry: as ever greater emphasis was placed on ancient authors in schools and colleges, both the writing and, crucially, the reading of neo-Latin poetry began to be frowned upon – a process that can be charted indirectly and anecdotally from a variety of sources.

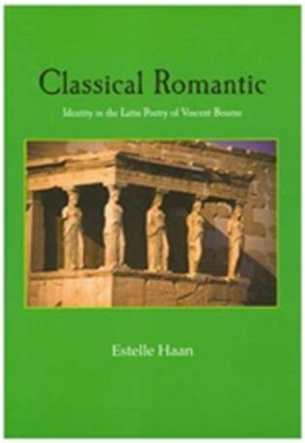
In Britain, Latin poetry enjoyed something of a heyday during the eighteenth century: Anthony Alsop, Thomas Gray, Samuel Johnson and Vincent Bourne being just a few who produced and published original poetry. Astonishing as it may seem to us now, Bourne's *Poematia* ran to nine editions between 1734 and 1840[1]. Bourne's popularity was still sufficiently high for Macaulay to write in 1843 of his admiration for the Latin of Gray and Bourne. While not going

so far as to compare them with their ancient predecessors his praise is still warm:

> Do we believe that Erasmus and Fracastorius wrote Latin as well as Dr Robertson and Sir Walter Scott wrote English? *[No]* … But does it follow, because we think thus, that we can find nothing to admire in the noble alcaics of Gray, or in the playful elegiacs of Vincent Bourne? Surely not.[2]

But as early as 1847, when Walter Savage Landor published his own *Poemata et Inscriptiones*, there were signs of a change in taste – at least in Landor's opinion:

> *Vinnius autem (ita appellabant eum familiares) nihil admodum habet suum, et, aliena quum Latina faceret, frigida est plerumque concinnitatis affectatio*[3].
>
> 'But Vinny (for so his friends called him) has nothing entirely his own, and, since he expressed unfamiliar things in Latin, generally displays a frigid striving after elegance of style.'



Estelle Haan's "Bourne Identity"

There were no more editions of Bourne until Estelle Haan's publication of selected poems in 2007[4].

Landor himself, 'England's last important Latin poet'[5], wrote much of his own Latin verse in the teeth of opposition from family and friends. Even in 1816 Landor's brother Robert wrote with a great deal of exasperation:

> Walter has been imploying [*sic*] Slatter & Munday to print Latin Poetry, which no one ever reads or even hears of – perhaps the books will not pay the expenses of publication[6].

Then again, in 1820:

> I have received two or three Letters lately from Walter about some Latin Poems, which have been printed at Pisa, and sent to Longman for publication. Here is another foolish expense without the chance of sixpence in return! Who reads Latin Poems written in these days![7].

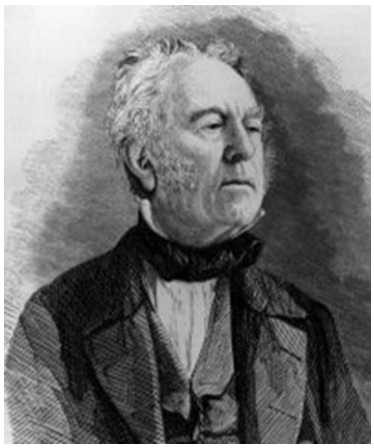
Poet and friend Robert Southey wrote to Landor in the same year:

> Oh that you would write in English. I can never think of your predilections for Latin verse but as a great loss to English literature[8].

The final straw came when even Wordsworth added to the cry for Landor to cease writing Latin:

> had your Idylliums been in English, I should long ere this have been as well acquainted with them as with your *Gebir* and with your other poems; and now I know not how long they may remain to me a sealed book[9].

Landor agreed to allow his Latin verses to be excluded from the 1846 edition of his works, acknowledging his editor's argument 'that Latin was no longer read except in schools'[10], though the following year he collected them in one volume – which was not exactly a bestseller:



Walter Savage Landor

> Landor gave away many copies of *Poemata et Inscriptiones*, but Moxon told the Rev. John Mitford that he sold only one copy[11].

Robert Landor was right: no one did want to read Latin written in these days. It was downhill from there for new Latin poetry. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the very idea of neo-Latin had

become almost repugnant. The 1914 revision of Carey's *Gradus* made a virtue of excluding all non-classical authors whose works had been cited in earlier editions because their language was manifestly 'impure':

> It is not easy to conceive how a school-boy (and for school-boys the work was intended) could form any just notions of Latin poetry, or how he could derive any but a most impure and inelegant style of language, from habitually consulting a book, in which the good was indiscriminately mixed up with the bad; in which examples of the greatest elegance from the poets of the Augustan age were placed side by side with, and not by any means distinguished from, others taken at random, not only from authors who wrote in the times of the later emperors, when the purity of the language was greatly diminished, and who even then had but scanty claims to the name of poets, but even from some writers of much more recent date, and of authority far more questionable[12].

By 1914, neo-Latin writers had become 'questionable authorities', no longer worthy of sharing space with the elegant Augustans in any reference work designed for impressionable young minds. Times had changed since Macaulay's praise for the virtues of neo-Latin writers less than a century earlier. No one in the twentieth century was going to endorse William Cowper's opinion of Vincent Bourne, written in 1781 before the very idea of neo-Latin had become somehow *infra dig*:

> I love the memory of Vinny Bourne. I think him a better Latin poet than Tibullus, Propertius, Ausonius, or any of the Writers in his way, except Ovid, and not at all inferior to him[13].

If I may add a personal anecdote: I have just received a letter from The History Press, publisher of my book *Britannica Latina: 2000*

Years of British Latin, informing me that they have a residue of unsold copies to be cleared from their warehouse – so any hopes I once had of enthusing British (and English-speaking) Classicists about their heritage of Anglo-Latin have now finally been dispelled! It seems that if the pendulum is beginning to swing back in favour of neo-Latin, it is doing so painfully slowly. The current A-level (advanced) Latin syllabus in the UK features no neo-Latin at all[14]. And Cambridge claims that it is the only British university to offer neo-Latin courses for undergraduates[15]. There is a long way to go before Bourne or Alsop or Gray are included in the school Latin curriculum – though if they were, it might encourage students to pick up their own pens and have a go at some verse writing of their own. (Well, we can but dream …)

In its small way, then, *Vates* is one attempt to encourage anew the very idea of *reading* as well as of *writing* new Latin verse – since we can't realistically hope to have the latter without the former.

* * *

In the next issue, I will suggest some ways – other than publication in *Vates* of course! – in which Latin poets might be able to find an audience for their work, one obvious but curiously overlooked resource being *music*.

* * *

Notes:

1. Storey (1974), p. 122.

2. Macaulay, Life and Writings of Joseph Addison (1843) in Macaulay (1897), pp.66-67.

3. Landor (1847), p. 300. Kelly, in Binns (1974), p. 155 translates this as: 'Vincent, however, totally lacks originality, and when he imitates other Latin authors he is without warmth, and aspires to mere elegance.'

4. Haan (2007), Appendix 1, pp. 135-165. Thanks to so-called 'Print On Demand' publishers such as Kessinger and BiblioBazar, paperback facsimile reprints of nineteenth-century editions of Bourne and many others are now easily and cheaply available, as a search on Amazon.co.uk will reveal.

5. Binns (1974), Introduction p. x.

6. Elwin (1958), p. 176.

7. Elwin (1958), p. 183.

8. *ibid.*

9. *ibid.*

10. Elwin (1958), p. 374.

11. Elwin (1958), p. 378.

12. Carey (1824, rev. 1914), Preface p. iii.

13. Quoted in Haan (2007), p. 15.

14. The OCR A level syllabus can be found here at http://www.ocr.org.uk/download/kd/ocr_9611_kd_gce_spec.pdf

15. 'Cambridge is the only British university which offers undergraduate courses in Neo-Latin',
http://www.mml.cam.ac.uk/other/courses/ugrad/neo_latin.html

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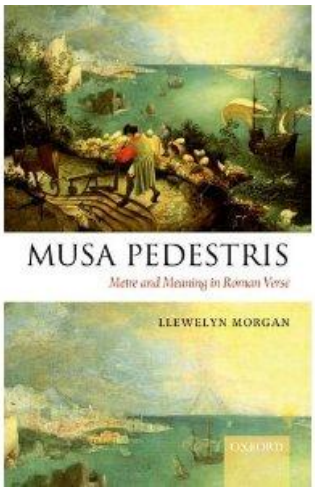
Book Review



Musa Pedestris

by Llewelyn Morgan

Oxford University Press, 2010

ISBN: 978-0199554188

RRP £70

All composers of Latin verse should read Llewelyn Morgan's *Musa Pedestris.* It is quite simply the best book ever written on Latin metrics. Morgan's point is that Roman (and Greek) poets selected their metres to suit their subject matter. More coarsely put, Horace did not wake up one morning and mutter, I've had enough of Greater Asclepiads and Alcaics; today, I'll have a bash at some Sapphics. In support of his belief, Morgan subjects (supplying texts and convenient translations) a large number of poems by (primarily) Catullus, Horace, Lucilius, Martial, and Statius to searching analysis of how man makes the metre and metre makes the man. A large number of other versifiers, Latin and Greek, are also caught in his capacious net. The book is heavy going at times, thanks to the unavoidable welter of sometimes jaw-breaking technical metrical terms. But Morgan writes in clear English, agreeably spiced with humour and telling autobiographical flashes, notably the concluding revelation that his book was conceived in a

Donnybrook pub – as Horace (*Epistles* 1. 19. 2-3) proclaimed, *nulla placere diu nec vivere carmina possunt/ quae scribuntur aquae potoribus*. Despite this toponym, Morgan is laudably even-handed in his treatment of rival views, until this final outburst: "Contemporary Latin literary criticism is paying far too little attention to metre. Academics should be ashamed of describing metre as deadening. That is to fall in with lazy and ignorant characterizations of metre. Metre can never be an optional extra in any adequate encounter with classical poetry." As J. C. McKeown (himself a distinguished editor of Latin poetry) concludes in his *Times LIterary Supplement* review (August 19/26, 2011, p.13), "Fighting talk, and irrefutable." I doubt any *Vates* reader would disagree.

Barry Baldwin

* * *

De gustibus non est disputandum

Letters to: vates@pineapplepubs.co.uk

Dear *VATES*,

Hello from Santa Monica. And thank you for *Vates* and the sometimes delicious poetry (though my Latin seems to have been defenestrated with some of the graduate work I did at Univ. Texas before returning to the law).

For what it's worth, here is a very bad limerick I wrote at the age of fifteen in a contest with my Latin teacher, a defrocked priest:

olim erat magister Latinae

qui scripsit epistolam consobrinae;

scripsit "ego non scio

cur semper non dormio -

estne propter amorem feminae?"

Perhaps your readers might enjoy a bit of doggerel! And I vote for more drinking songs…

Judy Koffler

* * *

Dear Editor,

I was delighted to find *Vates*, although it was a discovery made entirely by accident. I have had various goes myself at writing Latin verse, but I have always found it like laying Lino – bubbles keep emerging in different parts of the 'room'.

Cura ut valeas,

Anthony Dykes

[Anthony Dykes is Parish Priest of Saint Wulstan, Wolstanton, Staffordshire and Chairman of the North Staffordshire Branch of the Classical Association, http://www.northstaffsca.org/. He is also the author of *Reading Sin in the World: The Hamartigenia of Prudentius and the Vocation of the Responsible Reader*, Manchester University Press, 2011]

* * *

CONTRIBUTORS

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

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).

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*.

Massimo Scorsone (Turin, 1963), former editor of *Parthenias* – Collection of Neo-Latin Poetry, is currently member of the Scientific Committee of *SuRSUm* – being an acronym for '*Su*ssidi alla *R*icerca negli *S*tudi *Um*anistici' – Interdepartmental Centre for Scholarly Aids in Humanities, University of Turin (http://www.sursum.unito.it), and chief editor of the *Corona Patrum Erasmiana* for the *CESU* – European Centre of Humanistic Studies (http://www.cesutorino.it/corona.html). In the field of Latin – as well as sometimes of Greek – composition, till today he has published little more than a polymetric 'Dorian' epigram, written after the Sevillan poet Vicente Aleixandre (*Permanencia / Eis Paramonēn*, in Pablo Luis Ávila Molina [ed.], Vicente Aleixandre, *Mediterranee. 50 poesie per 50 poeti*, Turin-Mallorca: Mauro Baroni Editore, see http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/~jc210/greekcomps/caleix.htm), and a ridiculously prolix shape poem (*Columna Aldenardiana Triumphalis*, with an English translation by Frances Petty, in David K. Money [ed.], *1708: Oudenarde and Lille. A tercentenary commemoration in prose and verse*, Cambridge: Bringfield's Head

Press, 2008), without mentioning other *pastiches* of the same genre, still circulating on the Web.

Joseph Tusiani was born in Italy but emigrated to the USA in 1947. Before his retirement he taught at the City University of New York (Herbert H. Lehman College), at Fordham University, and was Director of the Catholic Poetry Society of America as well as Vice President of the Poetry Society of America. His extensive list of publications includes poetry in English, Italian and Latin – he has been hailed as the greatest living neo-Latin poet.

Mark Walker is the editor of *Vates*. His latest book, an English verse translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Life of Merlin (Vita Merlini)*, was published in April 2011. (www.pineapplepubs.co.uk). His Latin translation of *The Hobbit (Hobbitus Ille)* is due to be published by HarperCollins in late 2012.

Brad Walton lives in Toronto. He did a BA in Classics and graduate work in Theology, which seems to have been a dreadful mistake. His study of Jonathan Edwards (*Jonathan Edwards,* Religious Affections, *and the Puritan Analysis of True Piety, Spiritual Sensation and Heart Religion)* was published in 2002. More recently an attempt at Menippean satire, *Peripedemi Perigesis*, was serialized in *Melissa*. His day-job is in the University of Toronto Library. In his spare time he plays theorbo for the Toronto Continuo Collective, directed by Lucas Harris.

* * *

Look out for the next issue of *Vates* in Summer-ish 2012

***Vates* is available for free download here**

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