VATES

The Journal of New Latin Poetry

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Editorial

If anyone were to suggest that writing Latin verse is nothing more than a dry classroom exercise in evoking the 'pale ghosts of antiquity', I would show them this bumper issue of our journal. Alongside classical quantitative metres here you will find haiku, rhyming and rhythmic verses, 'free' verse, and even an entirely new form – the Quincouplet (the inventor of which, Catherine B. Krause, is featured on p.3). There are translations from English and Chinese, original works with a classical theme, elegiac tributes and poems that address our modern world head on. And alongside contributions from esteemed veterans there are first-time pieces from a new generation of poets.

In his 'Challenge to Readers' (p. 45) David Money tasks us with creating verses using yet another new metrical form, this time one developed by another *Vates* contributor and author of a collection of verses, Stephen Coombs. In his review of Stephen's book, David also expresses the hope that more such publications will soon appear: on which topic, please see p. 56 for a tentative proposal about a possible *Vates* anthology of New Latin Verse.

* * *

As always I offer my deep gratitude to all the contributors. If you haven't yet submitted 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.

Vates is now on Facebook:
https://www.facebook.com/groups/vates

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.)

Tres Haicua

Catherine B. Krause

Catherine writes: Three haiku, both in Latin and in English.

1.

adhuc mane est hic.

uelamen ecce nigrum

noctis se auferat.

English version:

It's still early here.
Behold, the black veil of night
lifts itself away.

* * *

2.

coniuit Deus

et uno eruptione

nata omnia sunt.

English version:

The Creator blinked
and a single eruption
gave birth to all things.

* * *

3.

dum nocte ambulo,

uiam mihi nix lustrat,

hiberni ancilla.

English version:

As I walk at night
my way is lighted by snow,
the winter servant.

* * *

Niuis Mundus/Mundos

Marco Cristini

Marco writes: This is an experimental work, but one that I hope might awake some Latin enthusiast's interest in Old Latin. Last year I attended a university course on Old Latin Grammar. It is a very interesting subject; almost everyone who studies Latin sometimes struggles with 'strange' exceptions, as *pater familias*, *fructubus* (instead of *fructibus*) or *sitim*. But these words are not strange at all, they are only the remnants of Old Latin forms, which, with the passing of time, were no longer used. When I began writing Latin poems one day I asked myself: 'Would it be possible to write a poem in Old Latin?'. The answer is *Nivis Mundus*. Here I tried to use the most important phonetic and morphologic features of Old Latin (by the way, there is a nice Webpage abuout Old Latin on Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Latin), but I kept the syntax simple, so that the text is not too 'alien'. Besides I wrote two versions of my poem (one in Old Latin and one in Classical Latin) in order to make the comprehension easier. As far as the theme of my poem is concerned, I had the first idea of *Nivis Mondos* while reading Goethe's *Erlkönig*. Here, however, the ending is happier.

Niuis Mundus (Classical Latin)

it homo candidas per siluas,

caelum est niuis, terra glaciei.

arboribus sunt foliae nullae.

uiator fessus est, sed iter etiamdum longum.

uentus susurrat ei uerba dulcia,

pollicitur niueum lectum, quietem.

at homo scit hoc dolum esse.

nox appropinquat celer,

tenebrae iam uincunt lucem,

aer fit frigidus quasi sol non esset.

uiator sistit aspicitque lucum circum se.

audit uoces subtiles folium herbarumque,

lucus totus eum inuitat ad requiescendum.

homo cunctatur, sed pedes eius graues sunt.

astra in caelo micant, etsi uiator ea non uidet,

quia oculi illius iam clauduntur.

dormiturus est, sed repente uenit auis super se.

parua luscinia eum monet suauisono cantu.

uiator ob stuporem rursum uigil auem sequitur,

siluam sub luna stellisque lucentem transit,

ad oppidum peruenit. at luscinia interea euanescuit.

* * *

Niuis Mundos (Old Latin)

eid homo candidans per siluans,

caelom est niuis, tera glacieis,

arbosebus sont foliai nulai.

uiator fesos est, sed iter etiamdom longom.

uentos susurat ei uerba dulcia,

policitor niueom lectom, quietem,

at homo scit hoce dolom esse.

nox apropinquat celer,

tenebrai iam uincont lucem,

aer fit fricidos, quasi sol non essed,

uiator sisteid aspeceidque loucom circom sed.

audit uoceis subtilis foliom herbasomque,

loucos totos im inuitat ad requiescendom.

homo qunctator, sed pedeis eius grauis sont.

astra in caelod micant, etsi uiator ea non uidet,

quia oquloi illius iam clauduntor.

dormituros est, sed repente ueneid auis super sed.

parua luscinia im monet suauisonod cantud.

uiator ob stuposem rursu uigil auim sequitor,

siluam sub lunad stelaisque loucentem transeit,

ad opidom perueneit. at luscinia interea euanesqued.

* * *

Translation: Snow World.

A man goes through white woods,
the sky is made of snow, the earth of ice.
On the trees there are no leaves.
The traveller is tired, but the way is still long.
The wind whispers sweet words,
promises a snowy bed, quiet.
But the man knows this is deceit.

Night comes near swiftly,
darkness overcomes light,
the air becomes cold, as if the sun didn't exist.
The traveller stops and looks at the place around him.
He hears the subtle voices of leaves and herbs,
all the wood is praying him to take rest.
The man hesitates, but his feet are heavy.

The stars shine in the sky, though the traveller does not see them,
because his eyes are already closing.
He is almost sleeping, but suddenly a bird comes overhead.
A small nightingale warns him with a charming song.
The traveller, again awake by astonishment, follows the bird, goes through the forest, which glitters under the moon and the stars, comes finally to a town. But in the meantime the nightingale has disappeared.

* * *

Felix Iste

Mark Walker

Mark writes: I attended recently a concert at St Martin-in-the-Fields where, among other items, I heard a performance of a motet by Vivaldi (RV629), the text of which intrigued me as an example of an interesting rhythmic metre. The first stanza is:

> *Longe mala, umbrae, terrores,*
> *sors amara iniqua sors.*
> *Bella plagae irae furores*
> *tela et arma aeterna mors.*

According to Karl Heller (*Antonio Vivaldi: The Red Priest of Venice,* Amadeus Press, 1997) such motets in 18th-century Italian church music typically consisted of 'arias and recitative for vocal soloists and strings set to modern Latin texts … in an Italianate mongrel-Latin'. Well, it may be a 'mongrel' but I liked the rhythm so much that I decided to copy it. For which purpose I parse the structure as follows:

- Lines 1 & 3 – four-and-a-half feet (catalectic) – 3 trochees, 1 iamb + ½
- Lines 2 & 4 – four feet – 2 trochees, 2 iambs (ignoring/eliding the *et* in line 4).

I particularly liked the cadence *umbrae terrores … irae furores*, which is a rhythmical Adonic (as in the English 'strawberry jam-jar' familiar in quantitative verse from the Sapphic stanza as well as the classic termination of a hexameter line (see this issue's 'Advice for Beginners' for more about that). Note that syllable quantity as employed in classical verse does not apply here – so, for example, the second syllable of *umbrae* is unstressed (see *Vates* 9 for more about stress accents in rhythmic verse).

The rhyme scheme is ABAB. You will observe my 'homage' (i.e. blatant plagiarism) in the use of *mors … sors*; this monosyllable rhyme is, I feel, an effective means of providing a strong close to each couplet.

Felix Iste describes the kind of happy-go-lucky type who seem able to float through life without a care in the world: an enviable state, surely, but – as my English rendition makes quite clear – one I have decidedly mixed feelings about.

felix iste, homo iucundus,

quem oblita relinquit mors,

semper mouet uentus secundus,

semper spernit seuera sors.

stultus iste, princeps stultorum,

qui fortunae oblitus stat,

mortis, sortis, uitae ludorum,

qui fidelis se fatis dat.

* * *

Metre: Rhythmic trochaic/iambic

Translation:

That happy-go-lucky guy, whom forgetful death ignores, always with the wind at his back, never the victim of bad luck. That idiot, prince of idiots, forgetful of fortune, of death, of chance, of the tricks of life, who with blind trust gives himself to the fates.

* * *

Carthaginis Occasus

Paul Murgatroyd

Paul writes: Following the Editor's suggestion about rhythmic trochaic verse in the last edition of *Vates* I found that I could get some powerful effects. I have produced an impressionistic sketch of the fall of Carthage, which could be viewed as a pendant to Marco Cristini's *Romae Occasus*, also in *Vates* # 9.

dies mortis, dies atra

delet alta munimenta,

frangens ossa, calcans ora.

quantus est tectorum fragor,

quantus territorum tremor,

quantus miserorum clamor!

milites Romani vates

doctos caedunt et cantores

et sculptores et pictores;

Phoebi statuamque prendunt

auream at aurum scindunt

summum opus et exstinguunt.

arae sacrae sunt foedatae,

ruptae sunt aularum ualuae,

stratae rarae sunt columnae.

pereunt iam ipsa busta

ueneranda et uestusta,

ignibus sed nigris usta.

uiolatae sunt matronae,

temeratae sunt puellae,

uetulae sunt uitiatae.

Hasdrubalis coniunx caedit

inque ignem natos iacit,

inque ignem ipsa salit.

capientes saeuas dapes,

dominos consumunt canes,

morientes mordent aues;

dentes dilacerant fibras,

ora ebibunt medullas,

rostra perforant pupillas.

dux Romanus minus gaudet.

hic dum fatum Troiae maeret,

cladem talem Romae timet.

obtruncata mater iacet,

propter illam pater tabet,

inter illos infans deflet.

urbs superba humo fumat,

nihil stat ac nihil restat,

trux hyaena hic cacchinnat.

* * *

Metre: Rythmic Trochaic

Translation:

The day of death, the dark day, destroys lofty fortifications, breaking bones, trampling faces.

How great is the crashing of buildings, how great is the trembling of the terrified, how great is the shouting of the wretched!

Roman soldiers slaughter expert poets and singers and sculptors and painters;

and they seize the golden statue of Apollo and hack apart the gold and obliterate a supreme work of art.

Sacred altars are polluted, mansions' doors are broken through, exquisite pillars are strewn on the ground.

Now the very tombs perish, venerable and ancient, but burnt by black fires.

Matrons are violated, girls are sexually assaulted, old women are raped.

Hasdrubal's wife kills their children and throws them into the fire and leaps into the fire herself.

Eating savage feasts, dogs devour their owners, birds bite the dying;

teeth tear entrails to pieces, mouths swallow marrow, beaks bore through pupils.

The Roman general does not rejoice. While he mourns for the fate of Troy, he fears a similar disaster for Rome.

A mother lies beheaded, near her a father is rotting, between them an infant is crying.

A proud city smokes from the ground, nothing stands and nothing survives, here a fierce hyena laughs.

* * *

A Plea for Consolation.

Thomas Lindner

Thomas writes: I wrote this poem in 1987, when still a teenager, suffering from tedium and eagerly waiting for inspiration from my Muse. In the 1990s, I compiled some 60 poems of mine and published them in a collection named *Lyra Latina* (1st edition, Vienna 1994; 2nd edition: Vienna 1997). Finally, a critical edition with a textual apparatus and metrical analyses appeared in 2012. All of my poems can be read in an online edition of *Lyra Latina*, together with the editorial history, textual variants, and some comments about my formation as a Latin poet:

http://thomaslindner.members.cablelink.at/lindner_lyr_lat_ed_min.pdf

descende caelo, Musa, ueni mihi,

ueni poetae, qui miser in toro

iacet nec ullis adiuuatur

deliciis et hebet uigore.

succurre tandem neue neges mihi

tam dulce donum! deprecor: acria

mutes odoro nectare inde,

ambrosiaque fruar suavi.

(*Lyra Latina,* carmen XXII)

* * *

Metre: Alcaics

Translation:

> Descend from heaven, oh Muse, and come to me, to the poet, who lies in bed unhappily, lacks strength and cannot draw comfort by any delights. Finally help and do not deny me your lovely gifts. I beseech you: from now on do exchange the exasperation with redolent nectar, and I will enjoy your sweet ambrosia.

* * *

Perdita

Jacinta Smallhorn

Jacinta writes: Though I've been chipping away at the study of Latin for a good while, versifying in it is all very new to me. But I feel I need to just throw something out there in order to make a start, and to encourage myself along! *Vates* offers the perfect opportunity …

tu trahis ceu currus ulnae inter nos et credis cauum

consequentem ferre messis copiosam; sed tua

certe solum, ego enecabor ac fame: ut Smaragda de

Notre Dame Illa ob rapacem Phoebum fallacem, uel ut

Liliorum Virgo ob tristis Lancelotum reginae –

enecabor sic fame atqui tu, meum mel, uixeris

* * *

Metre: Trochaic septenarius

Translation:

You draw the yards between us like a plough, and expect the ensuing distance to yield a fruitful harvest. But indeed it will be your harvest only, and I will starve: like La Esmerelda of Notre Dame for false and rapine Phoebus, like the poor Lily Maid for [Guinevere's] Lancelot – so starve; and you, my sweet, will live.

Aberrations/variations (at least the ones I know of!):

1. There are three feet comprising two long syllables rather than the long-short pattern proper to the uneven-numbered feet – as follows:

‘Phoebum’ (fifth foot, fourth line),
‘Virg(o) ob’ (third foot, fifth line)
‘regi…’ (seventh foot, fifth line)

2. The expected diaeresis after the fourth foot is absent in the first line.

3. I have not translated ‘Notre Dame’.

* * *

Animus Aequus Philosophiae Expers

Richard Sturch

Richard writes: Back in 1959 Dr. Eric Mascall, then a Student of Christ Church, Oxford (later Professor of the History & Philosophy of Religion at KCL) produced a small book of verses called *Pi in the High*. One, 'Unphilosophic Contentment', was subtitled 'A Horatian Ode'; and not long after, while in the Army in Singapore, I sent a Latin version, in Sapphics, to my brother Nicholas. A few days ago Nicholas came across the letter containing it and sent me a photocopy. I thought I might try it out on *Vates* readers.

Dr. Mascall died in (I think) 1991. I attach his original verses, as well as my 1960 effort, but have no idea who inherited the copyright. I doubt whether he himself would have objected to their appearing in *Vates*; he was himself the author of a fine Latin parody of Thomas Aquinas.

Quinte, narrantur nisi falsa, sunt qui

dignitatis uix memores honestae,

quae patent nondum sibi praeterire

rsse negarint;

his tamen magna pietate moti

esse respondent alibi futura

(uerba nos firmant ceterum legentes

Herodotorum).

tertii foran miseri supersunt;
uatibus parent, eademque credunt
falsa per sese, simul et secundum
quid fore uera.

‘ueritas non est inimical falsi!’
dictitant quidam: ‘dialecticorum
dirigunt sanctas acies amicae
rite chororum!”

me sed infirmum neque mens perita
in loca eniti iubet altiora
passibus claudis, neque amore magno
spiritus urget.

si quis errabit per agros deorum
carpet et fructus amaranthianos,
nonne egestatem mihi roly-poly
cocta leuabit?

dum Iouis nectar sapientiores

indicum uel soma bibunt beati,

me iuuant testae rubidi Falerni,

somnus et aufert.

gaudiis tantis alii fruantur

quae creant grandes animi Platonum;

sat placet cenis mihi poculisque

sumere uitam.

* * *

Metre: Sapphics

Translation: 'Unphilosophic Contentment' by Eric Mascall

Friend, there are those, as I have heard,
Who, lost to sense of shame, insist
That that which has not yet occurred
Does not exist.

Others, more pious these, avow,
As history unerring tells,
That that which is not up to now
Is somewhere else.

While some, a sad priest-ridden crew,
Hold, or in darker ages did,
That what is false *per se* is true
Secundum quid.

Yet other some claim true and false
No foes, but each of each orectic,
United in the sacred waltz
Of dialectic.

Me feeble, of noetic strain
Nor able much nor over-fond,
Problems on this pneumatic plane
Are quite beyond.

Revering him whose spirit feeds
In fields of amaranth and moly,
I satisfy my simple needs
With roly-poly.

Content that souls heroic flow
On seas of nectar and of some,
I swill my bottled beer and so
Pass into coma.

Let others taste the heady joy
That comes with philosophic thinking.
My coarser hours let me employ
Eating and drinking.

.

* * *

Distichon De Placentis

Nicholas Stone

Nicholas writes: Given the rather odd content of this distich, some explanation ought to be supplied: it sums up a story told to me this year by my grandfather, relating how when he walked home from work at night he often passed by what he thought was a patisserie, with cakes in the window. He eventually went in, in the daytime, only to discover that it was a dental practice, and that the 'cakes' were in fact sets of false teeth!

semper nocte domum quando ibam liba uidebam;

nunc uideo dentes irradiante die!

* * *

Metre: Elegiac couplet

Translation:

I always saw cakes as I walked home by night;
Now I see teeth by the day shining bright!

* * *

Cogitans Libouuum

Brad Walton

Brad writes: This is an attempt to translate a poem by Tu Fu (712-770 c.e.), into Latin. The original is composed of eight lines of five syllables each, a caesura after the second syllable of each line, and the same rhyme throughout, occurring on alternate lines. All I have tried to imitate of the original is its concentrated expression. I offer three translations: A literal one of the Latin, a literal and an expanded one of the original (by David Hawkes, *A Little Primer of Tu Fu*, Oxford, 1967).

tellus gelascit ultima.

mihi quid, magister, diceres?

quando anser aduolauerit?

autumnus auget flumina.

odit beatum Cynthius.

scopulis morantur daemones.

laesis locutus manibus,

demitte carmen fluctibus.

* * *

Metre: Iambic dimeter

Translation 1:

THINKING OF LI PO

The limit of the world ices over.
What would you say to me, teacher?
When will the goose fly this way?
Autumn swells the rivers.
Apollo hates a happy man.

The daemons are waiting on the cliffs.
Speak to the injured ghost
and drop a poem into the current.

Translation 2: Literal translation of the Chinese:

THINKING OF LI PO FROM THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

Cold wind rises world's end
Gentleman's ideas like what
Wild-goose what-time arrive
Rivers-lakes autumn-water much
Literature hates destiny-successful
Mountain demons rejoice people passing
Ought with wronged-ghost talk
Drop poem present Mi-lo.

Translation 3: Interpreted translation of the Chinese:

THOUGHTS OF LI PO FROM THE WORLD'S END

Here at the world's end the cold winds are beginning to blow. What message have you for me, my master? When will the poor wandering goose arrive? The rivers and lakes are swollen with autumn's waters. Art detests a too successful life; and the hungry goblins await you with welcoming jaws. You had better have a word with the ghost of that other wronged poet. Drop some verses into the Mi-lo as an offering to him.

* * *

Five Quincouplets

Benjamin Wallach

Benjamin writes: First exposed to quincouplets through Andreas Lovaniensis' two wonderful compositions in the Autumn 2013 issue (*Vates* #8), I found myself immediately enthralled with this elegantly humble poetic style. Indeed, I soon realized that the almost epigrammatic quality of a quincouplet requires the poet to be at his most lucid and precise, a difficult but greatly rewarding necessity. In my first quincouplet presented here, for instance, I seek to capture the passing mental image of a great marble statue vivaciously examining those who go by. Thematically, I hope to present a literary situation (i.e., this sentient statue) which muddies the waters of our crisp living/non-living binary-all in just five words. This extreme constraint demands extraordinary care in word selection, though the fluidity of the Latin language still allows for creative word patterns (e.g., the placement of the prefix *praeter* at the very beginning of a line). The most important choice of words, though, pertains to the quincouplet's title, which constitutes a full sixth of the poem's content. For this work, I chose the title *Marmor*, not only as a reference to the statue's marble composition, but also because of the word's internal consonance, mirroring the (a)biotic duality discussed above, a point driven home by the second syllable's striking similarity to *mors*, the familiar root relating to the dead and inanimate.

[*The Editor adds a reminder*: "The rules of a quincouplet, or quin, are simple. There are two lines, with two words on the first line and three words on the second. It need not have a title, but if it does, the title must consist of only one word. The title can be used for any purpose except as the first word of a sentence continued by the poem."]

Marmor

statua saxi

praetereuntes aspicit uiuide.

Adipisci

algor auola

aestus aestatis appropinquet.

Clustra

nix negotiumque

arduis compescuntur muris.

Disparita

elanguens arbos

me antiquior ciuitateue.

Aquaticae

dictum naues

lacrimis alti cadere.

* * *

Metre: Quincouplets

Translations:

Marble.

A statue made of stone spiritedly gazes at those who walk past.

Arriving.

Fly off wintery coldness and let the summer warmth approach!

Bulwarks.

Snow and pain are kept out by my lofty walls.

About to Vanish.

A slumping tree, far more ancient than either me or the nation.

Watery.

It is said that ships sink with the tears of the Sea.

* * *

De Instantibus Hominibus Curis

Lydia Ariminensis

Lydia writes: I drew my inspiration from some verses of the *Aeneid* (IV, vv. 522-532), which I read to my students with metrical rhythm:

> *Nox erat et placidum carpebant fessa soporem*
> *corpora per terras, silvaeque et saeva quierant*
> *aequora, cum medio volvuntur sidera lapsu,*
> *cum tacet omnis ager, pecudes pictaeque volucres,*
> *quaeque lacus late liquidos quaeque aspera dumis*
> *rura tenent, somno positae sub nocte silenti.*
> *[lenibant curas et corda oblita laborum.]*
> *at non infelix animi Phoenissa, neque umquam*
> *solvitur in somnos oculisve aut pectore noctem*
> *accipit: ingeminant curae rursusque resurgens*
> *saevit amor magnoque irarum fluctuat aestu.*

I remembered the famous night poem of Alcman too (Fr. 89P):

> *εὕδουσι δ' ὀρέων κορυφαί τε καὶ φάραγγες*
> *πρώονές τε καὶ χαράδραι*
> *φῦλά τ' ἑρπέτ' ὅσα τρέφει μέλαινα γαῖα*
> *θῆρές τ' ὀρεσκῴοι καὶ γένος μελισσᾶν*
> *καὶ κνώδαλ' ἐν βένθεσσι πορφυρέας ἁλός·*
> *εὕδουσι δ' οἰωνῶν φῦλα τανυπτερύγων.*

Recalling to my mind these renowned verses, I composed something fitting to our times.

> *nox est, astra micant placido labentia caelo*
>
> *sed nobis infra de parua luce tremescunt*
>
> *urbis in aere conspectu fusco nebuloso,*
>
> *ante tabernas cauponasque ubicumque domorum*
>
> *lumine fuso, nec somnus mortalibus aegris*
>
> *nocte ob clamorem tota conceditur ullus.*

multi tam cupidi quaestus quocumque uagantur

solliciti numquam quod captum sit satis illis

se raroque solent consumpti dare quieti.

sunt qui continuo morbis miseri crucientur

quique carentes extollant palmas inopesque

cum uiuendi non illis spes ulla decore

nec dormire licet nisi sub Diuo iacituri.

dormit dura ferarum stirps, ac stant ut inertes

aerii uolucres in ramis immemoresque

lassa manent insecta cauernis clam colubrique

tradunt sese domi feles catulique sopori

non requiescit gens uigilans hominum miserorum

curis et fato uexatur nocte dieque

* * *

Metre: Hexameters

Translation: Worries Oppressing People

It is night, fading stars are shining in the quiet sky, but for us beneath they tremble with dim light in the foggy air of the town, confused to the sight, as plenty of light spreads in front of hotels and bars and houses and no sleep is allowed to weary people throughout the night because of noise.

Many people craving for gain wander here and there anxiously, because they have never got enough and seldom retire. Others are tortured unceasingly with diseases, others

lift up their hands in their poverty, as they have no hope of a dignified life and cannot sleep but in the open.

The hard progeny of wild beasts is sleeping, birds of the air lie like dead and forgetful on branches, weary bugs and snakes remain hidden in caves, cats and dogs fall asleep at home. But the progeny of unhappy men does not rest because of worries and is vexed by the fate all day and night long.

* * *

Verses for Rowley
Celebrating an octogenarian

David Money

David writes: The poem below was composed in October 2013, to celebrate the eightieth birthday of someone called Margaret Rowley, whom in fact I have never met – but who sounds well worthy of such a tribute. It is based on various pieces of information about the addressee's life and interests provided by Melanie Soden, the relative who 'commissioned' the poem (if that is the right word), through a mutual friend, Fiona Hook. She asked for something in Latin: it seemed to me that a poem would be better than a little piece of prose rhetoric. Apparently the results went down well enough with the recipient, and her family and friends.

I present it here for a wider readership in almost the same form as the original composition; I omit one couplet, quite personal to the addressee, which she would prefer to keep for her private amusement. Some interesting challenges arose; I aimed to fit her past and present academic interests into the opening couplet – training as a physicist in Oxford, and then a Classics degree in retirement. Taking two disparate adjectives (*physicis, piis*) with the same noun (*artibus*) was my attempt to compress this information. Current recreations follow: cycling in the second couplet, line-dancing in the fifth, chess in the sixth. I thought it important, as she was a former Yorkshire chess champion, to get in the chess; and I quite like the idea of the little wars of wooden monarchs, as well as the chance to allude to Vida's great Renaissance poem on the subject. A large and lively family – seven children, cats that are always having kittens – demanded mention; the garden found a place, but stories about a goat and chickens I didn't find room for.

As a Latin poet, I found it quite stimulating to be writing about someone I *didn't* know, trying to select and use to good effect appropriate ideas from the information that had been provided. It certainly makes a change from addressing personal poems to people I do know, as I have done over the years, along with quite a few other writers of modern Latin. The question arises, with such 'occasional' poetry, of whether its interest can extend beyond the original 'occasion' for its production. I hope it often can. But it needs to make some effort to arrest the attention of those later readers for whom the original persons and occasion have no particular significance. In the history of our art-form, the genre has a large, if sometimes problematic, place: something I have tried to explore further in my chapter on 'Epigrams and Occasional Poetry' in the forthcoming *Oxford Handbook of Neo-Latin*, edited by Sarah Knight and Stefan Tilg.

In past centuries, a lot of occasional poetry celebrated monarchs and other dignitaries. In our (sometimes) more democratic age, it is nice to see the individual qualities of more 'ordinary' people celebrated. As far as I am concerned, future commissions are welcome (those interested may contact me on dkm14@cam.ac.uk); other poets who contribute to *Vates* might indeed feel similarly, and be willing to put their services, in suitable circumstances and perhaps for an appropriate small reward, at the disposal of those by whom a new Latin poem might be appreciated – why not ask them, if the prospect of eternal fame intrigues you?

A Latin Tribute to Margaret Rowley
On her Eightieth Birthday

nouisti physicis dudum primordia rerum

artibus, et senior pristina prata piis.

lustro iam decimo sexto es robusta peracto,

pergis enim binis adueherisque rotis.

sunt quas tam grauiter premit octogesimus annus,

quas tardat tempus deminuitque dies:

qualiter haud uitam stolide tractare uideris,

indomito sequeris laeta uigore uiam.

linea saltantes leuiter disponit amicos,

hortum florenti sedula mente colis.

delectatque diu bene notus Scacchia ludus,

lignosi regis ludicra bella iuuant.

felibus et mulcens fecundis cincta sedebis;

uiuas septena prole beata tua.

illustri uigeas octogenaria laude:

gaudeat omnis homo, floreat omne genus.

* * *

Metre: elegiac couplets.
Translation:

Long ago you learnt the origin of things with a physicist's arts, and more recently you explored ancient fields with devoted skill. Now you are still robust, having passed your sixteenth *lustrum* [a five-year period, sometimes used by the Romans to mark ages; e.g. Horace *Odes* 4.1.6], for you proceed and are carried forward on two wheels. There are ladies whose eighty years weigh them down, whom time slows, and each day diminishes: you do not seem to be like them, dully stretching out life – instead, you happily follow your own path with undefeated vigour. A line keeps your lightly-dancing friends in order; you carefully cultivate your garden with a flourishing mind. The game of chess, which you know well, has long delighted you [cf. Marco Girolamo Vida's poem, *Scacchia Ludus*]: the wooden king's laughable wars give pleasure. And you will sit, stroking, surrounded by fecund cats; may you live happy in your seven-fold offspring. May you thrive as an octogenarian, much-praised; may everyone rejoice, may your whole family flourish.

* * *

Tria Poemata

Michelangelo Macchiarella

(1) Text Messages

Michelangelo writes: I wrote this in San Francisco – the fog had seeped inward.

tibi,
o insomnis puella,
ipsi dedi meum cor;
tum, amor noster fuit magnus,
nunc, quid est?
sicut meum cor:
et nihil et nullumque:
inane atque uacuom
… sterile.

* * *

Metre: Free verse

Translation:

I read her this once;
She said she didn't understand
And that I should go.

* * *

(2) Verses to be Sung

A constant struggle against ennui ensues.

uerso saepe de me morituro
aegrus for' opinor
uomitus miser
uenter se uersat -
eg' aegrebo
uerso me lapsare
hac doct' ex uita -
aeger aegrebo

* * *

Metre: Free verse

Translation:

Oft view
Myself I –
It's not loathing
See I self
It's me see
Sick I –
To far gone
Too
"Ayuda me."

* * *

(3) Yellow is the Colour of Panorama City

I never did understand why she called – why she was crying.

fortasse parum dixi.
“fortasse dixti mature,” ipsa dixit.
Urbs Angelum non est stellarum.
“Urbs Angelum stellas non habet,” ipsa dixit.

parua uerba tam inter sese bene coniecta

* * *

Metre: Free verse
Translation:

Perhaps I spoke too little.
“Perhaps you spoke too soon,” she said.
Los Angeles is a starless city.
“Los Angeles hasn’t any stars,” she said.

In the end they were all just little words so nicely placed together.

* * *

Salax Taberna

Michiel Sauter

Michiel writes: This is a poem about the owner of a filthy pub inspired by Catullus' poem 37 on a *salax taberna*.

cur cauponis olet salax taberna?

tenax iste negat lauare caudam;

manus mane lauat bis in matella

deinde tergit eas ter in capillis

ouo caluior est et iste caupo.

num miraris eo magis rogasque

quare fetida sit taberna putra?

* * *

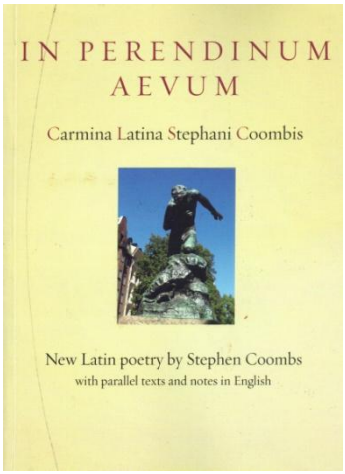
Metre: Hendecasyllables

Translation:

Why does the publican's filthy pub stink?
Tenaciously he refuses to wash his penis;
in the morning he washes his hands in the chamber pot twice
then he wipes them in his hair three times
that publican is even balder than an egg.
Do you really wonder and all the more ask
why his dirty pub is stinking?

* * *

Book Review



In Perendinum Aevum
Carmina Latina Stephani Coombis

New Latin Poetry by Stephen Coombs with parallel texts and notes in English

Printed for the author, Stockholm, 2014 (No ISBN at present: please see author's contact details below, for further information) Paperback: [xv +] 188 pp. [+ xxix photographic appendix]

Review by David Money

This is not quite a conventional review, of a book that is formally published, and thus publicly exposed to all the malice of the reviewing tribes. Stephen Coombs was kind enough to send me a copy of his Latin poems in their current privately-printed state; and Mark Walker asked me to provide a review for *Vates*. The book, as it stands, is very nicely presented, and many people interested in contemporary Latin writing might welcome a copy on their shelves.

Readers of the early issues of *Vates* will probably recall Coombs' poetry, as he contributed poems to *Vates 1*, *2* and *3*, all of which are included in this volume; and readers may wish to look back at them alongside the present review. I did not notice any further appearances in issues 4-9. Those three contributions to this journal do reflect some important aspects of his poetic *oeuvre*: willingness to use less familar metres, and an interest in religion, and his native county of Dorset.

Those who peruse this collection of Coombs' verse will find some more items on similar themes, but also a richer range of composition, much of it more personal, and sometimes more enigmatic. His brief iambic autobiography is on the back cover,

neatly covering a career largely spent teaching music in Sweden: though mindful of his British origins, he feels 'very much a European', fully assimilated in his country of residence. Now retired, a lifelong bachelor aged a little over seventy (born in 1943), in much of his recent poetry Coombs looks back at episodes in his early life. Now is a time for reflection, but with a focus also on what can be achieved in the present, and the unknown future: *Quando / rex nisi nunc fierem*? ('When am I to be king / if not now?'), but as a *vates* less interested in prophecy than *quae / tempora iam tulerint* ('what time / has already brought'; pp. 64-65, 68-69). Things are not always easy to disentangle, though generally presented in ways more likely to intrigue than repel the reader; as in the title of an extended autobiographical ode, *Simul Evidentia atque Obscura* ('Things at the same time both plain and obscure', pp. 90-97); optimism and melancholy go hand in hand, *simul laetor et lugeo* (p. 95).

Complication is only part of the story. There is a lively mixture of short and longer pieces, original ideas and bits of *Alice in Wonderland* etc. The short poems include some witty phrases that can serve to sum up profound ideas, such as *lapsus thalami sumus*, 'we are chance slips of the bed', punning on the familiar phrase *lapsus calami*, 'slip of the pen' (*Poeta Maestus*, p. 135). I like his epigram on the famous dictionary of Lewis and Short, starting *Num Levis et Brevis es*? *Potius gravis ac bene longus* ('You *levis* – light – and short? That's wrong: / you're heavy and distinctly long'; pp. 138-9). For his haikus (pp. 146-151, cf note p. 188), with characteristic care for formal detail, he uses classical feet as well as counting syllables, enquiring *Num Pyrrha simplex / munditiis voluit / audire carmen?* ('Did Pyrrha, simple / in her neatness, want / to hear the poem?' [Horace, *Odes* 1. 5]) – a good essay question? – and baffled by metaphorical brambles: *Virgulta densa / impenetrabilia, / humana corda.* ('Dense and / impenetrable thickets, / human hearts'). On a larger scale, his religious ode

Carmen Varangianum ('A song for the Varangian martyrs', pp. 108-111) gets its message over effectively in finely-handled Horatian sapphics.

The title phrase, *in perendinum aevum* ('into the era of the day after tomorrow') occurs in a poem on an Oxford punt (pp. 18-19); *perendinus* is not a common word: our friends *Levis & Brevis* offer a couple of uses in a purely practical sense (Cicero, Caesar), literally 'the day after tomorrow', and two that may be more metaphorical (Plautus, Gellius). It seems well chosen, in expressing Coombs' forward-looking attitude, and also some of his unconventionality. He can feel himself impeded, as well as inspired, by what he refers to later (p. 69) as *notiones insolentes*, 'unconventional ideas'.

That Oxford punt forms one of the *Occasiones Servatae*, 'moments held' by photography, which inspired a set of mostly short poems, a significant section of the book (pp. 16-29). The images themselves are usefully reproduced, in colour, at the end of the book; most are not in themselves of great artistic merit – more like the photos you or I might take on any trip, which I have heard someone more serious about photography dismiss as 'happy snaps'. A future editor, should some of these poems be picked for an anthology, might not go to the trouble of including them, and sometimes a quick verbal description might suffice (e.g., a flat Spanish plain with a village in the distance); nevertheless, I do think it is helpful of Coombs to have shown us exactly the images that inspired the verse, and at times the pairing can work together well, like music and lyrics. The message can be relatively simple – *Vivat amicitia*! ('Long live friendship!', pp. 26-27) – but more often there seems something enigmatic about these little scenes. Chance encounters with human beauty – a youth of 'living gold and ivory', or given an unexpected halo by a reflection in a bus roof – provide a kind of 'heavenly ambush' (to paraphrase p. 22). A young man snapped with loosened tie in a London hotel exemplifies virtues

that appeal to Coombs, 'beauty, prudence, seriousness and honour' – *pulchrum esse, cautum, serium atque honestum* (pp. 24-25). The poet may know more about the subject of the snap than is revealed to the reader. Two four-line poems (p. 29) on family groups inspire enigmatic reflections on youth and age: present joys might weigh down, *degravare*, the future; and *Diem / degimus ambiguum*, 'It is an ambiguous day we are spending'.

I notice (and I assume the poet intends us to notice) a delicate undercurrent of eroticism in quite a number of the poems: although there is nothing salacious, and the photographs are thoroughly chaste. Besides those already mentioned, there is the long poem in several metres (pp. 48-55) *Mustela vel potius Telamus* inspired by a statue in Stockholm of a youth looking down at a weasel, illustrated on the book's cover and frontispiece. He is a Ganymede-like figure, and his slender waist or *media pars* gives a new sense to *aurea mediocritas*, Horace's famous phrase for the 'golden mean'. This is a sensitive, Christian eroticism, though connected to ancient myths. Similarly a set of three religious poems, *Vox ter cupida*, 'Thrice yearning voice' (pp. 56-63), feature a naked youth (again, unsalaciously) dealing with the challenges of adolescence. Beauty matters powerfully to Coombs: *formam cecini*, '[I have] sung in praise of beauty' (p. 75) as he stresses near the start of another long ode reflecting on his life and career, with its ups and downs, *passus difficiles ac faciles dies*, 'having known days both of ease and of difficulty'. Later in the same ode we are presented with a coach-trip graced by a brief moment of falling in love (pp. 78-79). He is sensitive to the possibility of criticism, while hoping to produce material interesting enough to present and future readers, so that *discerpserit aula litterarum* ('the court of letters / will tear [it] to bits'; p. 75). That's us, folks: discerning scavengers.

For Coombs, the personal is definitely poetic; he is revealing something of himself, yet both in the photographic 'moments' and

elsewhere, the personal can also be puzzlingly elusive, as the greater part is kept hidden from us. I can imagine some readers, attracted to the more straight-forwardly religious poems, might feel less comfortable with this sensitive homoerotic tinge (very far though it is from carnal expression): although most denominations are probably more tolerant of talk of sexuality than they used to be. For this reader, the volume is enriched by such glimpses of powerful emotion.

Of the ancient poets, Horace is Coombs' chief inspiration – and it is no great surprise to find the tantalising youth Ligurinus with him (*Onyx Nardi*, pp. 40-47), though as a non-erotic interlocutor. One of the things I find most interesting and valuable about the book is the way that Coombs, while absorbing and using Horace's verse-forms, also goes beyond him, into the creation of some new lyric metres. I will take as my example the new strophic system of his *Urbes*, the six poems on cities which open the volume; this combines two of his new metres with one old one, the iambic trimeter catalectic (i.e. a six foot line, but with the last syllable removed). So, the first and third lines are iambic; the second is Coombs' 'greater' ionodactylic, the fourth his 'lesser' ionodactylic. The idea is to mix the ionic foot (*a minore*: two light syllables followed by two heavy ones) with the dactylic. Ionics on their own are rare; they are to be found in Horace's breathless *Odes* 3. 12: *Miserarum est* …, of which there are a couple of lively imitations in N. A. Bonavia-Hunt's *Horace the Minstrel* (1969), pp. 176-7 and 228-9: I especially like the former, an 'Ode to a Teddy Girl of the 1950s' by a certain A. Eustance. Their obvious repetitiveness, however, is a natural barrier to wider use. Coombs'mixture frees them up.

Here, then, is the structure of a four-line *Urbes* stanza: using *Vates*' preferred notation of light (L) and heavy (H) syllables – otherwise (in Coombs' notation) '*brevis* / short' and '*longa* / long' – and 'A' for *anceps*, when a syllable can be either light or heavy, as

the author prefers: this is always the case at the end of the line, and also in the first and third feet of these iambics. (I omit the more complicated possible variations in iambic lines, which as far as I can see Coombs wisely avoids here.)

AH LH AH LH LH A
LLHH LLHH HLLHLA
AH LH AH LH LH A
LLHH LLHLA

Here is how it works in practice: this is the final stanza of his poem on Oxford (pp. 8-9):

Quid nuntiatur universitate
studiorum? Modo tali des operam rei
quae sit superstes, prisca et huius aevi,
tua vere, veterum simul.

('What is the university's message? That you / should devote yourself to just such things as survive, / that are both ancient and contemporary, genuinely yours / and at the same time the property of your predecessors.')

And here is a 'greater ionodactylic' line from earlier in the same poem, describing the process of ageing and restoration of stone: *medicinis reparatur, scalpitur, eminet* ('[it] is restored with remedies, is scraped and finds itself / conspicuous'). That seems to me to convey its message effectively, with a choice of words that make the most of the rhythmical structure. There is a sense of age, tinged with melancholy, about several of Coombs' *Urbes*: Oxford's stone, Lisbon's *fado*. Madrid brings heat, passion, dissatisfaction. Yet amid uncertainty he also finds moments of magic, of absolute beauty (*absoluta pulchritudo*), as in his adopted home of Stockholm (pp. 4-5), still in some way *anceps*, 'uncertain in intimacy', as if it were a father-in-law's house – as he can imagine, despite stressing

his unmarried status in the stern iambic opening, *Mi deerit ac deest defuitque coniunx* ('I shall be, am and have been without a wife'). One needs to think about compressing those 'ee' sounds to one syllable each (*deerit* must scan as two syllables only, and *deest* one), and though that does not apply the third time, with *defuit*, all three tenses of that verb make a powerful combination. Paris provides some easier bodily pleasures, in the longest of the set (ten stanzas, pp. 12-15), before ending with a note of philosophical caution (the final 'you' refers to the city herself):

Periculosum ver, periculosa
hominum spes, chorus infans causa periculi,
vitae voluptas, ipsa vita nostra,
homines, urbs: ego, tu sumus.

('Dangerous is spring, dangerous is human hope, / the children's dancing is a source of danger, / as are the pleasure of living, our very life, / people, the city: as we are, I and you.')

A challenge to readers:

Here I would like to issue a friendly challenge to my fellow readers: why not try to write something in this new verse form, for the next issue of *Vates*? Any subject or length would do, and it would not be necessary to obtain Coombs' book or study his approach before starting. If seeking inspiration, one could do worse than follow Coombs himself, and take any *Urbes* that have some personal significance as a starting point. The information above, setting out the structure of each four-line stanza, ought to be sufficient. I am inclined to have a go myself, and would be delighted if others could join me in the experiment.

Coombs fairly tentatively suggests names for his fresh lines (p. 183), but not for the new stanzas they help to produce. For the one

I am selecting here, perhaps 'the Coombian [or Coombsian] Urbane stanza' might do? This particular new stanza, like the other alternative forms introduced by Coombs, may end up appealing to a number of subsequent authors, or it may remain more personal to him; whatever happens, I would like to express my approval of such innovation. It is good for Latin to try new things, in the structure of verse as well as in other respects. Coombs is far from rejecting the old forms: he is a master of many of them. His variations are fully rooted in the ancient tradition of quantitative verse. They deserve to be assessed on their individual merits, both for the use Coombs himself makes of them, and for their potential usefulness in the hands of other authors.

The book may or may not appear in future, under the auspices of a more formal publisher; but in any event, Stephen Coombs would be very pleased to distribute copies now, and all interested readers are invited to contact him directly to arrange this. His contact details are as follows: by email, stephen.coombs@ymail.com – and by post: Tomtebogatan 34, SE-113 38 Stockholm, Sweden. As far as I am aware, he has not yet set a price; please remember that the postage, as well as the production of these neat volumes, complete with colour illustrations, will cost him some money, and offer to reimburse him appropriately. In some circumstances (as he suggested to me informally) it might make better sense for him to accept a donation made to charity on his behalf, in lieu of payment to him personally. But he will let you know, when you get in touch.

While Coombs' own motives are not primarily commercial, it is worth our pausing to consider, in general terms, the economics of such publishing, for a niche market like modern Latin. The actual making of books is not especially expensive: various printers will produce them quite affordably, and the minimum print-run need generally be no more than 100 copies (hence, not very risky or expensive, even if not all are sold). Print-on-demand services can

produce even smaller print runs, albeit at a higher cost per copy. The cost rises if you need to hire other people to prepare your text for publication; but if you do that yourself (and I have managed it, just about, despite a general incompetence with technology), and don't put a price on your own time, it is quite possible to sell books at a reasonably modest price, which includes a sufficient margin to ensure that the exercise is almost certain to break even, and likely to make a small profit.

For many, I know, such considerations are irrelevant: we are dealing with modest sums, probably in the hundreds or very low thousands of pounds, euros, dollars or whatever, so what does it matter? But I like to think of it as a commercial exercise, partly to stress that it is not just what is sometimes referred to as 'vanity publishing'. All publishing is vanity, in a way: if you think successful authors of mainstream fiction and non-fiction aren't vain, and inordinately proud of seeing their names in print, I would suggest you think again. Of course people wish to draw attention to themselves and their work, as is only natural, and for many authors it is a secondary consideration whether or not their work makes any money. There is a kind of fully-justified vanity, that I think applies to Coombs' volume; he has produced something which deserves attention from others, and it is quite right that he wishes others to notice it. Commercial publishers, including academic presses, will only look at whether they can sell enough copies to make it worth their while; but we can do without them, while still maintaining a fairly hard-headed and business-like attitude to the costs and rewards.

Publishing in print form, as well as on the internet, is important to the future of Latin verse: it needs to be on individuals' shelves, and (crucially) on the shelves of some major libraries, for the attention of future scholars. We are looking at it for our own pleasure, today, but also, as Coombs puts it, looking ahead 'in perendinum aevum'. I therefore commend Stephen Coombs for his

initiative in producing this volume, and I would warmly urge other regular contributors to *Vates* to do likewise. If you don't feel you have enough material, or would feel more confident in the company of fellow poets, why not collaborate on a joint volume? I am not necessarily promising to buy it, but I would like to know that it's there, and I think you will find that enough interested buyers exist, for good-quality, innovative Latin verse, to make the effort worthwhile.

David Money

Please contact the author Stephen Coombs
stephen.coombs@ymail.com for enquiries about availability

De Gustibus non est Disputandum

Letters to the Editor

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

Dear Editor,

Congratulations on Issue 9. If you allow me to change Issue to Month, 9 months make a man, and so I dream of *Vates* as a healthy baby briskly cruising aroung manhood. Needless to say, I was deeply moved by Bob Zisk's awareness of my ninetieth birthday, which he chose to celebrate by quoting some lines of mine that promptly hit the mark by making my age seem joyously bearable. Not knowing how to reach him, I beg you to send these humble hexameters to him – and may he forgive their haste and unpolishness.

Ad Robertum Zisk

Certe iunior es, Roberte, viro cui scribis

Et nunc exoptas aetatis non grave pondus.

Hoc facientes, nonne sumus gnari oppositorum--

Dico, senectutis? Si verum est, cur memoraris

Decretum quod cras et sponte sua apparebit?

Si non est, cur vis paulum delere iuventam?

Continuum sine ver in te remanere, cavendo

Ipsum verbum hiemale loqui solemque tenere.

Thank you very much and congratulations again.

Yours cordially,

Joseph Tusiani

Advice for Beginners

In this instalment of our semi-regular column, **David Money** tells us about

The Michigan Experiment

There are various ways of encouraging new poets, and assisting their early efforts; I hope contributors to *Vates* will keep adding their ideas. Here, I would like to introduce a website which has been created by my American colleagues at the University of Michigan, to encourage both would-be poets and readers of poetry to take a look, and also to seek feedback from more experienced poets; both beginners and experts may be able to make valuable suggestions, whether for improving the site, or for future initiatives of this nature. This is the website:
http://www.umich.edu/~rclatin/iv/index.html

The site is an offshoot of the *Inter Versiculos* summer workshop (University of Michigan, 2011), which intended to give people interested in trying to write Latin verse, but not necessarily with any experience at all, enough confidence over the course of a week of teaching sessions, practice, and communal discussion to start writing their own poetry, and hopefully achieve some worthwhile results. They might not avoid all errors – many of us keep on making silly mistakes, however experienced we are – but would understand the principles, and by receiving on-the-spot advice and corrections be able to see how errors can arise, and how to go about fixing them.

This is not something I had done before, in this intensive way. Over many years of teaching at Cambridge, I have from time to time been asked to teach people verse composition. This is very much an optional subject nowadays; while about half of the Classics students attempt prose composition for their exams, it is rare to find one attempting verse. There are a number of prizes,

which people do attempt in varying numbers: indeed it would be nice to see more of the verses composed for Oxford and Cambridge prizes (whether victorious or not) submitted to *Vates*. They give people something tangible to aim for, although one hopes that there may be more value in real poetry than merely winning a university prize.

This being so, my teaching method has generally been to give a demonstration, and then suggest the student tries some verses (translating from English, or original); after making some errors and having them pointed out, the better students tend to get the hang of it. Whether they get very serious, or persevere for long, depends on their level of interest and other commitments: and there is the problem that the syllabus is packed with compulsory elements, leaving little time for optional extras. Others also teach the subject, some of them to more students than I have seen. So, if not exactly flourishing, the art is alive and kicking in the ivory tower. But it needs to flourish outside academia, as I am sure *Vates* readers will agree; and perhaps its best hopes for the future lie in attracting new poets from outside, as well as within, the ranks of current students and academics – including that small portion of the general public inclined to take an interest. How to reach them, inspire them, and help them develop their skills is the challenge. The method I adopted at Michigan was something of an experiment; I hope a broadly successful one, but also open to considerable improvement.

What can the website offer, apart from a look at how other people spent their vacation? There is a guide to navigating the site ('About this site'); sections of greater interest may include the public reading, videos of teaching sessions and summaries of key points. Some advice may be obvious to beginners, some less so. If some of it helps other prospective versifiers, the site will have achieved a useful result. The interaction between teacher and audience hopefully helped to clarify the issues which beginners might find

problematic; my thanks go to all the participants, and especially to Gina Soter of the Residential College, University of Michigan, the prime mover behind the workshop, and its ever-capable organiser. Most of the demonstration and discussion preserved on video should make reasonable sense; a few 'private jokes' may not be immediately obvious – we felt the need for an American Muse to be added to Parnassus, whom we named Mildred of Michigan – and no claims are made for sartorial elegance: in my defence, it was hot, and I was travelling very light, not expecting to be filmed, with one pair of more-or-less respectable trousers and one pair of less distinguished violet shorts.

Getting people together for a workshop like our Michigan experiment obviously takes time, organisation, and funding (in this case we were fortunate to have some generous institutional support, but it also inevitably costs participants a fee and travel expenses that are more easily afforded by some than others). How does its value compare with just trying to get on with it at home, which costs only one's time? Chris de Lisle's interesting essay on 'Communal Composition' (*Vates 7:34-39*) explains how a group of people can get together informally, and pool their efforts to produce verse that an individual might not have the confidence or skill to write alone. We did not do communal compositions at Michigan – I wanted everyone to produce their own personal verse, however long or short – but the benefits of being with other people trying similar things, and facing similar problems, must be considerable.

Among the things we learned from the experiment was a list of desiderata for the future – perhaps chief among them, as far as I am concerned, being a convenient and simple online guide to how to scan. Many people who want to start writing verse can already scan Virgilian hexameters, at least, without any trouble: but that is not true of everyone, and I am not quite sure where to direct those who could do with some help. (If you have a good answer to this, especially if it already exists online, please let us know.) Textbooks

tend to have long and forbidding sections on quantity and versification: good for checking things, but less good for encouraging a beginner. The amount of information about scansion that needs to be absorbed immediately is not actually very large: exceptions to the rules and other complications can probably wait. When teaching in person, I find it doesn't normally take long to show someone how to do it; it would be nice to have a similar resource available, when that method is less practical. We would certainly have found it useful, before the Michigan workshop, to have been able to direct our less confident participants to such a resource.

Future activities are not yet fixed: but I hope there will be some further experiments along similar lines. If you have suggestions for a location, or for attracting new participants, please do get in touch. Whether in America once more, or in continental Europe or closer to my own home in Britain, it would be nice to see the spirit of Michigan revived and developed. I would be happy to be the sole 'experienced' teacher again, guiding a group of complete or near beginners; equally, that could be combined with a workshop for other more experienced writers, who could share their work and discuss their aims and methods, offering the beginners a range of different potential approaches. Any feedback on the website would be very welcome, as would any comments on future possibilities: please feel free to contact me directly on dkm14@cam.ac.uk, as well as moving the discussion forward in the pages of *Vates* with further advice to beginners, or questions from beginners to the rest of us.

My final 'advice to beginners' for today: good luck, and have a go – we are really delighted to see you try, and wish you every success at getting over the inevitable early difficulties. New poets are the future of our art, and I hope you may become one of them.

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Contributors

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.

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

Catherine B. Krause has a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science from Dickinson College and hopes to one day go back to school to study linguistics. Under the name Benjamin C. Krause, her English poetry has appeared in *Rabbit Ears: TV Poems*, *Gargoyle* and *Reckless Writing: The Modernization of Poetry by the Emerging Writers of the 21st Century*. Her Esperanto poetry has appeared in *Penseo*. She created the form of the 'quincouplet' poems that appeared in Vates 8 from Autumn 2013.

Thomas Lindner lives in Austria and is Professor of Comparative Philology in the Linguistics Department at the University of Salzburg. He is also a Member of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. His research interests focus mainly on the classical languages. He has published several books and many articles on Latin, Greek, and Indo-European linguistics.
http://thomaslindner.members.cablelink.at/lindner_lyr_lat_ed_min.pdf

Michelangelo Macchiarella had a dream in Los Angeles last night wherein he looked at himself in the mirror and said, “I am just a composite of everything I do.” Awaking this morning, he reclines on the patio, shuts his eyes to the sun and drinks his coffee; he speaks aloud, “That just means that I am nothing.”

David Money teaches Neo-Latin literature at the University of Cambridge, for the Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages, and is a fellow of the *Academia Latinitati Fovendae*; he has

published widely on Neo-Latin topics, especially on British verse of the 16th to 18th centuries. As well as trying to be active as a Latin poet, he is interested in encouraging others to develop their talents in this direction, with initiatives such as the 'Inter Versiculos' summer workshop (University of Michigan, 2011): http://www.umich.edu/~rclatin/iv/index.html

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*.

Michiel Sauter teaches German, Dutch and Latin in Nijmegen, the Netherlands. He has only just begun to write Latin poems after reading Mark Walker's "Advice for Beginners" in *Vates 9*.

Jacinta Smallhorn is from Canberra, where she lives and works as a parish secretary. She has a PhD in linguistics from the Australian National University; her doctoral thesis was a historical-comparative study on a family of Papuan languages.

Nicholas Stone is a 16-year-old Classicist studying at Westminster School in London, who enjoys versifying in Latin, Greek and English.

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

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 (**@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 near London.

Benjamin Wallach attends the Montclair Kimberley Academy where he enthusiastically studies Latin and serves as the president of his school's chapter of the New Jersey Junior Classical League. Though a deep admirer of Roman history, culture, and literature, the work featured in this issue of *Vates* marks his first expedition into the composition of Latin poetry.

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.

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The *Vates* Anthology of New Latin Verse

A Tentative Proposal

I have for some time now been thinking about producing an anthology of Latin poems by contributors to this journal. I envisage the layout will be very similar to that of *Vates*; it may simply be a collection of all the poems that have appeared here, or include additional works selected by the contributors, with each contributor having their own dedicated chapter within which they can showcase whichever poems they choose.

As the owner of the Pineapple Publications imprint I will allocate an ISBN to the book and register it with Nielsen BookData as a specified publication (and send a copy to the Legal Deposit office of the British Library). My initial thought is to make it an e-book available for download via Amazon's Kindle store and elsewhere; but I will also consider listing it at a print-on-demand website such as Lulu.com, so readers will be able to own a physical copy should they so wish.

In the next few weeks and months I will be contacting all *Vates* contributors individually and asking for their thoughts. I will of course publish nothing without consulting each and every potential contributor. Questions such as what to charge for the book – *gratis*, a purely nominal fee, or not? – remain to be pondered.

In the meantime, if you have any feedback about this idea please don't hesitate to let me know.

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Look out for the next issue of *Vates* in 2015

Vates is available for free download here

'ego Lar sum familiaris'

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