



DIURNA

NEWSPAPER OF THE 25TH LATIN SUMMER SCHOOL: DIES MERCURII, JANUARIUS XVI

**Abbey's Bookstall continues near the inside
fountain in The New Law Building**

**The second of the Nicholson Museum tours takes
place today at 12.40 pm**

**The post prandium lectures at 1.30 pm today
are:**

Paul Roche

"Neronian Rome in 10 objects and texts"

New Law School Annexe SR 442

Dexter Hoyos

*"Give me not M basia but but <I> basia ! Some
revelations about Roman numerals"*

New Law School Annexe SR 444

Kathleen Riley

*"Little Eternities: Henry James's Horatian Sense of
Time"*

New Law School Annexe SR 446

**The activities for school students continue in
Eastern Avenue Seminar Room 115**

**Kathleen Riley's Special Interest Series for Level
4, 'A Son's Quest: Modern Odysseys with
Telemachus and Aeneas' continues in Eastern
Avenue Seminar Room 312 from 2.50 pm to 4.00
pm**

KUDOS

Founded by Kevin Lee, Kudos works to support the teaching of Latin and Greek at Australian universities. It funds a part-time position at the University of Sydney and hopes to introduce others at other universities where the languages are struggling. Kudos is a registered charity with tax-deductible status. For more information see kudos.org.au or email information@kudos.org.au

GROUP PHOTO

John Coombs would like to get a photo of all the WEA Latin students at the barbecue on Friday.

LATIN AT WEA SYDNEY IN 2019-01-14

The following courses are being offered at WEA, 72 Bathurst St., Sydney, just down the hill from Town Hall Station, in 2019.

All classes are to be taught by John Coombs, (2A tutor). All classes run for nine weeks and each class lasts for two hours. The cost of each course is \$258, or \$232 with concession.

LATIN BEGINNERS 2

Starts Monday, 4/2, 2.00 – 4.00 pm. Will be starting part of the way through chapter 9 of *Oxford Latin Course*, Book 1

LATIN BEGINNERS CONSOLIDATION

Starts Monday 4/2, 5.30 – 7.30 pm. Will be starting part of the way through chapter 23 of *Oxford Latin Course*, book 2

LATIN ADVANCED 3

Prize-winning entry in the Diurna Competition

Cicero's poetry: hot or not?

By Lisa Creffield

A small experiment was recently carried out in our Latin reading group. Thirteen couplets of Latin verse were handed out, and members had to guess whether they were written by Vergil, Lucan or Cicero.

The results were interesting. Vergil was the most correctly recognised of the three poets. Where Lucan was mistaken, it was usually for Vergil, and where Cicero was mistaken, it was usually for Lucan.

The purpose of this experiment was to find out if Cicero's poetry deserves the rabid condemnation it frequently gets. Is it truly stand-out awful compared to his contemporaries and successors?

While Cicero is renowned and revered for his oratory, his letters and his philosophical writings, ancient critics who had access to Cicero's poetry "were clamorous in condemning it with unmistakable virulence," as John W Spaeth writes in *The Classical Journal* (Vol. 26, No. 7, Apr, 1931).

Modern disregard stems largely from a single line mocked by Juvenal that purportedly came from a now lost section of Cicero's three-volume epic poem on his Consulship.

O fortunatam natam me consule Romam!

Starts Friday 1/2, 2.15 – 4.15 pm. Has started working through the *Oxford Latin Reader*

LATIN ADVANCED

Starts Wednesday 30/1, 10.00 – 12.00. Has almost completed the *Oxford Latin Reader*, and will start on *Wheelock's Latin Reader* when this is finished.

LATIN ADVANCED

Starts Friday 1/2, 10.00 – 12.00. Has almost completed the *Oxford Latin Reader*, and will start on *Wheelock's Latin Reader* when this is finished

CONTACT

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Or enrol using the website, weasydney.com.au

The classicist Mary Beard describes this as "one of the worst pieces of Latin Doggerel to have made it through the Dark Ages" and translates it as: "Rome was born a lucky city, when I as consul wrote this ditty".

It seems odd that a man so brilliant with words and masterful with rhythm of rhetoric, with such breadth of scholarship and sensitive appreciation of poetry and literature, would be tone deaf himself when it came to writing verse.

Saxa atque solitudines voci respondent, bestiae saepe immanes cantu flectuntur atque consistunt; nos instituti rebus optimis non poetarum voce moveamur? (*Cic. Arch. 8.19*)

Tacitus was one of Cicero's disparagers. He writes that Caesar and Brutus wrote verse "no better than Cicero's", but what they wrote had the "happier fate" of having fewer people know that they had written it. Seneca, Quintilian and Aper were also among the maligners.

In contrast, Plutarch claims that "before the rise of Lucretius and Catullus, there is little doubt that Cicero was the poet of his age".

Much of Cicero's extant poetry is his translations of Greek poetry, such as the *Phaenomena* of Aratus. Here, Cicero is regarded as having made much progress in Latinising the Greek dactylic hexameter. Spaeth writes that "it is quite certain that Lucretius

paid Cicero the sincere compliment of studying and imitating his hexameter verse", noting several reproductions of phrases from Cicero's *Aratea* in Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura*.

W W Ewbank, editor of *The Poems of Cicero* (1933), describes Cicero as "something of a pioneer in the more extended use of the hexameter". It is clear that Cicero's skill with rhetorical rhythm influenced his poetry. Ewbank notes that "Cicero did undoubtedly adopt special rhythm to secure special effects" and notes spondaic rhythms "illustrative of dignity, grief, extent of distance, physical strain, and cognate ideas".

While Cicero's poetic talents may not have reached the stellar level of his oratorical ones, it is unfair to condemn them absolutely. If nothing else, our experiment certainly failed to generate any shrieks of In fact the most eminent classicist of our group mistook one excerpt of Vergil (Aeneid II 693-4) as being written by Cicero. Not that he should feel too ashamed by this error, since Ewbank notes that "in the *Prognostica* we find verses which might be written from Vergil's own pen":

nuntiat horribiles clamans instare procellas

haud modicos tremulo fundens e gutture cantus

History has not judged Cicero the Poet very kindly. As much as his notorious ego (compounded by Juvenal's ridicule) may be to blame, there is certainly beauty and value to be found in Cicero's verse. In the words of J Wight Duff, author of *A Literary History of Rome*:

"Cicero is a vivacious and tasteful intermediary who transmitted to Lucretius and Catullus the ancient Latin versification enhanced in dignity and, still more decidedly, in techniques."