Latin for Mrs Jones

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**Abstract**

An early seventeenth-century memorial to an English-woman in Lindisfarne Northumberland, inscribed in both English and Latin, gives testimony not only to love and grief for a departed family member, but also to a, for the time, common mixing of languages. The mourning relative’s choice to demonstrate their grief in Latin verse invites scrutiny in several intercultural contexts. The first – Latin and English intermingling on a memorial – is perhaps less interesting than the conversation between two Latinate cultures: that of the seventeenth-century erector of the stone and of ancient Rome. The composer of the inscription faced the task of fitting their chosen words into a quite rigid structure following precise technical rules of prosody and composition established by classical Latin poets. In so doing they declared their gender and education. This type of use of Latin by unremarkable people in obscure locations represents a curious and significant mixing of cultures; the explication of it in this article is by a specialist in what is nowadays referred to as the field of neo-Latin.

**Keywords:** Language mixing, Renaissance Britain, Ancient Rome, neo-Latin, interculturality

Just off the north-east coast of England, facing the bleak North Sea, Ann Jones was buried. She lies in the church of St Mary the Virgin, on Lindisfarne (also known as Holy Island), Northumberland: nowadays connected to the mainland at low tide by a causeway, but still cut off at high tide. Now, the island is popular with tourists for its wildlife, for its long history, and for the remoteness which they themselves threaten when the causeway is open. Thirteen hundred years ago, it was a bustling centre of trade and religious learning, open to the sea, from which destruction was to come. Then, in the Anglo-Saxon age, learned monks would be wholly at home in Latin. They were long gone by Mrs Jones’s time. There was a small castle
– where little Latin was probably spoken – to protect the anchorage from disturbance; there was less of that, since the Scottish king had come south. In 1625, the year of the king’s death, and her own, Mrs Jones’s island was a dull backwater. Reading and writing in foreign languages was not high on the agenda; most of the inhabitants did little enough in their own tongue. Yet if a foreign visitor had passed by the church – perhaps a ship’s captain from the Baltic, detained by the wind or giving thanks for escape from it – he might have found her commemorated in a way he could understand. 1

What is odd about Mrs Jones’s memorial is not the use of Latin, in itself. It is that it begins in English, then shifts to Latin; and that the Latin is in verse. It is time for us to meet her:

*Here lyeth the bodie of Ann Jones, somtyme wife to Henry Jones esquire: which Ann died the 19 of Februarie 1625.*

*In obitum dilectissimae matris Ann Jones*

*Si quis forte rogat, cuius tenet ossa sepulcrum,*

*Ipse tacens docui marmora dura loqui.*

*Si quaeris proavos, generoso sanguine ducta est,*

*Si vitam: insignis regula iustitiae.*

*Si quaeris mores, mulier nec amantior usque*

*Nec pietatis erat, nec probitatis erat.*

*Haec pro te tristis subscripsit carmina, mater,*

*Quae sunt officii signa suprema sui:*

*Per me Petrum Jones.*

The Latin can be translated as follows:

*[title:] On the death of my beloved mother Ann Jones.*
*[verse, lines 1-2:] If anyone may ask whose bones are in this tomb, I have taught the hard marble to speak, being silent myself.*
*[lines 3-4:] If you ask about her ancestors: she was of noble blood; about her life: an outstanding model of justice.*
*[lines 5-6:] If you ask about her manners: no woman was ever more fond of piety, nor of probity.*
*[lines 7-8:] These are the verses written for you, mother, in my sadness; they are the final
signs of my duty –

[signature, outside the verse:] by me, Peter Jones.

The text, as I give it, has been lightly modernised: the original stone is all in capitals; I have added some punctuation, and changed ‘Jones’ to ‘Jones’. (Much the same might have been done, if it had been printed in Mrs Jones’s period.) What would our foreign visitor make of it? The English, he might struggle with: but clearly a name, and a date. What year, though? Do they mean the new style calendar, in use in most parts of Europe, or the old style, to which England clung for more than a century after this, and in which the year only began on 25 March. So 19 February 1625, old style, really means 1626, in modern usage. I am guessing old style is meant, and so might our visitor, if he paused to consider; either way, he knew the date within a year. Who cares anyway, besides the Jones family? When he reached the Latin, he would be more at home, assuming he paid any attention in school – for schools throughout Europe did not just study Latin, they taught in it, and taught people how to write it. He might well have written similar words himself, as an exercise.

This was no exercise. It was a labour of love, and of grief; the last duty of son to mother. That much is clear from the last two lines, and signature, of the poem; and also from the opening Latin phrase, with its superlative *dilectissimae*, ‘most loved’. Our reader might have expected the name in a Latin form, *Annae*, ‘of Ann’ – it is difficult to see on the stone, but there may be a mark of abbreviation (‘Ann:’) here, as there probably is, more oddly, the first time it appears in the English. But the English name, unfamiliar as it may be, and awkward to pronounce (‘Joh-ness’? – ‘Ee-oh-nase?’ – whatever …?) would be no serious barrier to reading the Latin.

What was Peter Jones thinking, when he commemorated his mother in this way? Not, I am sure, of the convenience of foreign visitors, or of intercultural inquiry. The mixing of languages is a distinct choice; one or the other for the whole monument would be more natural. I don’t know why he did that: but I guess it seemed worthwhile to put the basic information in plain English, for the benefit of local people who had known Ann Jones, and would care about where she lay. As long as they were literate in English, this would tell them. Though the style is now archaic, the message remains comprehensible to most: I can imagine some readers today, especially non-native speakers, pausing over the spelling, and having trouble with ‘lyeth’ [lies], ‘somtyme’ [sometime, i.e. formerly], and the concept of an ‘esquire’.
Peter Jones wanted to go far beyond basic information; and as far as he was concerned, the right language for an elaborate tribute was Latin. Not all his contemporaries would have agreed. In most churches, and all cathedrals, which stood in this period, one may find elaborate seventeenth-century monuments in Latin, and others in English. Often the main impact comes not from the text, but the carved decoration. Peter avoided all decoration: yet the letters are very neatly carved, which suggests a skilled professional, and not the cheapest letter-cutter. Probably he could have afforded at least some sculpture, but preferred to leave everything to be conveyed by the words.

And what words are those? He claims to have performed a miracle: to have taught the hard marble to speak! Not quite literally, one is relieved to find; what could be worse, than to be accosted by a speaking memorial at every turn, a very ancient mariner determined to tell us his life story? (Modern technology can now perform exactly that: and there are exhibitions where the visitor’s approach will set off a speaking exhibit. Clever and informative, yes; peaceful, no.) Peter cannot be there in person; he wants his written words to have the same impact as a verbal tribute. And he grabs you and makes you listen: ‘if anyone asks’, he begins – and that ‘anyone’ is now you – so ‘if you ask’ the obvious questions, here are the answers.

The questions and answers seem quite conventional, even dull. They reveal contemporary concerns for social status and outward respectability, as well as the private virtues which her family will have known. Neither we, nor our seventeenth-century visitor, would be able to know whether Mrs Jones really was as perfect as all that – merely that her son wanted us to think so, and presumably thought so himself (if he had secretly disliked her, there are simpler ways to go through the motions of public remembrance, than composing Latin verse). And her good points are not presented as unique: she was of good family – that is important, in a snobbish world, but a quality shared by all others of her class; what matters most about her life, is her strict adherence to justice – a virtue, certainly, but potentially a chilly one, the avoidance of crime in one’s own conduct, and its repression in others. No woman ever loved piety more: that may be outward religious observance, and it may also be private religious devotion, and (in a classical Latin sense) devotion to one’s family. Not for nothing is ‘pious’ the standard epithet for the epic hero of Virgil’s Aeneid, with which any reader of Latin would have been familiar. The final quality, probitas, is less easy to translate, at least with a single word; any of ‘goodness’, ‘honesty’, ‘uprightness’, ‘modesty’ might do – and doubtless Peter means a mixture of all of them, the quiet virtues that befitted a seventeenth-century married woman of good family, and presumably also a widow (as the ‘sometime’ wife of Henry Jones implies, and the fact that Peter, not Henry, sets up the monument).
In terms of intercultural inquiry, then, we are dealing with the engagement of two Latinate cultures, Peter’s seventeenth-century present, and the ancient Roman manners which informed his choice of words, and the range of meanings which those words could reasonably bear. In many respects these cultures were quite separate; the Romans had various repellent habits – gladiatorial and wild-beast contests, a slave economy – which the English of Mrs Jones’s day largely lacked. The North East was yet to be addicted to football, and there wasn’t much of an empire. The English of this coast were more likely to be victims than perpetrators of slave-trading, and even that risk was lower than in places more exposed to North African piracy. Their treatment of women of good family – respected, repressed – may not have differed so much. The Romans of the classical period were pagan, or philosophers; Mrs Jones had little choice in the matter, but presumably conformed to the established Anglican church in which she was buried. Rome’s empire was multi-lingual, in its eastern half predominantly Greek: so Latin literary forms were never everyone’s natural choice, however pervasive among the Roman elite. Yet beyond its barbaric opening, an educated Roman of the classical period (say 100 BC (or BCE) – AD 200 (or CE)) would have understood every word of Mrs Jones’s epitaph, would have known exactly what sort of person she was, and would have seen many similar memorial verses. The same applies to an educated European of any nation, in Mrs Jones’s own age.4

Since it does not apply today to most educated people, even to most professors of History or English (or even, one may whisper, to some professors of Latin), it is worth exploring and attempting to explain exactly what this shared literary understanding amounted to. Not only the language, and the sentiments, were common property. The key element in Peter’s tribute to his mother is the verse-form. If that is not grasped, the words are merely a nice set of conventional platitudes. With it, they are real poetry. I do not suggest they are great poetry, or even better than average. But they are part of a great international tradition of popular verse, in which hundreds of thousands of people have participated as writers, as well as readers, over a period of two thousand years.5

As almost any educated seventeenth-century visitor would spot instantly, that verse-form is the elegiac couplet. It helps to have the alternate lines indented (as in my transcription, and as on the original stone), a standard way to present this very common metrical structure. But even without that, and even if the words had been presented as a prose paragraph, the rhythm would still be obvious. Why that is so, it is more of a challenge to explain. It helps to have written such verses oneself, as the seventeenth-century visitor probably had, and the modern professor probably has not. To students of Latin, the terminology is not a barrier, even if the
practical functioning is more obscure; to everyone else, it is not much help to say that it is in elegiacs, and little better to say that this consists of a dactylic hexameter followed by a dactylic pentameter.  

Perhaps one should start by saying what this kind of Latin verse does not do. It doesn’t rhyme. Occasionally one notices an internal rhyme, as in the second line here (docui / loqui): this one more of a half-rhyme, and perhaps subtler for that, since docui has three syllables (do-cu-i), and loqui two (lo-qui). They are also different parts of the verb: first person of the perfect tense (‘I have taught’), and (one of the forms of) the present infinitive (‘to speak’). One may see the same in the last line (officii / sui), and this time they do agree with each other as noun and adjective. (We will come to the sixth line in a minute.) Much medieval verse relies on rhyme, but for ancient writers, and Renaissance ones who looked back to them, it is to be avoided. The lines must hang together on rhythm alone, and the rules for that rhythm are very tight. It is not a matter of the stress-accent, as in English and some other languages. Latin has such an accent, but it runs alongside the rhythm of the verse, generally conflicting with it at various places in each line, and uniting with it at the end.

And now let us attempt to explore what Peter Jones was actually doing. This is the tricky part, for me and for you – unless you are already an expert, in which case it will be basic and blindingly obvious. That is the challenge in explaining any kind of technical subject to people who are not experts in that field at all – as I must assume readers of this journal are not – and don’t particularly want to be, either; but who might get something out of it, if it can be made understandable, without excessive tedium and unbearable complication, yet without dumbing it down to meaninglessness. How much tedium can you bear? Brace yourselves. I am aiming for moderate tedium, marred by occasional mediocre jokes. Chiefly, though, I want to be understood – because Mrs Jones deserves it. What her son was doing in her honour was, in one sense, remarkable, the skilful use of an art that has deep intercultural links, and has in recent years been largely forgotten; in another sense, it was, for his time, quite normal. And it is that normality which gives this investigation its wider relevance. The Joneses can stand for many other normal families, in many times and places, and across various cultural divides. So, get ready for the detail. Who ever thought intercultural inquiry was easy? You’ve got to be tough to read this stuff.

Peter’s main task was to fit his chosen words into a quite rigid structure, which allows for variations, but only within clearly defined limits. A competent poet works within those limits, embracing them as a spur to creativity and elegance; a weaker poet struggles to meet their demands. Each syllable of every word needs to be considered, as do the places where words
meet. All syllables, for this purpose, are defined as ‘long’ or ‘short’; one long can sometimes be replaced by two ‘shorts’. This is more a technical rule, than a direct guide to pronunciation; if in doubt on the length of a syllable, the writer is better advised to consult the dictionary or grammar book, than his own ear. (It has become trendy in some quarters to call them ‘heavy’ and ‘light’ instead of ‘long’ and ‘short’; but ‘long’ and ‘short’ have the virtue of long usage, and are the terms Peter would have understood.) These lengths are not random, and not under the poet’s own control: only occasionally is there the option to choose whether a syllable should be treated as ‘long’ or not. Anyone familiar with writing English poetry may realise that this is different from dealing with stress-accent, and generally harder; but the fundamental idea of putting words in a rhythmical order is shared. There is no tolerance in Latin, though, for fudging the rules; one may get away, in English, with stressing a word that can scarcely bear it, but in Latin, you cannot leave a short in a place that needs a long, or a long where a short is required. This may sound impossibly complex. It is not, because the length of many syllables is predictable, and quickly becomes familiar, meaning that one need not be constantly looking in the dictionary.

Latin offers many possible metrical structures, some harder than this one, because less flexible. The basic unit here is called a foot, and has either three or two syllables; if three, they must be ‘long-short-short’ (this is called a ‘dactyl’), and if two, they must be ‘long-long’ (called a spondee). Thus, short syllables (in this particular form, though not in others) only travel in pairs, tripping along delicately. The first line of each couplet, the hexameter (six-footer), has six of these feet; the last is always a spondee, the fifth, by tradition (and for good poetic reasons), is almost always a dactyl. The other four can be any combination that the poet chooses, and much of the subtlety of the verse-form comes from playing with the different possibilities. Long poems such as Virgil’s *Aeneid* tend to be in continuous hexameters; handling such variations well is a key element in maintaining the reader’s pleasure. Peter Jones, though, was attempting epigram rather than epic, and for that the most natural choice was the couplet. The second line in each couplet is a pentameter (five-footer): a slightly treacherous term, because it doesn’t have five feet, one after the other, but consists of two equal halves, each of two and a half feet. Which makes five: keep up at the back of the class. ‘What is a half-foot?’, you may well ask. Just a single long syllable; and the last syllable of every line is automatically treated as long, regardless of its natural length, just as a reward for reaching the end. The second half of each pentameter is easy to analyse (‘scan’), and hard to write, as it must consist of two dactyls, plus the single long at the end. The first half has two feet (any combination of dactyls or spondees), plus a single long at the end.
There is always a gap between words at the very centre of the pentameter line, which is called the ‘caesura’ (cutting-place).

And Peter also needed a caesura in his hexameters; here, though, it must be a gap between words within a foot (not at the boundary between two feet), and it therefore divides the line into two unequal halves (generally two and a half feet before it, three and a half afterwards). Getting this right is at the heart of handling the rhythm. There can be a significant sense pause at the caesura, as in Peter’s lines 1, 3 and 5 (where I have put a comma after rogat, proavos, and mores), but there does not have to be, and in a longer poem, it would get boring always to do so. So far, so tricky; but Latin also offers some help in fitting words into this structure. Word order itself is flexible, even in prose, because the meaning does not generally rely on word-order, but on the changing endings of the words. In verse, it is more flexible, though a competent poet does not strain it so far as to threaten easy comprehension. Thus words which naturally go together, and would probably be adjacent in prose, can be separated for metrical convenience, as in Peter’s last line, sui (‘of his own’) and officii (‘of duty’).

That ending is one less usual feature of Peter’s epigram, as he continues the sense outside the bounds of the verse, explaining sui by the phrase which follows, his ‘signature’ – best read as prose, I think, though it could also be taken as a half-line of verse, if we treat ‘Jones’ as one syllable (‘Joans’, the English sound), an unnatural way to read those letters in Latin. That choice, doing something a little different to the normal ending of a poem, shows a certain confidence in his poetic talent. The sixth line might appear less satisfactory. Is it good style just to repeat the same ordinary verb, erat (‘was’), at the end of both halves of the line? It certainly exploits the nature of the pentameter, falling into two equal halves. It draws our attention, not so much to the basic verb, but to the two nouns, pietatis and probitatis. There is also its relation with the previous line to be considered: a natural transition is one sign of a good couplet. In Peter’s earlier couplets, he has used short phrases, so there is a pause at the end of the first line; now, he runs the sense on. And in doing so, the meaning subtly shifts. If we consider only the fifth line, he is saying that no woman was ever amantior, ‘more loving’, than Mrs Jones. That is perfectly in order, for a son’s tribute, in the most obvious senses of loving – loving her husband, loving her children. We may take that idea on board, before we read the next line; but Peter is playing with our expectations, and what she is actually loving is rather different, the two abstract qualities (piety, probity) that finish the couplet. As I said, one may dislike the sixth line; but one may also argue that it has a point, that justifies the otherwise drab repetition.
So Peter is thinking quite hard about how to express himself neatly and effectively. He is also constantly alert to the rules of composition: keeping the longs and shorts in the right places. There are two essential rules. When one word ends in a vowel, and the next starts with one, they ‘elide’, or come together (in practice, the first vowel is ignored); this elision also applies when a word ends in ‘m’ (felt to be a weaker sound). So at the end of the third line, *duct’est*; and in the fourth, *vit’insignis* (it happens even over a punctuation mark, though not usually between lines). When he wants this to happen, he must make sure the vowels are there together; when he wants to avoid it, he must keep them apart. The other key rule is that when two consonants are together, either within one word or at the end of one word and the start of the next, they make the preceding syllable long (regardless of whether it is long or short by nature). There are some fussy exceptions, with which I won’t bore you here (go on, you may say, I’m bored already … no, no, I insist: you really don’t want to know), and which the student of poetry does pick up by experience – teaching boring things was easier in the seventeenth century, when idle students were whipped. Basically, however, the principle is straightforward, and constant vigilance is needed to apply it. So with *rogat* (‘asks’) in the first line: the ‘-at’ ending is naturally short, but made long because the next word starts with a consonant. This is deliberate: he needs a long syllable there. The ‘-et’ of *tenet* (‘holds’ – literally: of whom, *cuius*, does the tomb, *sepolcrum*, hold the bones, *ossa*) is also naturally short; and this time, Peter needs it to stay short, otherwise he is seriously stuffed (to use a technical term), so must take great care to follow it with a vowel.

None of these thought-processes is particularly difficult, once a poet has become competent. But they need to take place, and other practitioners will know this, in assessing a poem; they will spot any errors, or awkward phrasing, and will give credit, if not huge praise, for competent execution of the necessary minimum requirements. Beyond that, of course, one may judge whether the poet has anything interesting to say, and how well it is said. What about our Baltic visitor? (Remember him, a couple of thousand words ago? Before you dozed off, or took a tea-break.) He did exactly the same things, at school in Stettin. Everything about Peter’s technique is second nature to him. Perhaps he could do better, perhaps he couldn’t. (Could Peter sail the Kattegat?) He could appreciate a well-constructed epigram. If Peter had chosen English, that would not have been the case, any more than a German poem would be understood at Lindisfarne, or Lincoln, or Lucca. I doubt, though, that this wide intercultural comprehensibility was Peter’s motive. He could perfectly well have written some English verse, if he wanted verse at all, which his friends and neighbours would have recognised (and who cares about anyone else?). He chose Latin verse because he could do it
well, and because it expressed, perhaps more effectively than his native language, the depth of his feelings. And, yes, maybe because it looked grander and more lasting too, and perhaps to some eyes more pompous: only the best for Mrs Jones.  

We have seen how Peter shifts his attention; first, ‘if anyone asks’, then ‘if you ask’ (meaning us, the readers). But in the final couplet, ‘you’ (te) is not the reader, it is his mother herself, as is made clear by mater (which must be vocative, a direct address, ‘mother!’). And he also shifts the focus to himself, using the third person rather than the first; the adjective tristis, ‘sad’, must refer to his own feeling, and in this context a simple word can bear a heavy load of grief. The chosen verb, subscriptit (‘he wrote down’), as well as neatly filling a gap in the line – ‘scripsit’ (‘he wrote’) would need to be padded out somehow with an extra syllable, and Peter is always alive to the rules – prepares us for his unusual signature at the end, as it can also mean ‘he signed’. In this one final direct address to Mrs Jones, he compresses much of the emotional force that can be found in the several direct addresses to frater, ‘brother’, in Catullus’ ten-line epigram on visiting his brother’s grave, poem 101. There, the Roman poet, writing in the first century BC (BCE), calls on his brother in lines 2, 6, and 10: the last, most memorably, running Atque in perpetuum, frater, ave atque vale, ‘and, for ever, brother, hail and farewell’. Catullus is a great poet; Peter Jones is a nobody – in poetic terms, if perhaps his social equal. Catullus’ poem is a greater poem than Peter’s. Possibly Peter was thinking of it (among many other possible influences), though there is no close imitation. The relationship is less obvious than allusion or imitation, a kind of intercultural affinity, enabling the later writer to pack a similar punch into an intense few words. It is no embarrassment to Peter to make the comparison. 

We have still not established why Peter was in a position to choose Latin verse. It is clearly a matter of education; that did not need to be at university level, but given the sexist assumptions of the age, it did make it predominantly male. There were women, throughout Europe, who wrote Latin, and many who could read it: possibly Mrs Jones was one of them, but if so she would have learned in a different, domestic context to Peter’s schooling. I don’t think that Peter’s use of Latin for a posthumous tribute implies that his mother would have understood those words well, in life. Can we say who Peter was, and where he studied? I think we can. No doubt much more could be unearthed about both of them, given their social status, but this is not an exercise in local history, or Jones family genealogy, so we may perhaps confine our search to checking the English universities. There were only two at this time. (If they were unsuitable – as they were, for religious minorities – one would have to study abroad.) Somewhat to my surprise, since Jones is so common a name, there is no
suitable Peter at Cambridge, and only one at Oxford. He matriculated (formally entered) at Queen’s College, Oxford, on 10 March 1619 (old style: 1620, in modern style) at the age of 17, and took his B.A. degree on 20 February 1622 (again, old style: so 1623). He is listed as the eldest son of an ‘armiger’ (or ‘esquire’, bearer of a coat of arms, gentry rather than nobility), doubtless the Henry Jones who was Ann Jones’s husband, and as coming from County Durham (possibly the family lived there, as well as at Lindisfarne in Northumberland; or a slightly loose geographical description).

It remains to ask, whether or not Peter made any mark as a poet at Oxford. The most obvious occasion for doing so might have been the book of verse the university produced while he was there, commemorating Sir Henry Savile, benefactor and scholar in the arts and sciences: *Ultima Linea Savilii* (1622). Two fellows of Queen’s contributed to that book (one in Hebrew, one in English), and two holders of the B.A., presumably of a similar age to Peter Jones: John Calverley with a two-line Latin epigram, and John Tireman with a couple of Latin poems totalling thirty lines. But no Jones. For a smaller college such as Queen’s, four contributors is not unreasonable, though dwarfed by the largest college, Christ Church, generally the most enthusiastic, which put in poems by at least 27 individuals, out of a total of 72. This is far from an exceptional total; other seventeenth-century books have well over a hundred poets, predominantly writing in Latin. There is no particular surprise that our Peter Jones failed to take up this opportunity for publication. It merely reinforces the impression of his ordinariness – among well educated people of his social class – and thus the chief messages that I want to extract from the story of Mrs Jones: that the use of Latin by unremarkable people in obscure locations represents a curious and significant mixing of cultures; and that the literary quality of that Latin, on occasions, can be surprisingly good.

With that, we may leave Mrs Jones, and her talented, dutiful son. But if this cultural phenomenon has proved of any interest, it may be worth concluding with a very brief survey of the wider state of play in the subject. None of this will be news to the specialist; but this article is not aimed at people who already know all about it. There are perhaps two relevant areas here, which don’t coincide as much as they might. The study of past (post-classical and post-medieval) Latin is one of them, now generally known by scholars in the field as ‘Neo-Latin’; the other is the practical use of Latin in the modern world, whether for purely literary purposes or for international communication. There are quite a number of people around the world who speak Latin to a high standard – and I do mean speak, not just read (as professors of Latin tend to); there is at least one serious academy which teaches in it. This would have seemed normal in the Renaissance; now it may appear a more idiosyncratic, even eccentric,
activity. The resulting skills can be no less valuable for that. In a world which speaks English, it can seem unnecessary; but it does provide a level meeting place between people from different cultures, where no one is disadvantaged by not being a native speaker. This pastime is by no means confined to the Catholic church (for which Latin has always been significant; though, as we have seen with Mrs Jones, Protestant Europe took it equally seriously), and has adherents in many parts of the world.\textsuperscript{15}

There is rarely a meeting of minds between practical users of Latin, and Neo-Latin scholars. Perhaps that is inevitable, since their agendas are rather different, and share only an interest in the language itself. Neo-Latin tends to be something people do in addition to other scholarly pursuits, whether in Classics, Modern Languages, English Studies, History, or many other fields. Since Latin was the main intellectual and cultural language of Europe for a very long period, and a regularly-used subordinate medium long after its predominance faded, there is a mass of material available for study, from scientific tracts to love poems – and indeed scientific poems about love. No one could possibly master all of this, but Neo-Latin is increasingly being recognised as a distinct and worthwhile area of study, where people of widely differing cultural backgrounds may share their experiences of a fascinatingly disparate topic.\textsuperscript{16} Though focused most strongly on the European Renaissance, it is not confined to that continent; elsewhere, particularly in the Americas, it had a significant impact. It helps, of course, to read Latin well to study the subject in depth. But many aspects are becoming accessible through translations and critical studies to those who are not Latin specialists. And in looking at Mrs Jones with you, I hope to have played a small part in bringing Neo-Latin to the attention of a new, intercultural audience.

Notes

3 Another example, from a village at the other end of England (Corsham, Wiltshire) is discussed at Money (2015) p. 75.
4 One might perhaps compare the enduring significance of Classical Chinese verse in Japanese culture, up to the late nineteenth century; I am grateful to Miki Iwata for this observation, and also to other readers of this essay, especially Joy Dauncey and John Gilmore, for their helpful suggestions.
Money (2015). On the more literary aspects of British Latin, Bradner (1940) remains useful (though the quotations are not translated); for more recent work see Houghton and Manuwald (2012); and for the earlier period Binns (1990), for the later period Money (1998).

I am not aware of a clear introduction to Latin metre aimed at non-specialists, which is one reason for attempting that here, on a small scale; most grammar books do cover metre, for students of Latin, but can quickly get complicated; for specialists: Raven (1965). (The Wikipedia entries on ‘Dactylic hexameter’ and ‘Elegiac couplet’, as viewed on 24 June 2015, may also offer a reasonable amount of help.)

Lyric metres (as used by the Roman poet Horace) allow little variation, a poetic challenge which was very often accepted Money (1998) and (2007).

As for Mrs Robinson …? We won’t go into that.

A quick example, scanning one couplet (lines 3-4), and avoiding technical symbols, just using L for long, S for short: Si quaeris proavos [LL LSS L] generoso sanguine duct’est [SS LL. LSS LL] Si vit’insignis [LL LL L] regula iustitiae. [LSS LSS L].


Foster (1891-92) 2. p.826.

On these verse collections: Money (2012) and (2013).

Accademia Vivarium Novum, Rome. On contemporary Latin verse: Money (2014), and the journal Vates passim.


Ford, Bloemendal and Fantazzi (2014); Knight and Tilg (2015); IJsewijn (1990-98). See also the Society for Neo-Latin Studies, with an online teaching anthology: http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/ren/snlS

**Bibliography**


Notes on contributor

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