

Magistro Forgáci Epistula

“Our annual writing competition continues,” Dr Forgács announced. “I expect the high standard of previous years’ submissions to be maintained.”

Luke, Jess and Damien instantly realised the difficulty of producing an entry with both sophistication and wit.

“Great literature comes from truth,” said Luke that lunchtime.

“The magisterial literary authorities command a sempiternal qualia, in contrast to their abeyant peers, and how better than through the earnestness of verisimilitude?” Jess concurred.

“*Ecce femina, non homo!*” Damien laughed to Luke. Damien’s native language was ostensibly Latin. “Indeed, *factio cedit veritati*. But what style ought we use to differentiate ourselves? A satire on the falsity of Ovid, or even a historiographical conclusion for the *Achilleid*?”

The word “prose” suddenly reared its head from some musty enclave of the page. The three fell into a suitably horrified silence.

So, they brewed up their submission – a metafictional plea for Dr Forgács to regard their non-stichic amalgamation of poetry as a valid entry – salivating over the promised prize of book vouchers.

<i>nos, maxime erudite Forgáx, venimus</i>	3 ia//
<i>hunc ad locum laeti beatum in hoc anni</i>	chol//
<i>circulo, at odiosis notis modo allatis</i>	chol//
<i>nunc oramus turbati uti temnenda ista</i>	chol//
<i>perscripta immutes permittasque ut nisi prorsas</i>	6 da//
<i>pro certamine fabellas aut carmina demus.</i>	6 da//
<i>sicut sol in caelo fulget, carmina multa</i>	6 da//
<i>virtutes ex sideribus nobis demittunt.</i>	6 da//

bibamus ex mellito poculo Lucreti, proficiscamur cum Aenea ad Latium, fleamus lacrimas Senecae Plantumque rideamus.

On the fateful moment of the fateful day, the triumvirate sat in Auditorium 101, armed with chocolate-chip cookies from the free-for-all.

Luke turned to his friends. “Surely Dr Forgács couldn’t refuse our poetic craftsmanship?”

“Should we triumph, we would be soused in eminence,” Jess replied.

Dr Forgács interjected. “It’s time to announce the winner. To those unsuccessful, I advise: “*sint procul hodie invidiae, omnia maesta*” – besides, there’s always next year, *when* you return!”

A teacher returned the groups’ submission, now augmented by a postscript.

vix vana verba admiror. fons de suo rivulo nascitur, virtus de virtutibus, quas efferentes manifeste non habetis. qui modum fingit, praemium amittit.

They stared up at Dr Forgács, who was looking in their general direction with an air of disdain.

“May I encourage the winner *voce sonora dicere*,” Dr Forgács paused dramatically. “Congratulations Bartholomew Eastaughffe, presenting ‘Moralistic Rhetoric in Epideictic Prose!’” Luke groaned. Jess muttered something that was probably unintelligible to most English professors. Damien crumbled the cookie in his hand. “*sic friat crustulum*,” he muttered.

Declan Zammit, Jennifer Hao & Lucas Parker (3A)

De Clodia- Metelli

Rock and ruin; that is what remains of the original, virtuous republic. Constitutional yet progressive. Free yet forward thinking. Dealer of justice, Donor of hope, home of revolution and reform. That was the Rome which stood firmly against the tide of avarice and corruption which so ravages this world. Yet now the republic drowns in lies, prejudice and iniquity. The dying ember of the old republic was rekindled by my brother but hissed out of existence upon being doused in his innocent blood.

I sat on the burnt remains of the Curia Hostilia, my brother’s cremated ashes amongst them. *Sicut sol in caelo fulget*, I could feel his spirit next to me. We watched together as the senators emerged from their first meeting in the Curia Cornelia. For some reason, it triggered the maudlin memory of Clodius’ inaugural speech as tribune. Just before he rose to address the crowd, I whispered in his ear, *voce sonora dicere*. Oh, how they loved him. So much more inspiring than the drab old men, hiding beneath their white togas, who were now scuttling fearfully back to the perceived safety of their homes. *In hoc anni circulo*, Caesar was systematically defeating the Gauls. In a drunken lovefest, he had disclosed to me his ambition. Soon he would return to disperse this rabble and the duplicitous Pompey. That day, I hoped to be spitting on the decapitated head of Cicero. Perhaps I would be given the opportunity to decollate him myself. People would rejoice in the streets, *sint procul hodie invidiae, omnia maesta*.

Alas! This blissful *fictio cedit veritati* and sadly once again my imagination erred in the realm of fantasy. A sigh parted my lips, swept into the afternoon breeze. Caesar could welcome Cicero back into Rome, and that gaggle of quacking senators could continue enjoying their bribes and exploiting their positions for another 450 years. Only the gods, and perhaps the vestal virgins, could know the future. I laughed aloud. The vestal virgins. What a joke. When I recalled the rites of Bona Dea in the Regia, I guffawed. Because of his ephemeral obsession with Pompeia, Clodius had dressed as a woman and slipped in on the rites. The High Priestess had been chanting something about *fons de suo rivulo nascitur*, when someone pointed at Clodius and screamed out “*Ecce homo*”. He was so pulchritudinous and well disguised that the women nearby retorted “*Ecce femina, non homo*”. Eventually they worked it out and Clodius shot off like a dormouse chased by a lion.

The last drops of the sun burned luridly on the horizon, and the empty Curia Cornelia was now shrouded in the ghostly red light of the evening. As Apollo brought his chariot to rest, I re-read the latest poem I had received from Catullus about Lesbia and a sparrow, but when I stood and began moving, it was not towards Catullus’ house that I walked...

Hugo Sharkey (2A)

SOMNIUM DIEI NATALIS DOMINI

It was Christmas night

'You can please yourself,' said my wife, 'but I'm going to watch the Queen's speech.'

'Remember the *annus horribilis*?' I said. 'I wonder if the speechwriters will slip any Latin in this year to put one over us peasants?'

'Just be quiet,' my wife said. 'It's starting.'

Now I won't swear this is what I heard, but I couldn't have made it up, could I?

'*In hoc anni circulo*,' she began in that fluting voice of hers, 'we have come to the point where I am obliged to share a wish with my subjects. So *sint procul hodie invidiae, omnia maesta vobis*, is what I say. How different, I am afraid, is the case of my dear family. It has been an *iter bumpium* for me.'

'I think she means "*rugosum*";' I said. 'Though I imagine there might be a *Via Bumpia* somewhere in Transalpine Gaul.'

'There has been that dreadful disappointment of my younger grandson, though *fons de suo rivulo nascitur*, you know.'

'Whatever does she mean?' said my wife.

'Oh, *non procul ab arbore sua cadit pomum*,' I said. 'I think she's referring to Diana. The royals always thought she was a bit loopy. "A couple of legs short of a tripod" I'm sure Seneca says somewhere.'

'And that wife of his,' the Queen went on, '*ecce femina, non homo de purpureo nata*. These actresses are all very well *dum celebritate vestitae sunt*, but then *factio cedit veritati*.'

'When the shower curtain of fame is pulled away, you can see who's showering naked,' I explained, in case my wife hadn't followed.

'Doesn't everyone shower naked?' she asked.

'I shouldn't think the queen showers at all. She would have a lady-in-waiting to shower for her.'

'But dear Prince Andrew, favourite child, he is always a ray of sunshine. *Sicut sol in caelo fulget*. And he loves the girls in summer.' she hesitated for a moment. 'I suppose the speechwriter meant dear Beatrice and Eugenie. No, just a moment, I misread the script. It doesn't say "*sub aestate*" but "*sub aetate*"'

'Philip, I am afraid, has become very D.E.A.F (don't worry, he can't spell), and so one is obliged *voca sonora dicere*.'

'That was a pretty rough old ablative she used there,' my wife said.

'She's probably as tired as the rest of us,' I replied, 'and working in a vocative would have been just too hard.'

So we said goodbye to Her Majesty and turned her off.

Alex Jones (Level 4)

A belated Christmas broadcast message from Sandringham to my loyal subjects in *contraria parte terrae*.

Voce sonora dicere: Salute!

The first Elizabeth Regina was fluent in Latin and once upbraided the Polish ambassador in an extempore speech in the ancient tongue. We ourselves regret having little chance to practise Latin in the modern world ~ maybe a word or two with the pontiff on a State visit. So, you'll

pardon us if we employ but a scattering of phrases in the speech we are about to deliver. In contrast to our namesake who let fly with her remarks back then in 1597, this royal message is a personal plea for sympathy.

QE1 was also known as the Virgin Queen. She didn't have children. In contrast to ourselves.

Some of you, well a few of you, may recall my *annus horribilis* in 1992 when the House of Windsor was plagued by family problems. *In anno circulo* I am reminded of those dreadful times. Andrew's in trouble again, and there are ongoing complications with the affairs of the next generation.

Fictio cedit veritati: fake news yields to truth and I wish to put the record straight. In a nutshell, I am getting tired of always being the personage calling family conferences and putting out the metaphorical domestic fires. But to whom can I turn for help?

I asked Phillip for advice. He began with a subjunctive, always a sign that he wants to avoid the issue: "*Sint procul hodie invidiae, Omnia maesta*". "Let be far away today jealousies, all things gloomy". Now, what was I to make of that? I suppose it was his way of telling me to forget it.

But I can't just forget it, can I? Responsibility devolves on me. I am the nurturer of the people, the fountainhead ~ *fons de suo rivulo nascitur*. Another metaphor from nature ~ *sicut sol in caelo fulget*. Like the sun ablaze in the sky I shower my subjects with warmth and enlightenment. And it's my face on your gold coins.

Uncle David let us down and a lot of the other Windsor men have been pretty well useless. The first Elizabeth took her own counsel. She was a strong woman. As am I. On refection, I'll just have to keep on going. After all, when you want to get things done, to whom do you turn? Simply *Ecce femina, non homo*.

Lyn Collingwood (2B)

35 BC Rome

It is the start of Saturnalia, and *sint procul hodie invidiae, omnia maesta*. We have been distanced, my dear Octavius, but let us reunite *in hoc anni circulo*. It is, after all, my fault that we have been dissociated. I plead for your forgiveness of my seclusive behaviour throughout the months - I have grown too attached to the parchment which has made me a bitter man.

The stories and fantasies I write are fiction, and *fictio cedit veritati*. The truth that no matter how much I write, how much ink I splatter onto a page, all my trials and tribulations in pursuit of success and satisfaction will be in vain, as I will never find true happiness in my words. Instead, I will find contentment in our renewed friendship, which I hope you will agree to.

It has been a long time since I have written to you. The last letter I sent proclaimed I would have a son and I saw him in a vision at Juno's temple, but I was wrong. When my wife cradled the child in her arms, she exclaimed to me "*ecce femina, non homo!*" I am confident that the goddess was toying with me, chastising me for my isolation and warning me of how delirious I will become in solitude.

My daughter is a gift. *Sicut sol in caelo fulget*, my child shines in my life. She has kept me sane in my insanity, as I sat at the desk for hours, my bed untouched for many days.

I need my friend back to ground me in reality. I devote little time and love to my family, and I cannot stay holed up in my room for much longer without my wife or myself falling into insanity. No god or man is reading my work, for it is pitiful in comparison to the texts of the great scholars.

They say *fons de suo rivulo nascitur*, but without a source of water, how can a stream exist? My source is almost empty, the water flowing out faster the longer I stay in solitude. Octavius, I am pleading for our friendship to mend, for my fountain to be reborn with youthful energy. I want *voce sonora dicere*¹ to the world how much I desire your presence. As the great philosopher Cicero said, life is not worth living without a friend, and that a life in isolation will alienate me from myself and the ones I love. I await anxiously for your reply.

Catherine Park (1B)

Australia

In hoc anni circulo, Australia is a wonderful place. Most times it is indeed Australia Felix! Summer is a glorious season here. *Sicut sol in caelo fulget*, Australians often head to the beach.

But if you read Australian literature, you learn about some of the challenges that have arisen in Australia at this time of the year. The fiction writing of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries is strewn with stirring tales of nature posing challenges for the brave and hardy souls carving out a living in the bush. Think Dorothea McKellar ('I love a sunburnt country, a land of sweeping plains'); think Henry Lawson and his dark stories and poems of flood and fire:

'Ah, better the thud of the deadly gun, and the crash of the bursting shell,
Than the terrible silence where drought is fought out there in the western hell;
And better the rattle of rifles near, or the thunder on deck at sea,
Than the sound — most hellish of all to hear — of a fire where it should not be.'

However, with almost ten percent of NSW ravaged by bushfire in the Christmas to New Year week, it was a case of *factio credit veritati*. If only we had taken the lessons of our bush writers to heart!

For us, we were terrified and trapped as we saw the horror blaze racing towards our house and the shed. We thought we were gone when suddenly we heard a truck – the RFS! And we saw the local RFS team leader in blue suit with yellow jacket racing towards us with a massive fire hose. "Behold the man!" shouted my husband in joyous relief. "How embarrassing!" I thought as I hissed at him "*Ecce femina, non homo*, you misogynistic idiot!" But then we heard the great cracking sound that signals massive danger. I realised we needed lots more water. "*Fons de suo rivulo nascitur* over there", I screamed pointing the RFS folks with the pump to the rock where the home creek rises. We worked tirelessly, pumping water, racing around with wet bags. More wonderful RFS volunteers arrived. They fought hard alongside all of us. Eventually as dawn broke, we realised we were in front. Slightly annoyingly, the idiot spouse decided *voce sonora dicere* and broke into full-throated song: '*Sint procul hodie invidiae, omnia maesta!*' But the farmhouse was saved; I could forgive almost anything!

Mary O'Kane (1A)