JAMES ADAMS

James Noel Adams

24 September 1943 – 11 October 2021

elected Fellow of the British Academy 1992

by

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J.N. (Jim) Adams CBE, FBA, FAHA was probably the greatest Latinist of his time, perhaps of any time. After a Research Fellowship in Cambridge, he held university posts in Manchester, for twenty-two years, in Reading, for two years, and in Oxford, for twelve years, and he was active in retirement until the end. For half a century he both opened up important new areas to linguistic study, and shed fresh light on familiar authors and texts. There is a breath-taking boldness to the questions that he took on and the comprehensiveness of his answers to them. His work has quite transformed our knowledge and understanding of Latin of all kinds, literary and not. It is no exaggeration to say that, through his research and publications, and by his example to the people he taught, supervised, encouraged, and inspired, he contributed to most of the work published – not only in English – on the Latin language and Latin linguistics in the last thirty years and now in progress.

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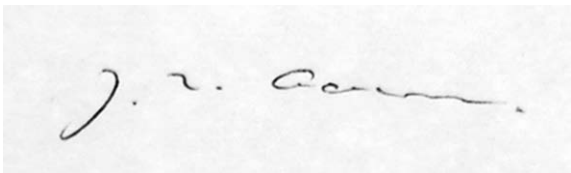

I

James Noel (Jim) Adams, the pre-eminent Australian Latinist, died on Monday 11 October 2021 at the age of 78.

Adams was born on 24 September 1943 at Royal North Shore Hospital, St Leonard's, Sydney. His father, John George (known as Jack), was a printer. His mother, Beryl (née Chant), was a secretary before her marriage. Adams was christened in St Swithun's Church, Pymble, Sydney, where his parents had married on 14 February 1942, and after a spell in his infancy in Melbourne (where his father was stationed in the Air Force) and two years in his maternal grandparents' house in Pymble (including 'bad memories' of having pneumonia before antibiotics), he grew up at Lane Cove on Sydney's Lower North Shore, in an unpretentious but comfortable house in a bushland valley, where he lived from 1949 until he left for England in September 1967.

Late in life, having spent most of his adult years in the UK, Adams researched his family history. His father's family was from Scotland. His paternal great-grandfather, John Charles, was born in Dumbarton, emigrated to Australia at the age of 14, and eventually served as a mounted policeman in the New South Wales Police Force. His son, Adams' grandfather, also John Charles, like many Australians of his generation, volunteered to serve in the Great War. He fought on the Somme, including in March-April 1918 at Villers-Bretonneux near Amiens, in one of the Australian Imperial Force's most significant actions, where 1464 Australians lost their lives and John was shot in the leg and gassed. Once, en route for a summer holiday at his first wife's family home in Burgundy (below), Adams tried to visit Villers-Bretonneux, but was prevented by a fallen tree blocking the road from seeing the village and its school with above each blackboard the inscription *N'oublions jamais l'Australie*. John was nursed back to health in London by an English woman, Louisa Agnes Layton. They married, and Louisa emigrated with John to Australia. Adams could recall them both, and remembered his grandmother as a formidable woman with a strong Cockney accent, still plainly to be heard when she visited him (in the first house he bought, in Chorlton, Manchester) in 1976, the year in which he published his first monograph.

Of his mother's family Adams remembered less. One telling detail was that his maternal grandfather used to refer to the suitcase in which he carried his sandwiches to the Sydney Cricket Ground as the 'port'. Adams much later heard it claimed by a resident of Melbourne that 'port' was a regional term of Sydney, and was pleased to find the word recorded in *Green's Dictionary of Slang*, where it is glossed 'a large suitcase, a school satchel', with the first example cited being from a Sydney magazine of 1900.

Adams' primary school was the local Lane Cove Infants' School, where he had no recollection of learning anything, and of which his main memory was of catching hepatitis (misreported by the local doctor to his parents as 'hepalitis'). Importantly, here

he established what would be a lifelong friendship with fellow cricket enthusiast Arthur Emmett, who became a distinguished lawyer and Court of Appeal judge. Adams' father Jack, himself a keen cricketer, introduced his son to the game, made him his first cricket bat, and taught him the straight-bat defensive strokes which would become his hallmarks: these enabled him (as he recalled) 'to stay in forever … scoring no runs', brought his team some notable 'winning draws', and led him eventually to concentrate on bowling. Emmett recalls after-school cricket in the Adams' backyard enthusiastically encouraged by Adams senior.

Adams excelled at the game already as a teenager playing for his high school, and in England he played club cricket regularly until the mid-1990s, mainly for league clubs in the Manchester Association. Anna Chahoud reports that in spring 2020, during the first Covid-19 lockdown, he was pleased to receive, along with an invitation to the 60th anniversary reunion of his class (held in May 2020), a copy of his school journal including two pictures of himself as a prefect, and a reference to 'some excellent cricket' played by a team with 'a good bowling attack' relying 'mainly on its spin attack of Adams and Baber. These two bowlers have taken over thirty wickets between them.'[1]

Even after he stopped playing, Adams followed cricket closely. He knew a lot about the game, thanks in part to his impressive collection of cricket books. These included some old and rare items, and books on cricketing jargon. As Anna Chahoud recalls, he maintained that the best captains were made on the cricket field, and he often remarked that cricket was the key to life.

As for Latin, Adams noted that his father 'asserted repeatedly that he had once scored 0/100 in a Latin exam, with pride in his voice'. The key influence here came from Adams' mother. She had come top of the class in Latin at the prestigious Hornsby Girls' High School. In Adams' words, 'She remained passionate about education, and did one thing that saved, or established, my whole academic career: she often referred to Latin.' More concretely, it was she who, ignoring his refusal expressed in a 'prolonged screaming fit', got him in a taxi to attend the day of tests for admission to Artarmon Public School for his last two years of primary education, 1954-6. Adams and Emmett were among the very few selected to attend this school in the neighbouring suburb, which since 1932 had offered 'Opportunity C Classes' for academically gifted boys and girls, which guaranteed a place at a selective public high school. Adams remained, in his own words, 'profoundly grateful to my mother for not giving in that morning'.

In the first Artarmon year, Adams' mother was responsible also for a precious and abiding cricketing memory of the 1954-5 MCC tour of Australia: she allowed her son to stay at home from school to listen to the whole of the first test at Brisbane on the radio.

[1] Of Adams' bowling Bill Barnes recalls that 'he was very pleased when I once accused him of chucking his bigger off-break'.

On this and other such occasions, she would tell the school that he had had an attack of asthma, which led to an end-of-year assessment of Adams in a school report as 'a very good student, but dogged by ill health'.

Of Artarmon Adams had many happy memories, not least of his teacher for the two years, Fred Lowrie. He made friends there for life, notably with R.J.B. (Richard) Bosworth, the eminent historian of Mussolini and fascist Italy. Remarkably, some fifty years later, Bosworth and, separately, Michael Roberts (also a modern historian), who had been in the other class at Artarmon, taught by Mollie King, were Visiting Fellows at All Souls – a fine example of what Adams referred to as 'Antipodean coincidences'.

From Artarmon, with a report from Mr Lowrie including the sentence 'he should do well in Latin', Adams went on to the excellent North Sydney Boys' High School, which he attended from 1956 to 1960. There he did indeed take to Latin, which was compulsory in the first three years, and he formed more lifelong friendships, including with (in the year above) W.R. (Bill) Barnes, who pursued an academic career in Classics, especially at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. Adams' NSBH Latin teachers included Mr C.E. (Colin) Bowser, who also coached the 1st XI cricket. Under Bowser, Adams played for NSBH against Melbourne High School, whose headmaster was Bill Woodfull, the Australian captain in the famous 'bodyline' series. Adams recalled speeches at lunch in the pavilion from Woodfull and two other former Australian captains, Lindsay Hassett and Ian Johnson. As for Latin, Adams recalled, Bowser favoured the simple style in Latin prose composition: by greeting 'flowery vocabulary' with question marks and exclamations he caused Adams to 'abandon the grand style thereafter'. In the state-wide 'Leaving Certificate' examination of 1960, Adams came top in Latin and so proceeded to the University of Sydney intending to continue with Latin and to start Greek. Adams was rightly and intensely proud of his schooling, and a lifelong vocal supporter of publicly funded education.[2]

Greek had been offered as an optional subject at North Sydney Boys', but Adams had then preferred History. In the first year of university, he was required to attend lectures in subjects other than Latin, and again he chose a modern history course. It was taught by the Sydney Professor of History, John (Jack) McManners (1916-2006), who was to hold the Regius Professorship of Ecclesiastical History at Oxford (1972-84), and whom Adams would meet again thirty-six years later in his retirement as Chaplain of All Souls College, at the dinner for shortlisted candidates for the Senior Research Fellowship. Another Antipodean coincidence.

After his first year at the University of Sydney, 1960, in which he came first in Latin 1 and Elementary Greek, Adams concentrated exclusively on Latin and Greek. He

[2] John Briscoe recalls that Adams moved increasingly to the left as he got older, by the end voting Labour and claiming to be more left wing than Briscoe!

worked hard, usually going home after the daily morning Greek and Latin classes, often learning by heart a page of Lewis & Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, before settling to the prodigious lists of additional reading required by both departments, and introduced for Latin in particular by a lecturer, one H.D. (Harry) Jocelyn FBA (1933-2000), together with a senior colleague, the ancient historian J.J. (Jim) Nicholls, in a year when the then Professor, A.J. Dunston, was away on leave.[3]

The Sydney Greek and Latin departments boasted some outstanding scholars and teachers, and Adams recalled what a privilege it was to be there in those years. Most influential on him – reflected immediately in the topics of his final-year long essays (on Pliny the Elder's text of Cato's *De agricultura*, and the language of Horace's *Satires*), and thereafter unmistakably in the interests and approach of his own research as it developed – were the Hellenist G.P. (George) Shipp (1900-80), who lived close to the Adams family in Lane Cove, and the Latinist Jocelyn, who was to move as Professor of Latin from Sydney to Manchester a year after Adams took up his post there as lecturer in 1972. Of other lectures at Sydney he recalled also those on Juvenal's colloquial vocabulary by the New Zealand poet and historian of Greek medicine I.M. (Iain) Lonie (1932-88), who may have provided another important early influence on Adams by referring his students to Bertil Axelson's *Unpoetische Wörter*.[4] It is striking that, although he occasionally mentioned Jocelyn's lectures on early Latin tragedy, Adams never acknowledged in print that he had been Jocelyn's pupil, referring to him just as 'my old friend'. By contrast, he often recalled the teaching of Shipp,[5] how he would sit with an annotated copy of Gerhard Rohlfs' *Sermo vulgaris Latinus* (which copy Adams later acquired), commenting on points of linguistic interest in excerpts from texts ranging from Plautus' *Miles gloriosus* (an early Republican comedy) to the *Mulomedicina Chironis* (an Imperial Latin treatise on horse-medicine). He remarked that Shipp's teaching gave no clue to the content or plot of the work the class was about – which the present obituarist took for criticism until he attended nearly forty years later in Oxford Adams' own classes on Plautus' *Miles gloriosus*.

[3] As Bill Barnes recalls, 'We as students took to the lists with a lot of energy, because we were told our unseen translations would come from them.' It was Nicholls who introduced Adams to Einar Löfstedt's *Syntactica*, a copy of which Adams bought in Munich in 1968.

[4] Of this important book on Latin vocabulary used and avoided in poetry, Bill Barnes recalls that 'we may have heard of it from Iain Lonie; at any rate we were excited to find it in the Library, even if none of us (I think) had enough German then to read it properly'.

[5] Best known for his work on Homer and on the history of Greek vocabulary, Shipp published important things also on Latin, including on the language of Roman comedy (a commentary on Terence's *Andria* is still in print), an abiding interest of Adams'. He may have inspired also Adams' interest in the language of obscenity, and generally in the distribution of synonymous or complementary words as evidence for their social or connotational meaning. Alanna Nobbs notes that Shipp and his colleague the Hellenist A.P. (Athanasius) Treweek were, together with leading mathematicians from the University of Sydney, among the chief code-breakers of Japanese codes during the Second World War.

Adams made many lifelong friends among his Sydney Classics contemporaries, including the Hellenist Bernard Gredley, known for his work on Greek drama. Though he worked consistently hard as an undergraduate, Adams did not hold himself aloof from departmental social life. As Alanna Nobbs notes in her obituary of Adams for the Australian Academy of the Humanities,[6] he recalled the camaraderie of the place, including the annual Greek or Latin play put on by the Classical Society with staff support.

In his third and fourth years, 1963 and 1964, Adams held the prestigious University Nicholson Scholarships I and II. Alongside Classics, he also did a year of Philosophy and two years of English, which he enjoyed and 'did well at',[7] so much so that for a time he thought of dropping Classics and switching to English for his final years. As it was, he graduated in 1964 with First Class Honours and the University Medal for Latin (not awarded every year, the Medal recognises outstanding academic performance over the entirety of the student enrolment).

Adams stayed in Sydney for his first two postgraduate years, 1965-7, with a Teaching Fellowship in the Department of Latin. The stipend enabled him to buy a VW Beetle, in yellow, in which he took great delight. Then, in 1967, he won a Commonwealth Scholarship to Brasenose College, Oxford. His cohort of scholars was – in theory – fortunate to be only the second such group entitled to fly to London. Previously, the voyage was by sea and lasted more than six weeks. However, Adams was so horrified by the flight that he could never again bring himself to board an aeroplane. Later attempts to persuade him how different air-travel had become were unsuccessful, and he never returned to Australia.[8] His dislike of travel was not confined to flying. He crossed the Channel rarely, and only by car ferry, to go to his first wife's family home in Burgundy, and once in summer 1968 to visit the Latin Thesaurus in Munich (a plan to return to Munich in 2019 was called off at the last minute). Remarkably, given his profession, he never visited Italy, and even within the UK he seldom attended conferences.[9] Not that

[6] A classicist herself, and now Emeritus Professor at Macquarie University, where she taught for most of her career, Alanna Nobbs was a year behind Adams at the University of Sydney.

[7] He remembered in particular reading some Chaucer, a great amount of Shakespeare and other early drama, novels from *Moll Flanders* on, and novels of the 1960s, 'Amis, Sillitoe et al.'

[8] Alanna Nobbs reports that Adams once attempted to return to Australia during his Oxford doctoral studies, on hearing that his mother had had a serious stroke. As Eleanor Dickey recalls Adams' account of the episode, 'when the plane taxied to the runway, he was seized with total panic and made such a ruckus that the pilot returned to the gate to offload him. His luggage was not offloaded; it went to Australia without him.' His mother did not regain consciousness.

[9] This was not a simple matter. Adams seems to have suffered from both claustrophobia (he refused to travel underground, even by Tube in London, let alone through the Channel Tunnel – with the single exception of a daytrip from Reading to Paris with Iveta his second wife [below]) and agoraphobia (going anywhere out of doors caused him great difficulty, special exceptions being made for e.g. cricket and football matches). Moreover, in his avoidance of conferences, his natural shyness of gatherings will have played a part, in addition to his dislike of 'wasting time'.

this ever caused him to be sidelined. On the contrary, he was a painstaking correspondent, cultivating his many contacts and friendships assiduously by letter – later, email – and telephone, and from an early stage of his career the world's Latinists travelled to him.

When applying for the Commonwealth Scholarship to Oxford, Adams, hoping to work on the language of Tacitus, had written to Ronald (later Sir Ronald) Syme OM, FBA (1903-89) and nominated Brasenose as his college. Syme, however, assigned him to R.M. Ogilvie FBA (1932-81) as his supervisor.[10] His DPhil dissertation, 'A philological commentary on Tacitus, *Annals* 14.1-54', he completed in under three years. One of the articles resulting from it[11] acknowledges Ogilvie and F.R.D. (Frank) Goodyear FBA (1936-87), but, as Anna Chahoud remarks, the names that stand out in the opening paragraphs are those of the Swiss Latinist Eduard Wölfflin and the Swede Einar Löfstedt. In the autumn of 1970, immediately on completion of the doctorate, he moved to Cambridge as W.H.D. Rouse Research Fellow in Classics at Christ's College (overlapping then at Christ's with the historian Simon Schama). In Cambridge, there were, or there had recently been, several of his Sydney University contemporaries, including Bill Barnes and Richard Bosworth mentioned above and Peter Brennan. Another close friend, the Latinist A.J. (Tony) Woodman, has recalled driving down from Newcastle in his Volvo to effect the move from Oxford to Cambridge with Adams, Bill Barnes (who was at St John's College, Cambridge) and all of Adams' possessions filling the car. In Cambridge, at the request of the New Zealander R.G.G. (Bob) Coleman (1929-2001), who had known Shipp well, Adams taught half of Coleman's classes on Vulgar Latin, reading with his students[12] – in a style no doubt reminiscent of Shipp's teaching in Sydney – extracts from a wide range of texts, the understanding of which he was destined to transform in his later career. In 1971, in Paris, he married Geneviève Baudon, a French student then teaching French at a school in Brentwood, whom he had met on a coach tour of Islay organised for foreign students by the British Council.

[10] Adams recalled that Syme told him this in person at dinner at A.J. Dunston's house in Sydney, during a visit to Australia. Although he did not supervise Adams' thesis on Tacitus, Syme did get Adams to do the index of names for his *Ten Studies in Tacitus* (Oxford, 1970), for which Adams received £30 but no acknowledgement in the preface. As Adams recalled, 'This was in fact my first publication. One thing I did do was change the wording of a sentence preceding the preface, which had been in the verbless Syme style. He did not change it back.'

[11] In *Classical Quarterly* for 1972.

[12] These included, Adams recalled, the Latinist Robert Maltby and the Hellenist Angus Bowie.

II

In 1972, after only two years of the Rouse Fellowship, Adams was appointed Lecturer in Greek and Latin at the University of Manchester. There he was promoted to Senior Lecturer in 1978 and to Reader in 1982, and he was given a Personal Chair in 1993. He was Chairman of the Departmental Board from 1983, and Head of Department from 1989.

When Adams arrived in Manchester, already in the department – or rather departments, plural[13] – of Greek and Latin were the Latinist and Roman historian John Briscoe (appointed in 1968) and the Hellenist D.M. (David) Bain (1945-2004, Adams' contemporary at Oxford, appointed in 1971), and a year later, in 1973, Adams' former teacher in Sydney Harry Jocelyn arrived as Hulme Professor of Latin;[14] Bain and Jocelyn in particular shared Adams' interest in 'low' and otherwise non-standard words. Within this distinguished quartet, a strong 'mutual affinity' arose. They did their teaching conscientiously, but they saw scholarship as their real purpose. According to John Briscoe, the sole surviving member of the four, they frequently met for a drink at the end of the day. Adams and Bain often had a pint at lunchtime also, and once, when Briscoe said that he couldn't take drink in the middle of the day, Adams replied, 'It's just a matter of practice.'

Adams' teaching always included the compulsory first year Latin language course, and he offered also, together with Jocelyn, special subjects on Early Latin and Late Latin,[15] enriching complements – for colleagues as well as for students – to standard training in the Classical language. The students learned a great deal from him, even if he sometimes struck fear into them. Briscoe remembers saying to students at the beginning of the year, 'Dr Adams will tell you that you don't know any Latin, but don't worry – he doesn't think I do either.'

[13] Adams, in his obituary of Jocelyn in *Proceedings of the British Academy* (120, 2003) at p. 288, calls the departmental structure in Classics at the time of Jocelyn's arrival 'somewhat confused, to say the least'. Officially, at least in the annual reports of Council to Court, until 1973, Latin and Greek were treated as a single unit. In reality, they were (as in Sydney, NB!) two separate departments, and this arrangement was formalised by the University in March of that year, and vigorously enforced by Jocelyn, in spite of Kerferd's aspiration to unite all classicists across the University in a 'School of Classical Studies' (from which the Department of Latin was explicitly withdrawn by Jocelyn). Greek and Latin were (re)amalgamated in the late 1980s, just before Adams was made Head of Department. As John Briscoe recalls, 'Jim, like Harry, opposed the amalgamation, but soon realised that he would get no preferment if he persisted'.

[14] For Adams' first two years in Manchester, the Chair of Ancient History was held by R.E. Smith (1910-78), who, as Professor of Latin in Sydney, had taught Jocelyn in his first two undergraduate years, and was largely responsible for Jocelyn's move to Manchester.

[15] The traditional term 'Vulgar Latin' was deliberately dropped, although Adams retained it in the title of his first two books, published in 1976 (*Anonymus Valesianus II*) and 1977 (*Claudius Terentianus*).

Coincidentally, for Adams' first ten years in Manchester, the Hulme Chair of Greek also was held by an Australian, G.B. (George) Kerferd (1915-98) from Melbourne (Sydney's rival!), who retired in 1982. Briscoe recalls that Kerferd took the authority of his position very seriously, once telling Briscoe that he had to learn to accept authority before he was fit to exercise it. On another memorable occasion, Adams, fed up with a student who persistently failed to turn up for lectures, said to Kerferd, 'I'm not going to teach Pocock any more.' Kerferd jumped up and down and said, 'You don't decide who you're going to teach; I tell you who you're going to teach.'

Adams would rarely issue such orders himself,[16] and for all the unbridled quality of what he might often say in private, he had an instinctive respect for status and authority. In the 1980s, with perilously low student recruitment into the Department (hardly exceeding the number of academic staff), there was pressure in the Faculty for the introduction of a degree in Classical Civilisation, i.e. with Greek and Latin literature taught in translation. Kerferd wished this, but was fiercely and resolutely blocked by Jocelyn. After Kerferd's retirement (in 1982), a committee was set up in 1988, chaired by a Pro-Vice-Chancellor, C.B. (Brian) Cox, Professor of English Literature, to consider the future of Classics in Manchester. Cox pushed the case for Classical Civilisation. Jocelyn declared that 'as long as there was breath in [his] body' there would be no such courses in Manchester, to which Cox said, 'Professor Jocelyn, you are killing Classics in this University.' Adams said little, but afterwards his line was, 'Cox is the most important person in this Faculty and is not to be trifled with' – which drew from Jocelyn, 'Cox is eminently to be trifled with.'[17]

Clearly, the matter was taken seriously at the highest level in the University. The Vice-Chancellor, Mark Richmond, became involved, and eventually Jocelyn's formal role within the Department was severed. He remained Hulme Professor of Latin, but appeared in the University Calendar under 'Staff not attached to a Department', and Adams was made Head of Department. Adams duly introduced Classical Civilisation, though he left the details of the syllabus and the running of the programme to one of the lecturers, Trevor Quinn, who believed in it, as he did not.

For most of his time in Manchester, as Eleanor Dickey has observed, despite the quality and quantity of his publications, Adams was not well known nationally since work on the Latin language of the sort that he produced was little valued in Britain – and internal

[16] Briscoe recalls Adams himself being more directive when he was made Examinations Officer, a move made at Kerferd's suggestion in order to bolster Adams' case for promotion. Adams fulfilled the role with great efficiency, though he interpreted it to mean that he had the power to issue instructions: Briscoe remembers one Adams circular which ended, 'This practice will stop.'

[17] As one of the authors of the so-called *Black Papers* on British education (1969-77), Cox did indeed have a very important voice, not merely in Manchester but nationally. As Tony Woodman has observed (personal communication), it is somewhat ironical that he and Jocelyn were on opposite sides in this debate.

promotion was jealously guarded.[18] The introduction (first in 1988) of periodic state-sponsored national assessments of research, which rewarded universities for the publication of high-quality work regardless of its subject, changed that state of affairs radically, and during the 1990s Adams enjoyed a meteoric rise through the academic hierarchy. In 1992, he was elected to a Fellowship of the British Academy, and a year later given a Personal Chair of Latin at Manchester. Remarkably, when Jocelyn had first proposed him for a Personal Chair, the Acting Vice-Chancellor Sam Moore (in the interregnum between Richmond and Martin Harris)[19] had sent the papers back marked 'No Case'.

Adams took leave away from Manchester for the first and only time in 1994/5, as Visiting Senior Research Fellow at St John's College, Oxford, and then immediately moved more permanently, to a chair specially created for him at Reading in 1995, and in 1998 to a Senior Research Fellowship at All Souls College, Oxford. On his retirement from All Souls in 2010, he returned to Manchester, where he still had a house, in Hale, and many long-established friendships, and he rejoined the Manchester department through honorary appointments and, in 2014, a Professorial Research Fellowship.

In the years after Manchester, Adams accumulated a series of honours, including in 2002 election as an Honorary Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities, in 2007 election to the Academia Europaea, in 2009 the Kenyon Medal for Classical Studies awarded by the British Academy, in 2010 a Festschrift to mark his retirement,[20] and in 2012 election as an Honorary Fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford; and in 2014 he won the 2013 PROSE award for Language and Linguistics made by the Professional and Scholarly Publishing Division of the Association of American Publishers Inc. for his book *Social Variation and the Latin Language*.

An especially proud moment came in 2015 when Adams was appointed Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) 'for services to Latin scholarship'. All of his family and friends received a photograph of himself with the Queen, together with a detailed account of the occasion and the conversation between them during the presentation, including this:

> The first thing she did was to hang the insignia of the CBE around my neck. She then said to me, 'You did your work at Oxford.' I said, 'Yes, All Souls.' 'Very good,' she said. I then said I had met her mother at a lunch there, and she replied, 'Yes, she very much liked going there' (she came once a year while I was a fellow). I ventured, 'She put on an Australian accent for my benefit.' She laughed openly. 'Oh,' she said, 'you are Australian? But you must have lived here for some time?' I replied, 'Forty-eight years, but I saw you in 1954 in Sydney.' 'Yes,' she said, 'that was the year I was there.'

[18] In 1997, invited (by Simon Swain) to apply for a Senior Research Fellowship at All Souls, Adams sent Swain his CV asking whether it was good enough.

[19] Harris (later Sir Martin Harris CBE), the noted French linguist, was Vice-Chancellor from 1992 to 2004.

[20] See Acknowledgements note at end.

Adams knew as well as any how to 'walk with kings nor lose the common touch', and he took delight in both. He kept a photograph of the occasion in his flat in Knutsford to the end.

III

In research and scholarship, Adams remained active and busy until the last day of his life, so that, as Eleanor Dickey observes at the end of her obituary, work bearing his name will continue to appear for years to come, 'other publications shaped by his encouragement will be coming out for decades, and the influence of his work will last as long as Latin linguistics remains a subject of academic inquiry'. His last book, which appeared in May 2021 – on asyndeton (that is, omission of coordinators like *and*, *but*, *or*) in Latin literature, laws, and prayers – bears on its front cover a fitting epitaph for his whole career in the study and teaching of Latin: *VENI, VIDI, VICI.* His final article, submitted months before he died, will be published posthumously by the Philological Society. In it, he challenges, as he had for fifty years, traditional views of Latin as a standard language.

Adams' subject was the Latin language, in the broadest sense – Latin in all its forms and varieties, from the beginning of our record to the emergence of the Romance languages. He had little if any interest in Latin literature as such, only in its language. His publications address explicitly texts and authors; grammatical and lexical topics; and, especially more recently in a head-on fashion, some of the very large-scale questions facing the student of Latin and Romance linguistics, Latin literature, and Roman history. There are few texts or documents of any type produced in Latin of any kind, by speakers or would-be speakers of Latin of any period, place, register, ethnic origin, or social class that he did not Know (*sic*).[21]

Even apart from the technical writers of veterinary and human medicine, his studies of named literary texts and authors are concerned with prose more often than with verse – early on, the *Historia Augusta*, Tacitus, Livy, Cicero, Lactantius; later, the pseudo-Caesarian *Bellum Africum*, Petronius, Mustio. However, Ausonius, Martial, and Latin epic (especially Virgil) are the subjects of three early articles, Catullus and the Augustan poets are a main focus of a major article on word order of 1999 (below), Plautus was always a central point of reference (and remains so in the big books of his later period) – and, on the documentary side, Adams has immortalised the remarkable attempts at poetry made by centurions of the Roman army in North Africa.

[21] The capitalisation recalls the observation made to the author by Stephen Oakley FBA (now Kennedy Professor of Latin at Cambridge) in the late 1990s, in the context of examining the DPhil of a student of Adams, that 'Jim Adams Knows Latin with a capital K!'

The linguistic domains for which Adams is best known are word order and vocabulary. His interest in word order dates from the 1970s. It is the subject of his very first article, on hyperbaton (the separation of closely connected words by others, less closely connected), and 1976 saw the publication of the still-important article on 'a typological approach to Latin word order' (in *Indogermanische Forschungen*), one of very few pieces in which Adams took an explicitly theoretical stance. It culminated in the 1990s in the monograph and articles described below on the placement of unstressed pronouns and weak forms of the verb 'to be', and it yielded along the way the 1991 article on the construction infinitive + *habeo* 'have' in Late Latin and the origin of the Romance future (Fr. *je chanterai*, Ital. *canterò*, etc. 'I shall sing'), in which a detail of variable word order is made in masterly fashion to throw light on an important problem of historical morphology and semantics.

Adams' lexical studies sometimes serve to establish the existence, the form and the meaning of unnoticed or misunderstood words (a good number of veterinary terms, but also such ordinary words as the Latin for 'to canter' [*tripodare*], are thus saved from lexicographical oblivion or misrepresentation). Other articles or chapters on vocabulary (as in the cases of words for 'put' and 'throw', or of some of the anatomical terms transferred from animals to humans, or of some of the new words attested at Vindolanda) illustrate changes under way in Latin foreshadowing Romance usage. Most, however, provide object lessons in how to use the distribution of synonymous or complementary words as evidence for their register, their social or connotational meaning, so (e.g.) the articles on words for 'woman', 'wife', 'prostitute', 'kill', and the seven chapters of *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*. In truth, however, although lexicography and word order are clearly more explicit in his bibliography, there are few areas of the grammar (from spelling and phonology to phraseology and constructions) that he did not cover in his studies of (e.g.) the *Anonymus Valesianus II*, Claudius Terentianus, C. Novius Eunus, the Bath curse tablets, the ostraca from Bu Njem, the Vindolanda letters, all of which amount to purportedly selective, in reality fairly comprehensive contrastive grammars of these texts. From the beginning, he showed that even the most difficult and out-of-the-way material, often regarded by others as unpromising, if examined in the right way, could be truly exciting and yield important insights of quite general relevance.

The comprehensiveness of Adams' work is one of its most important features. He had a total command of countless texts that most Latinists have never heard of, and of documents – tablets, ostraca, papyri, inscriptions – of all types, from all periods and parts of the Empire. He decisively and forever broadened views of and approaches to Latin by, as observed above, treating the language as a whole, the high literary, the highly technical, the semiliterate and the most 'hopeless gibberish' alike and together – Latin of all sorts, of all periods, genres, registers, from early inscriptions and Plautus to the emergence of the Romance languages. He demonstrated Plautus's mastery as a mimic of Latin

speech and writing of many kinds; features of spoken Latin in Cicero and Catullus and all the standard authors; the Latin precursors (e.g.) of French *ont* 'they have', of the French (and Romance) futures of the type *chanterai* (above), of the French (and Romance) verb nexus of the type *il le lui dit* 'he says it to him'. That a growing number of primary school children meet Latin through *Minimus* set in a fort on Hadrian's Wall is indirectly, in part at least, thanks to Adams' work within the Vindolanda team in making sense of the Latin of the writing tablets.

Adams was prolific. In the course of fifty years, he published ten books (six of them of more than 700 pages) and a hundred articles and other pieces, and edited with colleagues a further four volumes. He researched, wrote, and published at speed. His work transformed the field. If, as the great Dutch Latinist Harm Pinkster (1942-2021) said a decade ago, 'we have learned more about Latin in the last forty years than we had in the preceding four hundred', we owe this in large part to Adams' work.

Adams' activity may be divided into two periods. In the first, corresponding essentially with the Manchester years, he produced detailed investigations of well-defined topics of Latin vocabulary and grammar. In addition to dozens of articles, these studies included also five monographs. The most famous of these is undoubtedly the third, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* (1982), which became a bestseller, and which was published also in Italian (Lecce, 1996) and Polish (Kraków, 2013). It illuminates many passages of Latin literature by explaining in a matter-of-fact way the style or register of words usually treated by dictionaries inadequately or not at all. Its publication, especially in the context of earlier and ongoing work by Jocelyn and Bain on obscene words in Greek and Latin, contributed to the widespread perception of a 'Manchester school' of ancient obscenity.[22] This focus of Manchester research was noticed in an article in *The New Statesman* (7 January 1983), and Adams' book prompted an article in the *Sunday Times* (30 January 1983). Adams later described the publication of this book as 'a nightmarish event in my life', the main problem being that the publisher Colin Haycraft 'had connections in the press, and set them loose on me'.[23] He continued annotating and supplementing the book and corresponding with colleagues with a view to a new edition until his very last day.[24]

[22] Apparently first used in print by Frank Goodyear, in *Classical Review*, 35 (1985), 316 (a reference owed to Bill Barnes).

[23] To a *Daily Mirror* journalist, who had begun a telephone interview with, 'Is it true, sir, that Latin had 800 swear words?', Adams replied, 'I am not prepared to discuss the matter, and if you want to know what is in the book, you will have to read it.' This, as far as Adams knew, put an end to the *Mirror*'s interest. On the other hand, Haycraft sent Adams a copy of part of a letter addressed to him by Hugh Trevor-Roper, Master of Peterhouse, dated 10 February 1983 and beginning: 'How very kind of you to send me that learned work by J. N. Adams. I had read some reviews of it but had not realised how really erudite it is! I have hardly been able to put it down since it arrived!'

[24] Two long articles each on a single Latin word (κίναιδος / *cinaedus* and *exoletus*) were submitted to *Materiali e discussioni* in 2021, and published posthumously in *MD*, 7 (2021) and 8 (2022) respectively, the latter piece having been prepared for publication by Anna Chahoud and Beppe Pezzini.

His second book – *The Vulgar Latin of the Letters of Claudius Terentianus* (1977) – is more comprehensive in providing a thorough account (including the spelling, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary) of the Latin of a bilingual Roman soldier stationed in Egypt in the 2nd century AD. From six papyrus letters, Adams extracted a discursive, 100-page grammar of Terentianus' Latin. Typically, not a word is wasted, neither is a word spared for any topic other than language: there is no information on the content of the letters, even their texts are not included (an absence that Adams himself later regretted). As Eleanor Dickey rightly observes, non-standard Latin is notoriously difficult to pin down because of the fragmentary nature of its survival, and its social and geographical diversity across time, and the sharp focus here on one particular time and place allowed Adams to offer many new insights in the context of writing a crystal-clear grammar of this speaker's non-standard language in comparison and contrast with Classical Latin.

Adams' first book, *The Text and Language of a Vulgar Latin Chronicle (Anonymus Valesianus II)* (1976), foreshadows *Claudius Terentianus* in offering a detailed account of the language of an obscure text, in this case a late work of historical prose, a key source for the history of Italy, especially Ravenna, under the Arian Ostrogoth Theoderic, r. 493-526. Again, the text is not included, and nothing is said about its content, but Adams' *Anonymus Valesianus II* deserves to be better known than it is, not least for the chapters on syntax, where there is more of interest to be said than of the short, largely paratactic sentences of Claudius Terentianus. Adams recalled that a significant meeting during the preparation of this book was with the Finnish Latinist Veikko Väänänen (1905-97), the author of what was before Adams the standard handbook of 'Vulgar Latin', who had been invited by Jocelyn to speak in Manchester.

Very different are the two books published at the end of the Manchester years. *Wackernagel's Law and the Placement of the Copula* esse *in Classical Latin* (1994) examines the evidence for the use and especially the position of unstressed forms of the verb 'to be' across a range of literary authors in prose and verse. This short monograph complements a long article (also of 1994) on the placement of unstressed personal pronouns (*me*, *te*, *se*, *nos*, *uos*, etc.).[25] Together these two works – complemented by a further article, of 1999, on personal pronouns in the nominative (*ego*, *tu*, *nos*, *uos*, etc.) – constitute Adams' crowning achievement in the study of Latin word order. They reframe Eduard Fraenkel's revision of Wackernagel's Law by redefining the 'second position', to which little, unaccented words gravitate, as following not the first word of the clause (so Wackernagel) nor the first word of the 'colon' (so Fraenkel) but rather a 'preferential host', one of a set of accented but not necessarily emphatic words to which

[25] The lecture on which this article was based was delivered, as Adams observed drily in acknowledging the chairman's welcome, in London (whither he had travelled from Manchester) on the Saturday of the Old Trafford test match between England and Australia.

unstressed elements (including pronouns and weak forms of the verb 'to be') are attracted. In a brilliant coda to the 'unstressed pronouns' paper, a most appealing and suggestive historical connection is made between the enclisis on the newly-observed 'host' in Latin and the proclisis on the verb characteristic of Romance (in the nexus of the type *il le lui dit*, above). This is an extraordinarily illuminating and satisfying account of the history of a syntactic pattern, from the prehistoric parent language (Indo-European) to the modern vernacular. Adams' work on Latin word order thus takes its place beside that of the great French Latinist Jules Marouzeau (1878-1964), which on particular aspects it even supersedes. Here more than anywhere, Adams embraces recent developments in linguistic theory, especially in pragmatics.

Adams' last 'Manchester' book, *Pelagonius and Latin Veterinary Terminology in the Roman Empire* (1995), returned on the face of it to a focus on an individual author and text, but this time on a quite different scale. It is the first of the big books, longer than the first four put together[26] – although the style is no less terse and urgent. It also – in a manner anticipating the big books of the second period – squares up to the whole domain of ancient veterinary medicine in the Roman Empire, drawing together many smaller inquiries conducted in earlier articles on veterinary texts and terminology. Adams was proud of the drawing of a horse at the front of the book with the body parts labelled in Latin, as that was, in Alanna Nobbs' phrase, 'his own creative flourish'. Furthermore, in spite of its ostensibly narrow focus, the book offers an extraordinary number of instructive insights into the Latin language in various periods and registers, and has much to say on Latin literary topics.[27]

Many of Adams' articles from this first period, in addition to those already noticed, are of fundamental importance. Their variety demonstrates his interest from the start of his career in the totality of Latin, of all periods, places, and social classes, and in the big questions that he would later face head-on. In the early decades he was publishing simultaneously, for example, on the one hand on the language of Tacitus and Livy, on the other hand on the Vindolanda tablets and sexual vocabulary and other parerga to his early books. His interest in the regional diversification of Latin before our first documents in Romance is illustrated as early as 1977, in the foreshadowing of French words in the *Annals of the Kingdom of the Franks*, and numerous aspects of the wider problem are discussed in a 1989 review article of Roger Wright's important book *Late Latin and Early Romance* (1982). Features of bilingualism and its effects in linguistic interference

[26] The one-page preface ends: 'The manuscript was typed, many times over, by Amanda Herod [the Dept. secretary at the time], with characteristic high competence and also politeness. She never once expressed any attitude, by as much as a look or a pattern of intonation, to the material she was typing' – a nice illustration, as Roy Gibson remarks (personal communication), both of Adams' wonderfully dry sense of humour and of the warm relations that he cultivated and enjoyed with support staff.

[27] See the review in *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, 97.04.01.

are written up in the 1970s first for the influence of Greek on Egyptian Latin. Regional variation is investigated to begin with in the Latin of Egypt and Britain; sociolinguistic variation is documented in characteristics of female speech in Latin comedy; stylistic variation, and what may be inferred from it about authorship and chronological development, prompts some of Adams' earliest articles, on Tacitus (the subject of his DPhil thesis), the writers of the *Historia Augusta*, and Livy. He published twice in the Australian journal *Antichthon* (1984 and 1991), abundantly in a wide variety of British and continental European periodicals, especially in Germany, only once in an American journal (*Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 2015).

IV

Adams' departure from Manchester in 1995, first to Reading, and to Oxford soon afterwards, marked the start of his second period, in which he produced five immense volumes, each on a vast subject. The shift of scale was surely due to his move to a Senior Research Fellowship at All Souls College, Oxford. Thanks to this, from 1998 onwards, he was largely freed from teaching and administration,[28] and able to devote himself to research. He felt keenly the responsibilities of this position, and took seriously the need to account periodically to the college for his use of time and his holding of the fellowship. A key element in the production of the big books was the expert copy-editing of Adams' second wife, Iveta Adams (née Mednikarova), whom he met in Oxford and married in 2001. These major book projects reflect also his partnership with Cambridge University Press, and in particular with the CUP Classics Editor Michael Sharp, whose doctoral thesis had been supervised by Adams' friend and former Manchester colleague, Alan Bowman. Sharp worked closely with Adams (and with his collaborators on edited volumes) to ensure appropriate and attractive publication of the research conducted between Pelagonius (published by Brill) and the end. In contrast with the CUP period, none of Adams' earlier partnerships with publishers had lasted for more than a single book. Appropriately, as a final and incredibly useful mark of respect to his legacy, CUP will publish Adams' collected papers, in two volumes, and a volume of Indexes to his complete works.[29]

The centrepiece of the All Souls period is, in Eleanor Dickey's phrase, 'a connected trilogy' comprising *Bilingualism and the Latin Language* (2003), *The Regional Diversification of Latin, 200 BC – AD 600* (2007), and *Social Variation and the Latin*

[28] At All Souls he was an efficient, effective and fondly remembered Dean of Visiting Fellows towards the end of the 2000s.

[29] The collected papers are being edited by Anna Chahoud and Giuseppe Pezzini. The indexes are being compiled by a number of Adams' friends led by Eleanor Dickey, Anna Chahoud and Giuseppe Pezzini.

Language (2013), the third being completed two years after retirement from All Souls. These three volumes total more than 2,500 pages, and they address directly and comprehensively the three really big outstanding questions about Latin as a whole: (a) What, in broad terms and in detail, are the varieties of Latin – in time, in space, in society, and in style in the broadest sense – and how do they relate to one another? (b) When Latin speakers met speakers of other languages, what happened to Latin, and to the other language, in each contact situation? and (c) How did one language, Latin, for all its variety, evolve into the many Romance languages and dialects? These were, to say the least, bold questions to take on, even for a team of researchers, let alone for a single scholar. Either they had never occurred to people to address before, because the necessary connections had not been made, or they had seemed impossible given the (supposed) state of the evidence, or they had been much discussed, and the contradictory half-answers were well known, or they were (surely) simply too large and difficult for anyone to tackle single-handed. Eleanor Dickey's assessment in her obituary merits quoting at length:

> The questions addressed in these works are so large that despite Adams' concise style and the books' great length, he was unable to provide the kind of comprehensive discussions that characterise his earlier work; the treatments are selective. A different scholar, when producing a selective treatment of a large topic, might have concentrated on the most important points, even if some of those were well established and uncontroversial. But Adams hated to waste words explaining a *communis opinio* that someone else could have set out equally well; he preferred to concentrate on the points where he had something new to contribute, and that preference grew stronger as time went on. As a result, these books, particularly the last two, can best be appreciated by specialists in Latin linguistics who already know the material that Adams leaves out. For those specialists, however, the trilogy is extremely valuable, providing treasuries of individual new insights which together add up to revolutionise our understanding of these topics – even if that adding up is sometimes left to the reader.

The third volume of the trilogy, *Social Variation*,[30] was originally intended to include an appendix of sample texts and commentaries, like Väänänen's handbook of Vulgar Latin (above). When the book reached 900 pages even without this appendix, it was agreed with CUP to publish its material in a separate volume. This appeared in 2016 as *An*

[30] Of which see Roy Gibson's review in the *TLS* of 28 March 2014, including this notable comparison of Adams' work with Sir Ronald Syme's classic *The Roman Revolution* (1939): 'One cannot derive from Syme's work a theory or explanation of revolutions in general, or even much insight into why Augustus' Roman revolution occurred at all. Instead, readers are given a clear analysis of how a political and social revolution took place. Likewise in Adams there is no general theory of linguistic change, and no systematic attempt to understand why evolution took place; but a clear account is offered of the "what" and the "how" of significant alteration within the language.'

Anthology of Informal Latin, 200 BC – AD 900: Fifty Texts[31] *with Translations and Linguistic Commentary*, over 700 pages long, and including texts from Ennius and Plautus (2nd century BC) to a 10th-century north-Italian treatise on falcon medicine. Like *Social Variation* itself, the anthology is a diamond mine of new insights. It is perhaps the closest Adams came to writing a textbook, and offers the closest thing to an accessible way into his interests and methods. It complements – or rather replaces – Rohlfs' classic anthology (referred to above), and recalls again Shipp's teaching in Sydney and Adams' own first teaching in the UK, as a research fellow in Cambridge.

Just before Adams' death, another monumental work appeared: *Asyndeton and its Interpretation in Latin Literature: History, Patterns, Textual Criticism* (2021). In the 750 pages of this, his final book, Adams takes on and delivers perhaps the last word on a syntactic phenomenon – the omission of coordinators – that is as misrepresented or ignored as it is widely attested. Here he goes out of his way to address and accommodate readers with literary interests wishing to consult a particular chapter, rather than to read the book as a whole, by making the chapters on particular genres, texts and authors as self-contained as possible.[32] As in the All Souls trilogy (above), here too Adams ranges frequently beyond Latin, constantly citing Greek and giving detailed accounts of asyndeton also in the Umbrian Iguvine Tables and Vedic Sanskrit. Adams acknowledges that the 'typological chapters', in which he defines and distinguishes the numerous different kinds of asyndeton (grammatical, semantic, and structural), 'are in a way a separate work'. One of the last types of asyndeton distinguished is a variation on a type of hyperbaton, the subject of Adams' very first article (in the *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* for 1971), and, poignantly, the first item in this, his last bibliography is his 1970 Oxford DPhil thesis.

V

As for the qualities and style of his writing, if one may generalise, Adams' published work is characterised consistently, from the 1970s to the 2020s, by the same inimitable laconic rigour and efficiency. A signal strength lies in an unusually deft combination of exhaustive analysis and presentation of detail with summaries and conclusions of great scope and scale. As one reads his findings and discussion of them, one has the sense of problems and earlier, inadequate solutions being overturned, swept aside, and a feeling of finality in the seemingly irresistible conclusions. His 'persona' as author is refreshingly

[31] But Kathy Coleman recalls that when Adams put the typescript together to send to the press, he found that he had only forty-nine.

[32] The ten 'literary chapters' (231-680) are on: laws and prayers, Plautus, Virgil and early high poetry, Lucilius, Cicero, Catullus, Caesar's *Civil War*, Horace, the early annalists, Sallust and Tacitus, and Livy.

unselfregarding, his style, as already noted, lucid, terse, urgent – life is short, the art long! The subject and texture of his writing have misled many to think that the only Latin sources that interested him were narrow and recondite, and his approach uncompromising and exclusive. True, he devoted much attention to authors and sets of documents unfamiliar to most Latinists. True, to follow his presentation and argument was no amble in the park, since he paid his readers the compliment of assuming that they had read much of the relevant background. But his language is plain, his ordering of material and argument bracingly clear, his habit of taking stock at each stage of the route-march reassuring and inclusive. Reading a typescript by the present obituarist in 2020, he warned repeatedly against being allusive and making unreasonable assumptions of prospective readers including students.

Theory ('doctrine', he called it) was thoroughly well understood by Adams, but it is scarce in his works. His linguistic terminology is traditional, wherever it serves without loss of clarity. He treated with scepticism (to put it mildly) theoretically-laden work in general and new terminology (of the 'old wine in new bottles' type) in particular, and regarded with equal respect, and purely on grounds of merit and utility, the fashionable and the little-known. 'Lay out the facts, and let the evidence speak for itself,' he would say. 'Themes will emerge.' The jargon-free theoretical neutrality and straightforward empiricism of his approach make of his results a timeless set of tools and resources.

As Anna Chahoud observes in her obituary of Adams, 'Ahead of the times, in a no-nonsense and non-ideological way, he addressed topics pertinent to contemporary anxieties about the future of the discipline, in the current climate of revision and decolonisation.' Through his studies of unfamiliar texts in 'informal' Latin, he cast light on the language of ordinary people, on how it diverged from the varieties of the ruling elites, and he brought vividly to life a language characterised by diversity of all sorts as much as any 'world language' before English. As he outlined in a recent contribution to a UNESCO project on the future of education: 'Latin thus had a diversity determined by e.g. trading contacts, army movements, the efforts of reformers, morphological simplifications, and distinctions of attitude to lexemes across different social classes, about which we are learning more from new discoveries.' The article concludes with an endorsement of public ownership: 'The diversity of Latin is revealed by various sources, but it is important to be aware of the abundant and increasing non-literary documents, which, if they come into the hands of public collections rather than private collectors, may gradually contribute to a revision of the history of the language.'[33]

[33] 'Diversity and the Latin language', published 15 July 2020 at https://catedra-unesco.espais.iec.cat/en/2020/07/15/47-diversity-and-the-latin-language/ [accessed 7 Dec 2022].

VI

If Adams was not the classic, quintessential team-player, he did forge or take part in half a dozen important collaborations which have yielded monumental results. He worked over a long period with Alan Bowman and David Thomas on their publication of the Vindolanda tablets, providing the first linguistic analyses of these texts as they emerged. And between 1994 and 2018, he jointly organised and edited the proceedings of five major conferences on broad swathes of Latin – respectively on the language of Latin poetry (with Roland Mayer, 1999),[34] on bilingualism in ancient society (with Mark Janse and Simon Swain, 2002), on the language of Latin prose (to honour Michael Winterbottom – with Tobias Reinhardt and Michael Lapidge, 2005),[35] on the assessment of linguistic phenomena attested in Latin before and after the Classical period (with Nigel Vincent, 2016), and on early Latin, from the beginning to the first quarter of the 1st century BC (with Anna Chahoud and Giuseppe Pezzini, 2018).[36] He was an effective organiser and, when it had to be done, good at administration. It was his management and leadership, as chair of the Supervisory Committee from 1995 to 2011, that was decisive in overhauling and bringing to rapid and successful completion (in 2013, exactly 100 years after its inception) the monumental *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*.[37] One further telling and characteristic point: in discussion of collaborative large projects on technical Latin, Adams argued repeatedly and forcefully against restricting the project to, say, the medical writers, since so much important evidence was to be found in non-technical literary Latin and in inscriptions of all kinds. Conversely, to characterise the language of, say, Cicero, Virgil, or Ovid with reference just to other literary authors risked no less yielding a partial, impoverished, and misleading view.

VII

To those who regarded Adams as exclusively devoted to research and scholarship, it came as a surprise that he devoted such care and attention to teaching and mentoring. Like his scholarship, his teaching was conducted on, and in, his own terms. He used

[34] J.N. Adams & R.G. Mayer (eds), *Aspects of the Language of Latin Poetry* (*Proceedings of the British Academy*, 93, 1999).

[35] Tobias Reinhardt, Michael Lapidge & J.N. Adams (eds), *Aspects of the Language of Latin Prose* (*Proceedings of the British Academy*, 129, 2005).

[36] The volume based on this last conference is in press with CUP, to appear in 2023: *Early Latin: Constructs, Diversity, Reception*, co-edited by Adams together with Anna Chahoud and Giuseppe Pezzini.

[37] Of the seventeen fascicules of the British Academy's *DML*, the first five (A-L) took about thirty years (*c.* 1967–97), the last twelve (M-Z) were published in twelve years. Fascicule XIV (2012) is dedicated to Adams.

densely typed handouts and bibliographies, often with a supplementary sheet because he had typically prepared very early, and subsequently found more to read and say between sending the main pages for photocopying and actually delivering the class. His delivery was calm, well worded, easy on the ear, the pace steady but relentless, the message brief, clear, and bracing. There was no sitting back in Adams' classes, for what he conveyed was to be found as yet nowhere in print. If you cared about his subject, you had to work hard to get it down in note form, since the handout gave only references and examples, little clue to what he was demolishing and rebuilding. His teaching thus ticked the 'research-led' box in no uncertain terms. It was less obviously interactive, although he welcomed questions during class, judged the level of his audience's knowledge sensitively, and spoke accordingly. His students appreciated above all his careful preparation. He consulted books incessantly, but reshelved them immediately. Often students would see him march briskly into the University of Manchester Library or the Bodleian in Oxford, a scrap of paper in his hand with a list of references to check, and leave minutes later apparently without writing anything down.

As in print, so in the classroom, in the spirit of his own Sydney teacher G.P. Shipp (mentioned above), Adams had little if anything to say *about* the literary or documentary text whose language he was teaching – if you wanted to know the plot of the play, the point of the poem, the historical background of the papyri or ostraca,[38] well, you could follow the references in the bibliography. His job was to teach you everything about the Latin of the writer of the text, both what was deducible from elsewhere in the same text and from other Latin sources, and what light it shed on broader questions about the history and varieties of the language, colloquial, high-style, male/female, dialectal, Grecising, technical, foreshadowing Italian, or whatever. Why waste precious class time on topics already adequately addressed in print? The urgency of his oral delivery (often against a handout containing – for a one-hour session – well over a hundred examples) was also notable: the lecture that became the 1999 article on nominative personal pronouns was memorably compared in public discussion (by David Bain) to 'scoring a century before lunch', and in private (by Roy Gibson) to 'driving through the Ardennes'.

In those of his students interested in the Latin language, Adams inspired a keen and enduring devotion. Those pursuing non-academic careers after graduating retain decades later undimmed enthusiasm for the starkly illuminating and penetrating quality of his classes. As for those students, and colleagues, pursuing academic work and sharing his interests and approach, Adams was an unfailingly generous mentor and adviser, at any time in their careers, and a stringently, sometimes brutally frank reader and critic. In fact, the best possible fate for a piece of work on Latin and for its nervous author was to be

[38] The suggestion offered by a typescript-reader (Kathy Coleman) to include a map in the article about the Bu Njem ostraca (*Journal of Roman Studies* for 1994) was passed over in silence!

read in draft by Adams. He would even return the compliment by asking his juniors (including on one occasion a Master's student, now an Oxford professor) to give him feedback on his own work in draft. To all who could bear his scrutiny and comments he simply showed how to be a better scholar. This is a vital part of his immense legacy to the study of Latin.

It was well remarked[39] by Anna Morpurgo Davies DBE, FBA (1937-2014) that Adams 'is as close as we can get to a native speaker of Latin'. The wise student of any language knows how important it is to hear and interact with native speakers. It is hard to think of a language-related topic in Latin literature or Roman history where reading Adams would not shed light or give pause for thought.

VIII

On his retirement from All Souls back to Cheshire, Adams knew that his house in Hale could not accommodate his books, and bought a flat in Knutsford which became his library. The house and flat afforded glimpses also into his artistic tastes, which ranged from fine chairs and furniture to icons and modern and contemporary British and Australian painting. In these subjects he was as expert and as much a perfectionist as in his academic work. He knew, and was respected by, any antiques dealer worth knowing in Oxford and the Cotswolds, Manchester and Chester. His expertise made him the perfect Camerarius (the Fellow responsible for furniture matters) at All Souls.[40] On the other hand, he enjoyed sudoku, watching television, and reading novels including crime fiction.[41] As well as cricket he followed football keenly, and although a supporter of Manchester United, revered Alan Shearer.

Adams was genuinely sociable, and was a kind, loyal and affectionate friend to people from all social and cultural backgrounds. In Didsbury, Manchester, he and his first wife Geneviève were generous hosts to many, including Australian visitors who came to stay.[42] And later, Adams entertained countless friends and colleagues to lunch or dinner at All Souls. Anna Chahoud well observes that the thought never crossed his mind that people, especially younger scholars, would find the place intimidating, and in fact,

[39] In person to the present writer.

[40] It was probably in the function of this office that he once claimed to Bill Barnes '(with whatever truth or accuracy) to have designed the (then) new bicycle sheds at All Souls, "in the style of the vespasiennes of the Belle Époque"'.

[41] He told Bill Barnes more than once that he thought *Dance to the Music of Time* was the best novel in English of the twentieth century.

[42] Alanna Nobbs recalls the Adams hospitality (including Geneviève's French cheeses, and cricket and other games in their garden) shared with Bill Barnes, Peter Brennan, Arthur Emmett, John Lee, Emily Matters, Sue Spinks, and many others.

his unassuming, egalitarian attitude and evident enjoyment of their company put even the most nervous quickly at ease. He was a great repository of gossip and it was often possible to verify stories with him, for people liked to confide in him. He had a memorable and endearing chuckle (if that is the right word for it) with his mouth tightly closed, and a habit of hunching and relaxing his shoulders.[43] He was wonderfully witty, with a notably dry sense of humour.[44] Australian friends found him unchanged from his undergraduate days: as one of them put it, 'He was absolutely himself at eighteen: same clothes, same accent, same mannerisms. Nothing he achieved spoiled him.' He retained many expressions from his years in Sydney, including politically incorrect references to women as 'sheilas' and to incompetent doctors as 'quacks'. Hypocritical moralising would 'stick in [his] craw', a seminar paper thin on substance would be 'all froth and no beer', ambitious academics given to organising people and events were 'operators'. Other characteristic words were similarly far from understatement: 'dread' (for fear), 'abuse' (for insult), 'grotesque', 'hopeless', 'obsessed', 'out of hand'. His manifest pleasure in nicknames also dated (according to Bill Barnes) from his Sydney student days. He could seem by turns gruff and the soul of politeness; reserved and outrageously outspoken; self-assured and suggestible, even vulnerable. He walked at a colossal pace, covering the mile-and-a-half between All Souls and Wolfson College in under twenty minutes. Once, walking rapidly to an event in Wolfson, he came upon and greeted a colleague who was on foot to the same event but proceeding at such 'glacial speed' that, in agony, unable either to bring himself to abandon the colleague or to endure life at that pace, he made an excuse and went back to All Souls. In the rain, however, he would counsel against hurrying, on the grounds that 'the drops hit you with greater force, and you get wetter'.

At rest, Adams' sociability was not limited to academic contacts. He had a mutually respectful relationship with college porters, numerous art and wine dealers, car hire operators, and, towards the end of his life, with the Anglican minister in Knutsford, Nigel Atkinson. The isolation resulting from the pandemic in 2020 affected him badly. His sister Rosemary, and his cousin Lyn Camp whom he had not seen since he left Australia in 1967, sent him pictures of a happy, normal life in a 'different world'.[45] Telephone calls with family and friends became more and more important, and more

[43] At Adams' memorial in All Souls, Rosemary Hill mimicked this gesture perfectly (calling it 'the small humph of the shoulders, which he always did when amused'), as Kathy Coleman recalled it 'bringing him right into the Library'.

[44] As Wolfgang de Melo recalled at the memorial in All Souls, 'There was often an element of playful exaggeration, as when he was asked whether Australians were still calling the British "Poms". Jim said that this was not a genuine Australian expression; no, the true Australian word was "Pommy-Bastard", as in "dry as a Pommy-Bastard's towel". … Jim's tone of voice made it clear that this was said with sincere affection.'

[45] 'Different world' was the title of an email Adams sent to Anna Chahoud in January 2021, in which he forwarded a picture from his sister, the first of many such nostalgic messages.

frequent in summer 2021. He sensed his health failing him. To others he seemed as indefatigable as ever, and surely indestructible, but, as usual, his judgement was right.

Adams died three days after the death of his first wife, Geneviève; he is survived by his second wife, Iveta, and by two children, Nicholas from his first marriage, who is father to Oscar, his only grandchild to date, and Elena from his second marriage.

VENIT · VIDIT · VICIT

Acknowledgements

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