

The Wordsworth Trust LSE Literary Festival event

Poetry and Politics: how well do they mix?

Carola Luther

Poet, collections including, Arguing with Malarchy, Walking the Animals and Herd

Dr Llewelyn Morgan

Lecturer in Classical Literature and Language, Oxford University

Michael McGregor

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LSE events

Twitter hashtag: #LSElitfest



Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven! O times,
In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
Of custom, law, and statute took at once
The attraction of a country in romance—
When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights
When most intent on making of herself
A prime enchanter to assist the work
Which then was going forwards in her name.
Not favored spots alone, but the whole earth,
The beauty wore of promise, that which sets
(To take an image which was felt, no doubt,
Among the bowers of Paradise itself)
The budding rose above the rose full-blown.

William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, 1805

The fear gone by
Pressed on me almost like a fear to come.
I thought of those September massacres,
Divided from me by a little month,
And felt and touched them, a substantial dread
(The rest was conjured up from tragic fictions,
And mournful calendars of true history,
Remembrances and dim admonishments):
'The horse is taught his manage, and the wind
Of heaven wheels round and treads in his own steps;
Year follows year, the tide returns again,
Day follows day, all things have second birth;
The earthquake is not satisfied at once' —
And in such way I wrought upon myself,
Until I seemed to hear a voice that cried
To the whole city, 'Sleep no more!'
. . . But at the best it seemed a place of fear,
Unfit for the repose of night,
Defenceless as a wood where tigers roam.

William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, 1805

When France in wrath her giant-limbs upreared,
 And with that oath, which smote air, earth, and sea,
 Stamped her strong foot and said she would be free,
Bear witness for me, how I hoped and feared!
. . . And when to whelm the disenchanting nation,
 Like fiends embattled by a wizard's wand,
 The Monarchs marched in evil day,
 And Britain joined the dire array;
. . . Yet still my voice, unaltered, sang defeat
 To all that braved the tyrant-quelling lance,
And shame too long delayed and vain retreat!
For ne'er, O Liberty! with partial aim
I dimmed thy light or damped thy holy flame;
 But blessed the paeans of delivered France,
And hung my head and wept at Britain's name.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *France: an Ode*

Forgive me, Freedom! O forgive those dreams!
I hear thy voice, I hear thy loud lament,
From bleak Helvetia's icy caverns sent—
I hear thy groans upon her blood-stained streams!
. . . O France, that mockest Heaven, adulterous, blind,
And patriot only in pernicious toils!
Are these thy boasts, Champion of human kind?
To mix with Kings in the low lust of sway,
Yell in the hunt, and share the murderous prey;
To insult the shrine of Liberty with spoils
From freemen torn; to tempt and to betray?

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *France: an Ode*

To the Men of Kent

Vanguard of Liberty, ye Men of Kent,
Ye Children of a Soil that doth advance
Her haughty brow against the coast of France,
Now is the time to prove your hardiment!
To France be words of invitation sent!
They from their Fields can see the countenance
Of your fierce war, may ken the glittering lance,
And hear you shouting forth your brave intent.
Left single, in bold parley, Ye, of yore,
Did from the Norman win a gallant wreath;
Confirm'd the charters that were yours before;--
No parleying now! In Britain is one breath;
We all are with you now from Shore to Shore:--
Ye Men of Kent, 'tis Victory or Death!

William Wordsworth, 1803

O native Britain! O my Mother Isle!
How shouldst thou prove aught else but dear and holy
To me, who from thy lakes and mountain-hills,
Thy clouds, thy quiet dales, thy rocks and seas,
Have drunk in all my intellectual life,
All sweet sensations, all ennobling thoughts,
All adoration of the God in nature,
All lovely and all honourable things,
Whatever makes this mortal spirit feel
The joy and greatness of its future being?

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Fears in Solitude", 1798

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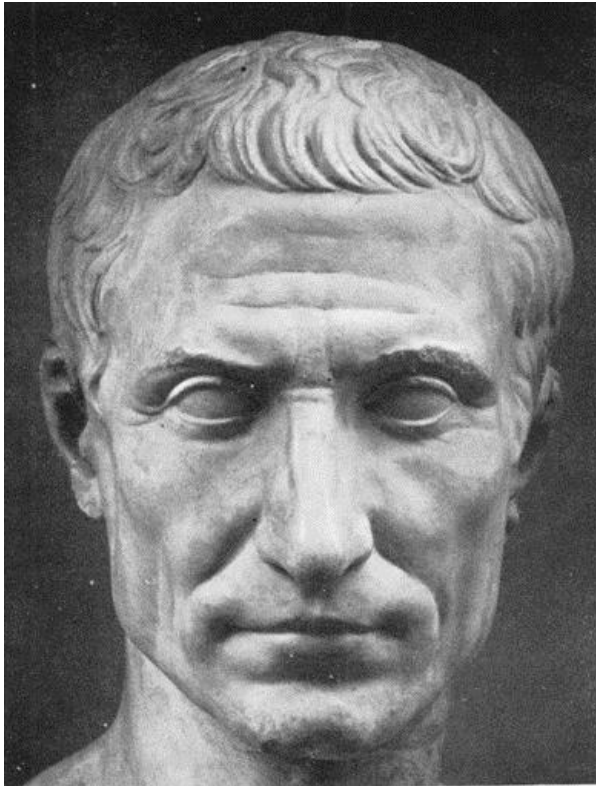
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Mentula conatur Pipleium scandere montem:
Musae furcillis praecipitem eiciunt.

Tool attempts to scale the Pipleian Mount.
The Muses hurl him out headfirst with pitchforks.

Catullus 105



Mamurra

Salve, dux hominum et parens deorum,
provisum mihi cognitumque numen.
nec iam putribus evoluta chartis
sollemni prece Quindecim Virorum
perlustra mea dicta, sed canentem
ipsam comminus, ut mereris, audi.
vidi quam seriem imminentis aevi
pronectant tibi candidae sorores:
magnus te manet ordo saeculorum,
natis longior abnepotibusque
annos perpetua geres iuventa
quos fertur placidos adisse Nestor,
quos Tithonia computat senectus
et quantos ego Delium poposci.



Hail, leader of men and father of deities,
godhead foreseen and recognised by me.
No longer scan my words unrolled on rotting papyrus
with the ritual pray of the Fifteen, but as you deserve,
listen to me prophesying in person.
I have seen what a chain of forthcoming years
the shining Sisters are weaving for you:
a great cycle of ages awaits you;
outliving your children and your grandchildren
you will enjoy in perpetual youth the peaceful years
which Nestor is said to have reached,
the years which Tithonus' old age counts up
and the number I demanded of Delian Apollo.

Statius, *Silvae* 4.3.139-52



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Tivoli, the ancient Tibur.

Laudabunt alii claram Rhodon aut Mytilenen
aut Ephesum bimarisue Corinthi
moenia uel Baccho Thebas uel Apolline Delphos
insignis aut Thessala Tempe;
sunt quibus unum opus est intactae Palladis urbem
carmine perpetuo celebrare et
undique decerptam fronti praeponere oliuam;
plurimus in Iunonis honorem
aptum dicet equis Argos ditiesque Mycenas:
me nec tam patiens Lacedaemon
nec tam Larisae percussit campus opimae
quam domus Albunae resonantis
et praeceps Anio ac Tiburni lucus et uda
mobilibus pomaria riuus.

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Others will praise bright Rhodes or Mytilene or Ephesus
or the walls of Corinth with its two seas,
or Thebes renowned for Bacchus or Delphi for Apollo,
or Thessalian Tempe.
There are those whose single task is to celebrate the city
of virgin Pallas in uninterrupted song and
parade on their brows an olive-wreath plucked from all sides;
in honour of Juno many a poet
will sing of Argos, good for horses, and wealthy Mycenae.
As for me, I am not so struck by enduring Sparta
nor the plain of rich Larisa
as the home of thundering Albunea
And the plunging Anio and the grove of Tiburnus and the orchards
watered by the ever-moving streams.

Horace, Odes 1.7 (the “Plancus Ode”)

albus ut obscuro deterget nubila caelo
 saepe Notus neque parturit imbris
 perpetuo, sic tu sapiens finire memento
 tristitiam uitaeque labores
 molli, Plance, mero, seu te fulgentia signis
 castra tenent seu densa tenebit
 Tiburis umbra tui. Teucer Salamina patremque
 cum fugeret, tamen uda Lyaeo
 tempora populea fertur uinxisse corona,
 sic tristis affatus amicos:
 'Quo nos cumque feret melior fortuna parente,
 ibimus, o socii comitesque.
 Nil desperandum Teucro duce et auspice Teucro:
 certus enim promisit Apollo
 ambiguum tellure noua Salamina futuram.
 O fortes peioraque passi
 mecum saepe uiri, nunc uino pellite curas;
 cras ingens iterabimus aequor.'

15 The bright South Wind will often wipe the clouds from the dark sky.
 It does not always breed rain.
 So you too, Plancus, would be wise to remember to put an end
 to sadness and the troubles of life
 with mellow wine undiluted, whether you are in camp
 20 amid gleaming standards or some day will enjoy
 the dense shade of your beloved Tivoli. When Teucer was fleeing
 Salamis and his father, they say that nonetheless,
 drenched with wine, he bound his brows with a poplar wreath
 and spoke these words to his unhappy friends:
 25 Wherever Fortune, kinder than my father, carries us,
 there we shall go, my allies and companions.
 Do not despair while Teucer takes the auspices and Teucer leads the way.
 Unerring Apollo has promised
 that there will be another Salamis in a new land.
 You are brave men, and have often suffered worse
 30 with me. Drive your anxieties away with wine.
 Tomorrow we shall set out again over the vast Ocean.

“Plancus had enough influence to ensure that his brother Plancus Plotius was proscribed”
 (Velleius 2.67.3)

“De Germanis, non de Gallis, duo triumphant consules”



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