

Anthony Alsop
Odes 2. 7,
‘Henrico Bridges’
(edited by David Money)

Anthony Alsop (c.1669/70 – 1726) is one of England’s most interesting Latin poets, who enjoyed a high reputation as a writer of occasional Latin lyrics among at least some of his contemporaries – one called him ‘the best Writer of Lyric verses in the world.’ He was a clergyman, educated at Westminster School and Christ Church, Oxford, and a firm Jacobite (that is, a supporter of the exiled Stuart dynasty). He specialised in the witty verse epistle, most often using the Sapphic metre, a genre which appealed to groups of educated Englishmen in this period. Alsop is a master of the form, adopting Horace’s lyric structures, but adapting them to the needs of a thoroughly modern kind of Neo-Latin verse. This particular ode is not necessarily his best – many others are at least as appealing (such as, for example, 1. 4 [on his wife’s death]; 1. 11 [to David Gregory, astronomer and Jacobite]; 2. 2 [to John Keil, another risqué scientist]; 2. 10 [exile and music]; 2. 26 [electioneering]) – but is chosen here as being a suitable length for this anthology, and to illustrate the use of Neo-Latin by Anglican churchmen to comment vigorously on the politics of preferment and doctrine in their national Church. The addressee, Henry Bridges [or Brydges] (c. 1675 – 1728) was the brother of the Duke of Chandos, and had recently been created Archdeacon of Rochester by Bishop Francis Atterbury, another friend of Alsop’s. Atterbury, a highly controversial figure, was soon to be exiled on account of his involvement in Jacobite conspiracy. Alsop, Bridges, and Atterbury, all High-Church Tories, had been broadly satisfied with the way the Anglican Church was going under Queen Anne; when she died in 1714, and the Hanoverians and Whigs took power, their party felt the chill of impotent opposition. *Odes 2. 7* reflects with bitter irony on the new political situation. The poem’s metre is in Sapphic stanzas, and it was written in 1721.

For further reading, see D. K. Money, *The English Horace: Anthony Alsop and the Tradition of British Latin Verse* (Oxford: OUP for the British Academy, 1998), pp. 298-9 [text and trans.], 171-3, 199-203 [discussion]; article on Alsop in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004); on Horatian imitation in Neo-Latin and the vernacular, see Money, 'The reception of Horace in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,' in Stephen Harrison, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Horace* (Cambridge: CUP, 2007), pp. 318-33. Alsop's ode 2.26, mentioned above, is one of a number of Neo-Latin poems included in Clive Brooks, *Reading Latin Poetry Aloud* (Cambridge: CUP, 2007), pp. 271-3, with a reading by Brooks on the accompanying CD. Money, *English Horace*, includes the two books of odes published posthumously by Francis Bernard, his stepson, later Governor of Massachusetts, and two other books of Alsop's verse from other sources.

The Latin text is taken from Anthony Alsop, *Odorum Libri Duo*, ed. Francis Bernard (London: Bowyer, 1752), pp. 45-6.

'Henrico Bridges'

Grande par patrum, duo clara Roffae

Lumina, aeterno decorare plausu

Quis vetat? cui non Hominum Deûmque

Dulce sonat vox,

Quae caput charum cineresque amici

5

Deflet, invito tibi qui reliquit

Rite collatum titulum, praeivitque,

Egregius dux?

Plauderem dictis, o amice, si sic

Omnia: at quis te malesuadus egit 10

Impetus durum fidei exoletae

Dogma tueri?

Plurimos nescis procerum patrumque

Stare te contra? nihil est, quod ingens

Arrius, quod gens animosa, Fratrum 15

Ordo Polonum

Scriptitant contra? sape tandem, et artes

Disce, queis magnus poteris bonusque

Dicier. Cultus sit ubique norma

Libera et exlex; 20

Sit fides, sit mens sua cuique, nullo

Sub duce aut ductu: imperiosa cleri

Ferre quis possit juga, quis sacerdo-
tale capistrum?

Quare age, et sit pro licito licenter 25

Velle; sit recti sibi quisque iudex;

Tros fuit quisquam Tyriusve, nullum ex-
amen inito.

Hisce si ductus monitis priori

Disparem vitae ingrediare cursum, 30

Forte mox cinget prius immerentes

Mitra capillos.

Translation: 'To Henry Bridges'

Who refuses to celebrate that great pair of fathers, the two clear lights of Rochester, with eternal applause? Who, among men or gods, does not find sweet the voice that laments the dear departed friend, who left to you (though you were sad to take it) the post that has been properly conferred upon you, and who preceded you as an outstanding leader?

I would applaud your words, my friend, if that were all. But what ill-advised impulse led you to defend the stern principles of an abolished faith?

Do you not know that most of the lords and bishops are on the opposite side? Is it of no account that great Arius, and that vigorous race, the order of the Polish Brethren, write against you? Be wise at last, and learn those skills, by which you can be called 'great and good.' Let the pattern of worship everywhere be free and lawless; let each have his own faith and mind, under no leader or guidance. Who can bear the imperious yoke of the clergy, or priestly control?

So act in this way, and let there be free choice; let everyone be his own judge of right; let there be no enquiry into who is Trojan or Tyrian.

If, led by this advice, you proceed on a course that differs from your previous life, perhaps soon a mitre will cover your hair (which previously was undeserving).

Commentary

Line 1: *Grande par patrum*: according to Bernard's endnote (p. [91] = sig. N2r), Thomas Sprat (1635 – 1713), Bishop of Rochester, and his son, also Thomas, the Archdeacon (Bridges' predecessor in the post).

par [here] = 'pair' [rather than 'equal'], object of *decorare*, to be taken after *Quis vetat* [line 3]; Also probably alludes to Horace, *Satires* 2. 3. 243 [*par nobile fratrum*], where the context is disreputable, so Also may intend some humour in making the allusion. The occasion for this ode was Bridges' *Speech to the Clergy of the Diocess [sic] of Rochester at*

the Archidiaconal Visitation (1721), in which, after praise of his predecessor, he violently attacks the government's policy of toleration for 'occasional conformists' (i.e., those prepared to pay lip service to the established Church, who tended to be Protestant Dissenters and Whigs).

Roffae: the city of Rochester, in Kent.

Line 3: *Deûmque*: *deum* is a common classical variant for *deorum* [genitive plural]; metrically useful, and here indicated by the circumflex accent.

Line 5: *caput charum*: variant spelling of *carum*; probably alluding to Horace, *Odes* 1. 24. 2, *tam cari capitis*. Also exclaims 'o caput charum!' on his wife's death, 1. 4. 17. A more literal translation of *caput charum cineresque* would be 'dear head and ashes' (the translation above attempts to reflect the Latin alliteration and tone with a common English phrase – at times just a cliché, but still potentially resonant).

Line 7: *Rite collatum titulum*: the post of Archdeacon, relinquished by the younger Sprat on his death; 'collation' is a modern technical term for installation to an ecclesiastical post.

praeivitque: note the scansion: the 'ae' is short (before the vowel 'i', as occasionally in classical Latin); the 'e' of '-que' elides before the vowel starting the next line. Sprat 'went before' or 'led' Bridges in the sense of preceding him in the post, or perhaps preceding him to Heaven.

Lines 9-10: *si sic / Omnia*: alluding to Juvenal 10. 123-4, *si sic / omnia dixisset*. The allusion is appropriate to the context here, in comparing Bridges' defiance of authority with Cicero, who (according to Juvenal) could have escaped murder at Mark Antony's hands if he had confined himself to poor verse. Like much clever Neo-Latin intertextuality, it can be read on several levels; is Also teasing Bridges for his style, or warning him of the revenge of his enemies?

Line 11: *fidei exoletae*: heavily ironic; Bridges supports traditional High-Church

Anglicanism, which the Whig government is now busy destroying. Note ‘fidei’ has three syllables, the third elided before the following vowel.

Lines 15-16: *Arrius . . . Fratrum / Ordo Polonûm*: like *deûm* (line 3), *Polonûm* is genitive plural. *Arrius* [the reading *Arius* is also found in a manuscript copy, Bodleian MS Don. e. 53, fo. 14] probably refers to Arianism, a form of Christian heterodoxy named after Arius (c.250 – c.336); possibly also a private joke about some opponent called Harry (a ‘great Harry’ to Bridges’ lesser Harry), or the ‘Arrius’ of the Horatian passage alluded to in line 1? The Polish brethren are probably Socinians, named for ‘Socinus’ [Lelio Sozzini (1525 – 62), and Fausto Sozzini (1539 – 1604), who established the sect in Poland]; an important collection of Socinian writings, which was in the philosopher John Locke’s library, was entitled *Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum* (1666). Alexander Pope referred to ‘the Dregs of bold *Socinus*’ (*Essay on Criticism*, line 545). Poland also reminded Englishmen of the Whigs, because of its elective monarchy – the Whigs, at the so-called Glorious Revolution of 1688, had similarly ‘elected’ William and Mary in place of James II, much to the disgust of Jacobites like Alsop. Julian Hoppit, in *A Land of Liberty? England 1689-1727* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), remarks that the period ‘saw the growth of Arianism, Socinianism, and, particularly, Deism. Central to Arianism was its denial of the divinity of Christ; Socinianism rejected Trinitarian doctrines, and thus also the divinity of Christ . . . and Deism stressed the existence of one Supreme Being and that true religion was natural religion.’ (pp. 227-8, in a section subtitled ‘a weakening faith?’, pp. 223-31). These were the powerful intellectual enemies that Bridges was opposing, and to which Alsop ironically suggests he might be wiser to submit. The cynical advice about joining the ranks of the ‘great and good’ strikes a chord in other times and contexts, and suggests the continuing vigour of eighteenth-century Latin’s engagement with ‘real-world’ controversies.

Line 18: *queis*: common alternative form for *quis* [= *quibus*, ablative].

Line 19: *Dicier*: present passive infinitive, ‘to be called’ (following *poteris*).

Line 21: *Sit . . . cuique*: ironic use of a commonplace classical idea, in the specific context of contemporary religious controversy: in a sense, of course, everyone’s mind and faith are indeed their own – but in practice Alsop and his friends would be deeply uncomfortable with the results of pushing such freedom too far.

Line 22: *cleri*: genitive, ‘of the clergy’; a late-antique Latin word, common in ecclesiastical contexts.

Lines 23-24: *juga . . . sacerdo- / tale capistrum*: *juga* [= *iuga*], yokes (a common metaphor for oppression); *capistrum* is a muzzle or halter for animals; Juvenal refers to the *maritale capistrum* [muzzle of marriage], 6. 43, alluded to by Alsop here, and at his *Odes* 2. 6. 19.

Note the split of a word between two lines (as also at lines 27-28); Alsop is quite fond of this technique (there are over thirty instances in his Sapphics), often used to good effect, to draw attention to a significant word; it is also found between the third and fourth lines of Sapphic stanzas in classical verse, as these were seen as a closely-connected unit. (Alsop’s versification is discussed at Money, *English Horace*, pp. 72-5). More ironic reflection from Alsop of the arguments used by the other side.

Lines 25-26: a rather complex phrase: perhaps, literally, ‘may it be [possible] to wish licentiously in place of what is lawful’? Perhaps imitating the awkwardness of legal language, and punning on *licito* and *licenter*.

Line 27: *Tros . . . Tyriusve*: an allusion to Virgil, *Aeneid* 1. 574 (*Tros Tyriusque mihi nullo discrimine agetur*); cf. also 10. 108 (*Tros Rutulusve fuat, nullo discrimine habebo*) – pious sentiments which do not prevent tragedy. The form *fuat* is an archaic subjunctive of *sum*: ‘let there be’ – the Virgilian parallel suggests it is a better reading than the more straight-forward *fuit* of Bodleian MS Don. e. 53, fo. 14 (and cf. note on formality of *inito*, line 28). Alsop

refers to the contemporary debates about toleration in England: should one examine whether an ‘occasional conformist’ is really sincere in his adherence to Anglican beliefs, or not?

Should Protestant Dissenters be welcomed (as they generally were, by the Whigs) regardless of their unorthodox religious position?

Lines 27-28: *ex- / amen inito: examen* [here] = ‘examination, enquiry’; *inito* is the more formal [future, second or third person singular] form of the imperative, ‘let one enter into.’

See note on lines 23-24, for word-break.

Line 32: *Mitra*: a bishop’s mitre; Bridges had not deserved a bishopric (*prius immerentes*, line 31) from the government’s politically-biased viewpoint (hence Alsop’s ironic suggestion that he needs to change his tune). This Neo-Latin poem offers literary support for Basil Williams’ assertion that ‘[t]hough there were a few Georgian bishops of whom any church might have been proud, the usual qualification for that office was political service or the support of powerful patrons in the whig party.’ (*The Whig Supremacy, 1714-60* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, second ed., 1960), p. 78). The ending reads neatly in the Latin, with subject and object filling the final (short, ‘adonic’) line: Alsop demonstrates a deft Horatian touch.