LETTER FROM ITALY

LATIN LOVER

Can a classicist's plan to revive a dead language save Europe?

BY REBECCA MEAD

One day last May, I telephoned the home of Luigi Miraglia, who lives in the small southern-Italian town of Montella, not far from Naples. "*Ego sum*," Miraglia replied, when I asked for him by name. Miraglia teaches Latin in a high school in Montella, but he believes that the language should not be reserved for the classroom and the textbook. He converses in Latin most days, often on the telephone, speaking with friends in places as far-flung as Romania and the United States and South Korea. He conducts an extensive correspondence in Latin, signing his letters Aloisius, the name he prefers to go by among his Latin-speaking peers. Miraglia's Latin is classical in style, modelled on the epistles of Cicero, mixing artfully constructed dependent clauses and colloquialisms. He speaks Latin more fluently than almost anyone else alive—indeed, more fluently than most of the people who have died during the last two millennia. He would have been able to talk comfortably with St. Augustine, Pico della Mirandola, or Erasmus, though he might regret being unable to take their *inscriptiones electronicae*, or E-mail addresses.

Miraglia is thirty-five years old; he is of medium height, and weighs slightly more than he would like to, though not so much that he is prepared to curb his consumption of *mozzarella di bufala*, his favorite food. He has a gentle face with dark, liquid eyes, and his hair, which is thinning, is dark brown but for a single silver strand in the center of his brow. He wears Lacoste polo shirts and khaki pants, which tend to be a bit rumpled. He is restrained and polite, except when he is driving his gray 1992 Rover, at which times he becomes aggressive and daring: weaving from lane to lane and skipping ahead of more cautious drivers in a manner that even his Italian friends remark upon, although on account of a broken speedometer he never appears to be moving at more than zero kilometres per hour.

Miraglia, who is unmarried, lives in a villa set in a forested valley on the outskirts of Montella. The house contains a library of sixteen thousand volumes, most of which are in Latin, and they are arrayed on rough-hewn shelves reaching from floor to ceiling. He shares the house with a youthful group of fellow-scholars; their number is fluid, but there are usually about ten of them. Among Miraglia's housemates are two women who were high-school students of his and are now studying Sanskrit and Classics at the University of Naples; a linguist who is compiling a dictionary of correct Italian pronunciation and who speaks English with the accent of Bertie Wooster; and a scholar of medieval history who has a collection of Gregorian-chant compact disks that numbers in the hundreds. The house is also home to three teen-age Albanian boys, who entered Italy illegally by boat and were arrested by Montella police for working without documents. Through the agency of a magistrate, the boys have been placed in the custody of Miraglia, who provides them with a home and with a well-rounded education that includes lessons in Italian, English, Latin, music, history, and philosophy. The Albanians are handy in the kitchen, and they often prepare the pizzas and pastas over which Miraglia and his friends debate philosophical questions—the Platonic conception of the ideal republic; the moral obligation of man to work for the betterment of his fellow-men.

"Exspectate litteras meas!" Luigi Miraglia told the stunned students—"You'll get mail."

ARNOLD ROTH

In Miraglia's view, Latin is not a tongue that fell out of use around the same time that the toga did, something as apt for revival as slavery or lion-on-man combat. Rather, it has been the

"Which celebrities do this type of yoga?"

• •

language of intellectual inquiry and argument, common to educated Europeans throughout the centuries, and is still appropriate for that use. "We have law, jurisprudence, science, botany, medicine, philosophy, and history in Latin," Miraglia told me when I visited him in Italy this summer. (We spoke English; he also speaks French, Spanish, and ancient Greek.) "Latin is not a dead language but a means by which men were able to defend thoughts and human rights, and this way it becomes a modern language. You can find answers to questions in our own lives." Miraglia believes that European political and economic unity can succeed only if the roots of an intellectual unity in Europe are also acknowledged and nurtured. "We don't have to look at classical culture as a model but as a seed that germinates in each new age like a new plant," Miraglia said.

As a concrete expression of his enthusiasm for the Latin-language humanistic tradition, Miraglia is attempting to establish an institute to be called Mnemosyne: Magna Graecia International Center for Classical Studies, which would attract students to southern Italy, where they could earn academic credits toward degrees in their home countries or complete entire courses of study under a permanent and visiting faculty, whose members Miraglia hopes to draw from among the Latin-speaking community. He has accumulated letters of support from scholars at such institutions as Yale, the University of Heidelberg, and the University of Ljubljana. The curriculum would include philosophy, the history of science, modern and ancient languages, and sports. (Miraglia was a keen Greco-Roman wrestler as a younger man.) Latin would not be the only language spoken, but Miraglia hopes that many of the teachers would conduct their classes in Latin, and Latin would be the lingua franca of the students, who would come from all over Europe and beyond.

Currently, Miraglia is hustling for financial support from the government of Campania, the region where he lives; he is also hoping that officials will provide him with a suitable building for his academy. He has his eye on an empty resort hotel on a green hillside near a coastal village called Castellabate, an hour and a half south of Naples, which has four tennis courts, two swimming pools, hundreds of rooms that could be converted into classrooms and accommodations, and spectacular views over the Gulf of Salerno toward Capri. One snag in Miraglia's plan is that the hotel in question was built by a Mafia family from Naples as a money-laundering operation, and a local anti-organized-crime official wants to have the building demolished. Miraglia is convinced that a far more meaningful message would be sent by letting him use the hotel. "The Mafia have built it to earn money, but not only will it not earn money for them, it will be a school whose purpose is to foster honesty," Miraglia told me. He is optimistic that he will prevail, and that once again scholars will debate and deliberate on the hillsides where Parmenides and Zeno, not to mention thousands of latter-day sunburned tourists, once dwelled.

Italy has a checkered history when it comes to reviving classical culture. Although the humanists of the Renaissance—Neoplatonists such as Pietro Bembo and Marsilio Ficino, or clerics like Pius II—enriched the culture with their revival of the philosophy and letters of the ancients, the example freshest in Europe's memory is that of Benito Mussolini. In addition to reviving the study of Latin in Italian schools, Mussolini attempted to link his own regime with Imperial Rome by excavating the Forum and building the grand Via dei Fori Imperiali. (More recently, Silvio Berlusconi has been dropping the odd Latinism into his public statements, an apparent attempt to augment his man-of-the-people profile with some statesmanly gravitas.)

Miraglia takes pains to point out that his own Latin project is not an effort to restore the glory that was Rome—indeed, Miraglia doesn't have a particularly high opinion of Imperial Rome, which involved too much sacking and conquering for his liking, and suffered an insufficiency of the activities preferred by the Greeks, such as sitting around pondering the meaning of life. Like most Italians, Miraglia studied Latin in school, and he loathed memorizing conjugations by rote. At fifteen, however, he had an epiphany

during a bird-watching trip to a nature sanctuary on a small island named Vivara, in the Bay of Naples. Vivara also served as a sanctuary for an elderly professor, Giorgio Punzo, who lived in a seventeenth-century building on the island, along with a group of young scholars from the University of Naples. Miraglia was taken with this sylvan fellowship, and when he turned seventeen and enrolled at the University of Naples he moved to Vivara, too.

It was Punzo who taught Miraglia to speak Latin—and, more than that, to inhabit the language, and to enter a dialogue with the authors who had used it before him. "I began reading very simple passages in Latin, and summarized them in spoken Latin," Miraglia explained. "I was surprised that after two months I was able to read Latin much more fluently. I was able to understand Tacitus, who was incomprehensible before." He began to read works that were outside the classical canon: the Neoplatonism of Giordano Bruno, the sixteenth-century philosopher; the mathematical works of Leibniz. "Punzo was really a humanist in the classical sense—there were no blocks between classical culture and science for him," Miraglia told me.

He lived on Vivara for ten years, during four of which there was no electricity or running water. (The scholars carried barrels of water on the back of a donkey from a pipeline half a mile away to their house at the top of a hill.) Still, Miraglia remembers it as a golden time. "There is a silence, and you can study without any trouble," he said. "Time passes, and you don't feel that time passes." In 1993, it became too costly to maintain the colony, and Punzo and his students left. One day last July, Miraglia drove me to a suburb of Naples, to a cliff-top area called Posillipo—Greek for "pause from pain." He pulled over to the side of the road and pointed out Vivara, a dark-green mound between the larger islands of Ischia and Procida. Then he gestured at the countryside around us. "Nero used to come here, and Caesar himself, and Cicero," Miraglia said, like a resident of Beverly Hills pointing out the homes of celebrities. "Nero's mother was killed over there," he added, nodding to the ancient spa of Baia. "And Petronius' 'Satyricon' was set over there."

The view that Nero and his mother would have enjoyed from this cliff top was, however, radically altered: the shoreline below was scarred by an abandoned factory. "I think that the Fascists built it," Miraglia said. He grew up in Naples, where, until titles were abolished in Italy, after the Second World War, his family had been among the local nobility: a Piazza Luigi Miraglia commemorates a nineteenth-century relative who was mayor of the city. Miraglia has a jaundiced view of the city of his birth. The traffic is intolerable ("If Hercules were living today, one of the labors would be to drive in Naples, and another would be to find a parking spot in Naples" is how Miraglia puts it); and the criminal habits of some of the city's more celebrated families are a scourge. "People don't observe the rule of law," Miraglia told me one day, while he happened to be swerving his car in a screeching U-turn to evade traffic difficulties. "It's a big problem."

Miraglia's father, a prominent doctor, wanted his children to see the world, and when they were young he worked each summer as a ship's doctor aboard a cruise liner, taking his family to South Africa and South America and throughout the Mediterranean. From this cosmopolitan vantage point, Miraglia seems to have concluded that the modern world is exactly like Naples, writ large: It was fantastic once, but lately it has gone to hell. "Our roots come from Greek and Roman and Christian culture," he told me. "But contemporary European culture is founded on subculture, and that is a disaster. People cannot feel they are united by Coca-Cola and McDonald's." Miraglia's tastes are somewhat maidenly, and he entertains lurid views of the ways of the world which appear to be acquired not from experience but by rumor. "People go to a disco and think that they are with other people, but they are not able to communicate, not even with their eyes, because it is dark," he once told me. Well, I offered, there might be other ways to communicate. Miraglia reddened slightly and said, "Perhaps in a sexual way, yes. But if men do not want to be beasts they should not act like beasts."

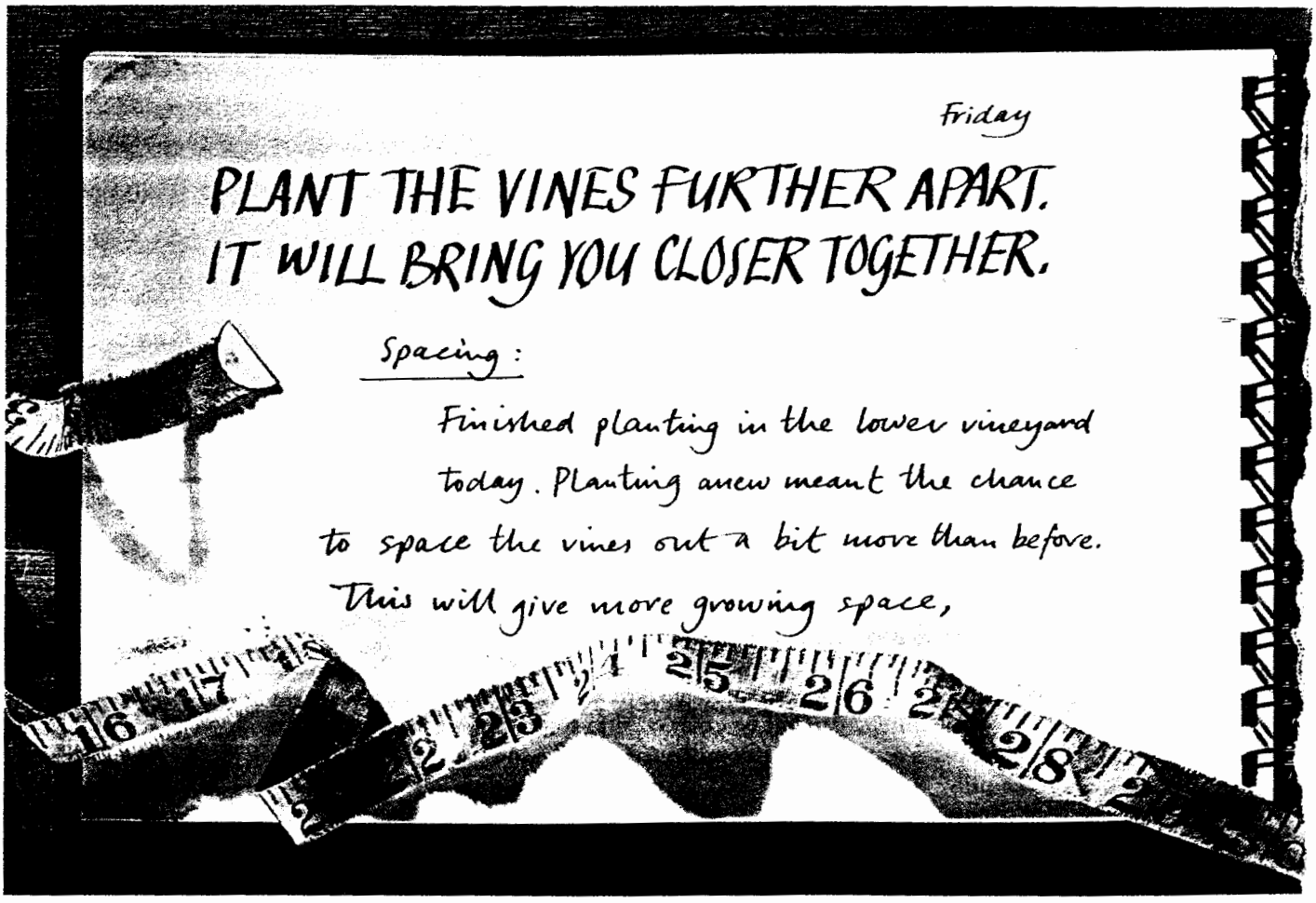
Miraglia has found that his plan

to preserve the timeless wisdom of the ancients happily coincides with certain contemporary cultural imperatives. One afternoon, we went to the offices of Antonio Valiante, the vice-president of Campania. Miraglia said he would need Valiante's endorsement if he is to raise the money necessary to found his institute: he hopes to benefit from a seven-trillion-lira ($3.4-billion-dollar) development grant that the European Union has budgeted for Campania. Miraglia took his place in a waiting room, where a coffee table was littered with brochures illustrating the tourism department's latest accomplishments—"Enjoy the First Event of the Third Millennium: The Inaugural European 'Bridge for All' Tournament"—and waited for two and a half hours beyond his appointed time for Valiante, who, Miraglia learned later, had spent the previous day threatening to resign because the department's president had undermined his authority in a political maneuver. (Valiante has since made good on his threat.)

Eventually, Valiante showed up and led Miraglia into his office, where, after glancing at the institute's projected budget—Miraglia is asking for between nine and ten billion lira annually for five years—he expressed enthusiasm. "Modern humanity needs to rediscover its roots, but that is being threatened by technology and pragmatism," he said. "We must recognize the spiritual dimension of man. We must remember that man is not only cold reason but also feeling and universal sensibility." Valiante added that he was particularly happy to lend his support, because he was born and raised in the very part of Campania where Miraglia intends to settle, and could think of no place more worthy of investment.

Ever since the ancient Romans imposed their language on neighboring barbarians, the teaching of Latin—who learns it, and why—has been inseparable from cultural politics. In the Middle Ages, Latin was the preserve of the Church, whose leaders believed that the language was inherently holier than the vernacular, and who used Latin as a means of establishing a reverential distance between priests and their parishioners. In the Renaissance, the classics were seen as a beneficial source of eternal, universal verities—"From Cicero I've learned to be myself," the Italian humanist Politian announced—and such a belief persisted well into the nineteenth century. The argument for the improving qualities of Latin is still made by the American Classical League, which points to studies showing that schoolchildren who have studied Latin achieve higher standardized test scores than their non-Latinist peers, even after taking into account the advantages that might be expected among a population of Latin-studying American adolescents.

Miraglia's claim that the classics, as the roots of European culture, provide the only means by which Europe can be saved from anomie and fragmentation has been a familiar theme during the twentieth century, as is demonstrated by Françoise Waquet, a director of research at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, in Paris, in her



excellent new book on the cultural history of Latin studies, "Latin or the Empire of a Sign." The "heritage theory," as she calls it, has been gaining ground since the nineteen-sixties, when Latin fell out of favor in schools in Europe and in the United States. Waquet debunks the popular notion that a wretched decline in the study of Latin occurred around two hundred years ago. She points out that Catholic clergymen both before and after the Reformation didn't understand the verses they were obliged to parrot; scholars at Oxford, even in the eighteenth century, were tongue-tied in the language they were required by statute to speak. Lord Byron wrote that in Lisbon he had been speaking "bad Latin to the monks, who understand it, as it is like their own."

For centuries, Latin has been taught as if it were a code to be deciphered rather than an organic means of communication. (Heinrich Heine observed ruefully that "the Romans would not have had much time left to conquer the world if they had had to learn Latin first.") The idea that Latin might best be absorbed as Miraglia absorbed it, through use, has a relatively recent provenance. In the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, Latin was batted around as a possible "universal language," suitable for diplomatic use (as were a perplexing number of artificial, simplified Latin derivatives with names like Latinesco, Novilatin, and Neo-Latinus); and in the nineteen-fifties the "living Latin" movement emerged in France, its leaders arguing that a return to Latin was the only escape from what they called the "Babel of modernity." A renowned figure among contemporary Latin-language partisans is Reginald Foster, a Carmelite monk transplanted from the United States to Rome, who serves as the Pope's senior Latinist. He runs a demanding summer school, mostly attended by American students and Latin teachers, who develop their ability to read and discuss Latin texts without resorting to English. The living-Latin movement in North America is represented by SALVI, an organization based in California, which, in an example of the language's adaptability to the needs and moods of the age, sponsors such events as all-Latin wine-tasting tours of the Napa Valley.

Miraglia tends to distance himself from the living-Latin lobby. "My aim is not that the students be able to speak Latin but that they be able to understand the texts deeply," he told me. For Miraglia to claim that speaking Latin isn't important is, however, a little like Rudolf Nureyev announcing that he doesn't care about dancing. Miraglia loves speaking Latin, and his facility with the language astonishes more plodding Latinists. One day when Miraglia and I were in Rome, we dropped in on Reginald Foster's class, and afterward Miraglia hung around outside the classroom, holding forth in flowing, ebullient Latin about his institute to a group of dumbfounded students, gathering their names and particulars with a blithe "*Exspectate litteras meas!*" (Latin for "You'll get mail.")

Miraglia's efforts to downplay the Latin-speaking element of his insti-

MYSELF WITH CATS

Hanging out the wash, I visit the cats.
"I don't belong to nobody," Yin insists vulgarly.
"Yin," I reply, "you don't know nothing."
Yang, an orange tabby, agrees
but puts kindness ahead of rigid truth.
I admire her but wish she wouldn't idolize
the one who bullies her. I once did that.
Her silence speaks needles when Yang thrusts
his ugly tortoiseshell body against hers,
sprawled in my cosmos. "Really, I don't mind,"
she purrs—her eyes horizontal, her mouth
an Ionian smile, her legs crossed nobly
in front of her, a model of cat Nirvana—
"withholding his affection, he made me stronger."

—Henri Cole

tute are political: he knows it makes him sound like a kook. Even among Latin teachers and classics professors, spoken Latin is a minority interest, and a controversial one. Latin purists dismiss spoken Latin as irrelevant to their studies of ancient authors, seeing no reason why the classical vocabulary should be adulterated with neologisms, like *computatrum* for "computer." Miraglia hates phony Latinisms—nothing makes him cringe more than hearing someone referring to a *photocopiatus*—since he believes that the language is capacious enough to accommodate even the most unexpected of modern references.

One morning, Miraglia took me to Castellabate, to the empty hotel he hopes to make his own. We were joined by Claudio Piga, a computer engineer from Milan, a private scholar of Latin whom Miraglia intends to install at his academy as a professor of the history of science; and by Dino Piovan, an enthusiastic young classics teacher from Vicenza whom Miraglia also hopes to draw to the south. Miraglia drove along a winding road up a forested hillside, and parked the car at the rear of the hotel. We walked for a while through the woods, Miraglia pointing out plants which Virgil mentions: the myrtle, the cypress. "Horace said poets love the woods—'*Scriptorum chorus omnis amat nemus et fugit urbem*,' " he said dreamily. We descended to the hotel, where a caretaker emerged and welcomed Miraglia like an old friend.

The hotel is built on the hillside, each floor slightly set back, terrace-like, from the one below. We entered the main building, where lush bougainvillea flowered over the doorway, and wandered into what had been the bar, its dark wood fixtures thick with dust, couches stacked against the wall and covered with white sheets. From there, we walked into a sprawling dining room, which was surrounded on three sides by windows to the sea. The view was spectacular, but so was the disrepair: there was smashed glass everywhere underfoot, and dead leaves that had been blown in through the broken windows and through a hole in the ceiling, where part of the roof had been ripped off by a tornado some years earlier. The place looked as if it had been ravaged by Huns, but Miraglia obviously could see it filled with chattering Platonists. Then we went outside and walked past the empty swimming pools to the parking lot, which was marked with a sign. "In a few years, that will say 'Area Stativa,' " Claudio Piga said cheerfully. Miraglia looked pained; although Piga was right, it seemed impolitic to speak of spoken Latin.

In the eighteenth century, the global decline of Latin was hastened by a rebellion against the classics in the New World, where it was argued that Latin

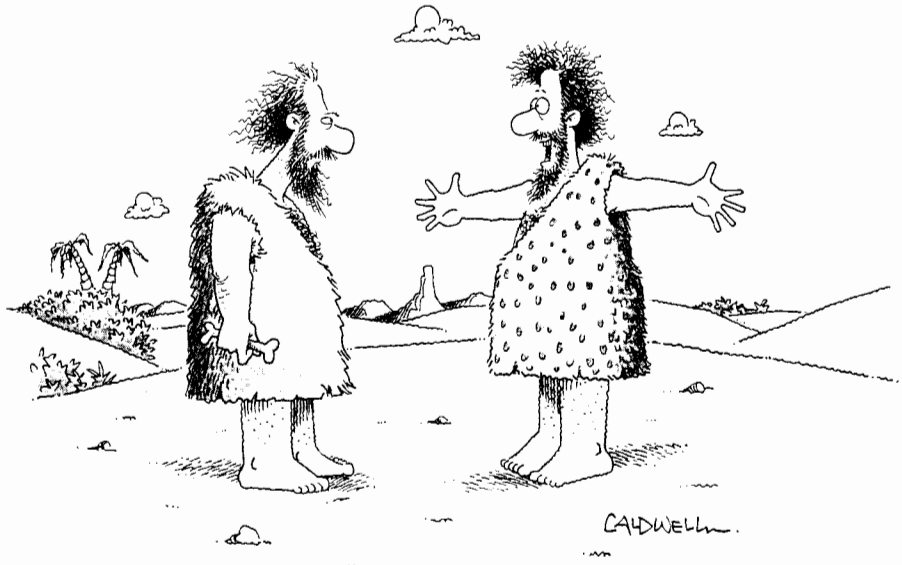
and Greek were relics of an élitist English educational model, unsuitable for the more democratic, progressive, and utilitarian society that was emerging. America has always been in the vanguard of Latin detractors, as Françoise Waquet notes: Yale dropped its Latin entry requirement in 1931, about forty years before similar moves by Oxford and Cambridge, and by the nineteen-nineties there were more American students of French, German, Spanish, Italian, Chinese, or Japanese than there were of Latin.

One result of this decline is that Latinists in the United States have had to adapt to prevailing fashions within academia; Miraglia's American peers present Latin studies as having nothing to do with the study of dead white males. At the University of Kentucky, in Lexington, one of the leading centers of spoken-Latin teaching in the United States, the classics department's Web site declares, "One could hardly find a better example of a field that is multi-cultural and truly 'interdisciplinary' than the study of Latin literature." Every July, the department hosts a "conventiculum," a ten-day, all-Latin seminar that is designed to train Latin teachers and graduate students in speaking Latin, but which also attracts amateur Latinists. The conference is organized by Terence Tunberg, the chairman of the Kentucky classics department. Tunberg, who has an intense, etched face, speaks fluent Latin, and goes by the name Terentius. (In addition to teaching, Tunberg, along with his wife, Jennifer Morrish Tunberg, is the translator of "Cattus Petasatus: The Cat in the Hat in Latin.") "Latin is no one's national language, and therefore we are all on neutral ground," Tunberg told me when I asked him to explain the multiculturalism of Latin studies. "And the great writers of the Renaissance were all multicultural, part of the international Latin culture. There were women who wrote in Latin in the medieval period. And there is a huge Jesuit literature about China and Japan—the whole opening up of the East was done via Latin."

Miraglia has attended the Kentucky conventiculum twice as a teacher; he is received as something of a celebrity, because of the purity and fluency of his speech, and because of the range of his learning. During this summer's conventiculum, I sat in on one of Miraglia's classes, the ostensible subject of which was three poems from the medieval period. Miraglia held forth in Latin for an hour and a half, during which time his discussion covered the medieval practice of the *peregrinatio academica*, whereby students would travel from one European school to another in search of new teachers; the difficulties with pronunciation in different countries during the Middle Ages (Miraglia imitated the Latin accents of a Frenchman, a German, and an Englishman to demonstrate); death, and the fact that no one wants to talk about it nowadays; Jim Morrison ("*Jacobus ille Morrison autumavit tria esse in hac vita nostra magni momenti: res venereas nempe, medicamina stupefactiva, atque mortem; se autem duo prima elegisse ipsum, sed a morte potius se electum iri,*" Miraglia said, which translates as "Jim Morrison said, 'There are three things in life: sex, drugs, and death. I choose the first two and the last will choose me' "); the poetry of Catullus; Sanskrit literature; and Tantric sex.

Attendees at the conventiculum are asked to sign a pledge that they will speak only Latin during the conference, but enforcement isn't a problem, since the conference provides what a therapist might call a safe space for American Latin enthusiasts, who relish the opportunity to be among their own kind. One evening, a group of two dozen participants went to a Japanese restaurant for *piscis crudus*, or sushi, and the private dining room that had been set aside for the group rang with Latin chatter: "*Da mihi aquam!*" someone would say, requesting the water jug, while someone else would ask to be passed the *condimentum zingiberis*, or ginger dressing. Miraglia, who had never eaten Japanese food before, seemed fearful at the prospect, particularly after spotting a pile of shoes outside a tatami room. "*Nescio quid malum hic olfacio,*" Miraglia said to Tunberg as they sat down, wrinkling his nose ("I smell something bad here"). "*Suspicor te pisces non pedes olfacere,*" Tunberg replied, assuring Miraglia that it was fish, not feet, he could smell. Miraglia quickly ordered tempura, having ascertained that it was cooked.

In America, where the California roll is part of the national cuisine, Miraglia's insistence on the importance of maintaining the Latin roots of European culture starts to look less like old-fashioned cultural conservatism and more like a distinct form of identity politics. Of course, part of the point of belonging to the Western tradition is to believe that the Western tradition is naturally superior to any other tradition. Miraglia has a mild impatience



"At first I'm pissed because she's all 'Fur is death! Fur is death!' But then I think, Dude! She's naked!"

"What do you have in the way of gateway drinks?"

• •

with the current popularity of Eastern philosophy. "A lot of young people seek their own spirit in the Oriental world," he told me one day, wearily. "But they could find what they are looking for in our own tradition. We don't need Sanskrit writers, because we have it all. But we ignore it all."

One day in Kentucky, I asked Miraglia whether he was aware of the debates over multiculturalism in American universities. We were having lunch, along with a Latin-speaking friend of Miraglia's named David Morgan, who teaches at Furman University, in South Carolina, at a Southern-style restaurant called Ramsey's Diner. Miraglia had ordered fried green tomatoes and pinto beans, having been warned away from the macaroni and cheese—"*Non tibi placebit*"—by Morgan. ("If you don't make pasta quite right, the Italians get upset," Morgan said.) Over the bar was a sign reading, "We Don't Serve Women—You Have to Bring Your Own," which Morgan explained in Latin for Miraglia, who smiled politely at the joke. The notion, so prevalent in the American academy, that no cultural tradition should be granted natural privilege over any other seemed similarly untranslatable. "Humanism is called humanism because it is universal," Miraglia said, puzzled at the suggestion that one had already to be a humanist to see things that way.

In spite of his view that Europe is losing touch with its past, Miraglia does not blame American culture for the decline. Miraglia enjoys some expressions of American culture, such as Hollywood movies, and has a large video library in Montella that includes "The Mission" and a number of Disney movies; he disapproved of "Gladiator," however, because it contained bad Latin. ("They show an arch with the words 'Ludus Magnus Gladiatores' on it," he told me. "It should be 'Ludus Magnus Gladiatorum,' with the genitive.") And the enthusiasm for the Latin language among the participants at the conventiculum pleased Miraglia, though it was sometimes a little playful for his tastes. One evening, at a Latin-language singalong, a group of students, including a young Latin tutor from Madison, Wisconsin, named Justin Mansfield, gathered around a piano. Every day at the conference, Mansfield, who goes by the name Mad Latinist on the Internet, wore a different T-shirt bearing a Latin slogan. (Today's was "Purgamentum init, exit purgamentum": "Garbage in, garbage out.") He taught the singers a Latin version of "The Star-Spangled Banner." ("And the rockets' red glare" was rendered "*Iaculumque rubens*," which translates as the reddish, or blushing, javelin.) The next day, Miraglia said to me, "We are on holidays here—the singing and the joking. And through jokes it is possible to participate in a higher knowledge. But what we intend to do in our institute is something quite different."

In August, Miraglia held his own seminar in Montella, a more high-minded affair than the Kentucky gathering. Over five days, he and his housemates, as well as fifteen visiting Latinists from France, the United States, Israel, and all over Italy devoted themselves to subjects such as "De vita activa et contemplativa," and "De amicitia," with readings from Plato, Aristotle, and Seneca. As summer drew to an end, he was still waiting to discover whether the hotel in Castellabate, with its criminal foundations, would be demolished or turned over to him for moral reinvigoration.

When Miraglia and I were in Rome, we spent an afternoon touring some of the places where Latin was once spoken not just by enthusiasts but by everyone. We began in the Forum, and as Miraglia walked along the uneven cobblestones of the Via Sacra he recited the first two lines of Horace's satire—"*Ibam forte via sacra, sicut meus est mos, / nescio quid meditans nugarum, totus in illis*"—in which the poet's walk along the same street was interrupted by a garrulous, clinging bore. A little farther on, we approached the Colosseum, and peered in. "St. Augustine wrote of the experience of a friend of his who didn't want to come to this kind of spectacle," Miraglia said. "The friend was forced to come, and he said, 'You can force my body to come, but I will not come with my soul.' He tried not to watch by closing his eyes, but he wasn't able to close his ears, and so after a while he was involved. Even he must have cried out, '*Occide, verbera, ure!*'—'Kill, beat, burn!' " As he told the story, Miraglia

looked mournful, quite ashamed of his forebears.

We walked on, and Miraglia's spirits seemed to lift when we reached the Pantheon and entered under the Corinthian columns. "You walk in here just as a Roman did," he said. "There is no other temple in the world that is as well preserved as this one, because this one has always been used." Under the Romans, the Pantheon was dedicated to all the gods; in the seventh century A.D., it was converted to a Christian church. But it has served less elevated purposes, too. In the fifteenth century, its portico was used as a poultry market, and now tourists wander around the building, gazing through their camcorders. I suggested that the Pantheon was like an ancient language that had been kept alive through use. "We all use ancient literature for our own purposes," Miraglia said. "It becomes different things in different centuries, but it still preserves its value."

We walked over to the tomb of Raphael, inside the Pantheon, where a small knot of tourists were staring, uncomprehending, at the Latin inscription. Miraglia read it aloud, rolling Bembo's words richly off his tongue: "*Ille hic est Raphael timuit quo sospite vinci / rerum magna parens et moriente mori.*" Then he translated. "*Ille hic est Raphael.* 'Here lies the famous Raphael.' *Timuit quo sospite vinci rerum magna parens.* 'During whose life, the great begetter of things'—that means Nature—'feared lest she be overcome,' that is, by his art," he said. "*Et moriente mori.* 'And at whose death Nature herself feared lest she die with him.' "

He strung it all together. " 'Here lies the famous Raphael, during whose life the great begetter of things feared lest she be overcome, and at whose death Nature herself feared lest she die with him.' " In English, the epitaph lost its fluency and nuance, and I asked Miraglia to read it again in Latin, which he did. "It's very beautiful," he said, and it was, very beautiful indeed. ♦

From the Seattle Post-Intelligencer.

What: World music, Arts & Dance festival
When: Friday through yesterday
Where: Maymoor Park, Redmond

I guess you had to be there.