Few people, if any, had a greater impact on the Russian literary scene at the turn of the twentieth century than Valery Yakovlevich Bryusov (1873-1924). Poet, critic, editor and translator, called “one of the most solemn […] figures in the whole of Russian literature”1 and “reigning impresario of Modernism […], a cultural phenomenon of the first magnitude,”2 Bryusov was born in Moscow in a merchant family, and educated at Moscow University. His early collections of poems Tertia vigilia (1900) and Urbi et orbi (1903) as well as his literary magazine Vesy (The Scales) placed him at the head of the entire movement known as Russian Symbolism, ultimately perceived as the Silver Age of Russian poetry.

Bryusov’s fascination with Rome began in his gymnasium years and remained an inspiration throughout his prolific and multifaceted career. True, many of his poems, historical essays, and novels echo his concern for the fate of other ancient cultures and civilizations, among them the Aegean, the early Egyptian and the Babylonian. His interest in the Middle Ages resulted in his world-famous novel The Fiery Angel (Ognennyi angel), while speculations on the existence of Atlantis appeared in many other works. But the history of Rome and Roman culture and literature continued to play an important part throughout his life. His sister recalls that reading and reciting Latin poems became a family tradition, cultivated especially during summer vacations.3
In his final years (1917-24), he taught a number of courses at various universities on his favorite topics, for example, ancient literatures, the Latin language in relation to comparative linguistics, and the fall of the Roman Empire. In 1920-21, he even advertised in Proletkult his willingness to teach Latin to anyone who wished to learn the language.\textsuperscript{4} The poet’s well-preserved archives allow scholars to obtain an inside view of this passion. His notebooks, high-school compositions, and personal library catalogues bear witness to his early interests and at the same time shed light on the poems written throughout his life. Of the five thousand volumes in Bryusov’s library, 241 are listed under ancient literature and history, most of them imported from abroad. In 1898, eight of the catalogue’s thirty-one pages were devoted solely to the titles of ancient writers.

The marginal notes in his books provide valuable information. In Horace’s \textit{Selected Odes}, published in 1889 in St. Petersburg, Bryusov left many samples of his own translations. In his French edition of Horace, he made numerous notations, some of them in Latin. His analyses of euphony and alliteration reflect his great enjoyment of these poems. Next to Horace’s verse “Et statuent tumulum et tumulo solemnia mittent,” he noted the pattern of the recurrent consonants and vowels: “tttttttt, m,m,m, eeee,” and next to the line “Non patrie validas in viscera vertite viris”—a similar pattern of “vvvv tt -- rrr.”

Bryusov’s friends admired his thorough knowledge of Roman history and letters. Nikolai Gumilyov adorned the opening page of his \textit{Pearls} with the inscription: “To Valery Yakovlevich Bryusov—Caesar’s Caesar.” The poet Vyacheslav Ivanov wrote in the volume of his translations from Alcaeus and Sappho: “Candido indici / Vero Romano / docto poetae / Valerio sodalis.”\textsuperscript{5} Several years earlier, Ivanov had welcomed Bryusov’s “Wreath” (Venok) with his own poem entitled “Wreath,” dedicated to Bryusov:

Певец победный Urbi пел et Orbi:
То – пела медь трубы капитолийской ...

[The victorious singer sang to Urbi et orbi:
It was a song of the Capitoline trumpet’s brass. \textsuperscript{6}]

The \textit{admiratio Romae} tradition was essential to Bryusov’s entire artistic development. The young Bryusov quickly grasped the