

## For Kevin Lee, Professor of Classics

NOEL ROWE\*

*For see, winter is past,  
the rains are over and gone.  
(The Song of Songs)*

Had I not this morning learned that Kevin Lee was dead,

I would not have noticed that, day after day, rain  
had turned the wooden tables in this courtyard charcoal-grey,

nor remembered  
visiting the Rodin museum on another morning after rain  
to find de Balzac looking back as if he understood why,  
having caught water in its hem, his cloak  
was holding it there,

nor felt suddenly a need to stumble through  
an old Latin dictionary I haven't used in years, just to read again  
words like *virtus*, *pietas*, *simplicitas*, as if  
they had done a better deal with death, one that English cannot  
now recall.

(My Latin dictionary says they're all to do with excellence of  
character; no doubt  
a Greek dictionary would give me other terms, just as powerful,  
to say  
how good a man you were, but I never got beyond the ablative  
absolute,  
so the only word that comes to mind is *agapé*.)

\* *Noel Rowe teaches Australian Literature and Creative Writing at the  
University of Sydney.*

Had I not this morning learned that Kevin Lee was dead,  
I might not have stayed in Holme courtyard long enough to see  
that now, even in winter, the rain is over, gone, the sun  
is putting out its hand to leave on disconsolate wet wood the  
lightest print.