

CHARLES MARTIN

On a Roman Perfume Bottle

The Romans were not meek,
And often the results
Of their inventive labors,
Towers and catapults,
Went rumbling off to wreak
Havoc on their neighbors;

This tiny, cooled-down state
Of a once ardent passion
Knows nothing of those wars;
But served, in its own fashion,
The imperious dictate
Of Venus's with Mars.

A Late Correction

The legend, built up over many years,
That told of how the spells the monsters cast
Reduced the hapless children to hot tears
And left the grown-ups they became aghast
And swaddled in unmanageable fears
Originating in the nightmare past---
That legend needs revising, it appears,
Now that we see the monsters plain at last:

How this one, with its repertoire of snarls,
And that one, rearing up, are both translated
Into these oldsters from the suburbs, clad
In gay synthetic leisurewear, elated
To be here for their child's sake.

Then, "Mom, Dad,
I'd like you both to meet my good friend Charles..."

Charles Martin is an acclaimed translator of Latin poetry. His verse translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (W. W. Norton, 2003) received the 2004 Harold Morton Landon Translation Award from the Academy of American Poets. He has also published translations of the complete poems of Catullus (Johns Hopkins, 1990) and a critical introduction to Catullus's work which is part of Yale University Press's Hermes Series. A professor at Queensborough Community College (CUNY), he also teaches poetry at Syracuse University. He lives in Manhattan and Syracuse with his wife, arts journalist Johanna Keller.