

Hadrian's Death Poem: Six Variations

ANIMULA VAGULA BLANDULA
 HOSPEM COMESQUE CORPORIS
 QUAE NUNC ABIBIS IN LOCA
 PALLIDULA RIGIDA NUDULA
 NEC UT SOLES DABIS IOCOS

O my departing soul, little flatterer / who spent a lifetime in my care
 now on a sudden called somewhere / colorless, intractable, stripped bare
 your usual laughter wasted there

Tiny soul my travel companion / ever more spry as limbs grew old
 now for the first time all alone / bloodless, stiffening, cold
 where are the jokes we told?

Little soul, little vagrant / my body's host and guest
 who left me this moment / pale, austere, undressed
 no smiles where you went

Sharer of my Tivoli nest / my foreign soul, my lover
 the moment you were lost / my only comfort was laughter
 of fountains, falling water

Fellow wanderer / loyal retainer / ghost ambassador
 underworld guide / for once tongue-tied

Spirited away
 soul, where
 are you? Frosty
 Hades. Here
 no light, no day