

The Journal of the Classics Students Association

**ΠΙΘΟΣ**

PITHOS



VOLUME 15  
SPRING 2016

DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS  
SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEFS**

William Chadwick

Sarah Mabie

**READERS**

Kitty Lee Ann

Madelyn Brown

Kevin Hunter

Andrew Love

**FACULTY ADVISOR**

Professor Gillian McIntosh

**SPECIAL THANKS**

Seth Chabay

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Relative Truths in Cicero's Dream of Scipio<br><i>BY WILLIAM CHADWICK</i>  | 6.  |
| It Goes without Saying. Or Does It?: A Case for Poetry in Translating Virgil's <i>Aeneid</i><br><i>BY KERRY GRAY</i>   | 11. |
| Authority and Authorship: Who Writes Whom? An Analysis of Catullus' Poems 8, 51, and 70<br><i>BY ANNIE HUYNH</i>   | 25. |
| Ovid, Love and War: A Comparative reading of <i>Amores</i> 1.1 and the story of Daphne and Apollo in the <i>Metamorphoses</i> 1.452-567<br><i>BY SARAH MABIE</i> | 40. |
| Projections: how dare the Romans not think like us? Taboos causing problems for translators of Catullus<br><i>BY KATIE ORWIG</i>                                 | 53. |
| Skepticism among the first Greek Philosophers<br><i>BY LUCA TANTARI</i>  | 74. |
| A Mediterranean Pope: Gregory the Great and His Correspondence<br><i>BY ERICH WIEGER</i>   | 84. |

## LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

*ΠΙΘΟΣ (PITHOS): a large earthenware jar used for storage.*

Xaire, salve, and greetings reader, to the fifteenth edition of Pithos, the San Francisco State University Classics Department's student-produced academic journal.

This year's submissions covered a broad spectrum of topics and were excellent pieces of academic writing. Our authors and our readers have worked diligently in preparing their writings to present to you. It is our heartfelt hope that you enjoy and learn from them.

We would very much like to thank several people for their assistance with publishing this work, first and foremost Dr. Gillian McIntosh who as our faculty advisor has been a light in the darkness, guiding us through the publication process. We would also like to thank our authors, Kerry Gray, Annie Huynh, Katie Orwig, Luca Tantari, and Erich Wieger for their hard work this semester in generating these pieces. We also wouldn't be where we are without our readers, whose thorough editing enabled us to provide the highest level of quality, so thank you Kitty Lee Ann, Madelyn Brown, Kevin Hunter, and Andrew Love for your time and dedication. Finally, but not least, special thanks to Seth Chabay, the Classics office coordinator for his assistance with making this available to you all.

*Multas gratias tibi ago*

Sarah Mabie & William Chadwick

*Co-Editors-In-Chief*

## BIOGRAPHIES

**William Chadwick** is a double major in Classics with an emphasis in Classical Archaeology and Cell and Molecular Biology at San Francisco State. He is currently finishing his final semester of his undergraduate program before continuing on to a Masters in Biology. His fields of interest include the overlap between ancient philosophy and writing and our modern understanding of our planet and the world around us.

**Kerry Gray** is a Masters student in the Department of Classics, with a Bachelors in Classics with an emphasis in Latin and Greek. His interests include Greek and Roman historiography, cultural identity, translation and Greek lyric poetry. He has served as Media Secretary in the CSA and resident badass in the Trapp library.

**Annie Huynh** is a graduate student at San Francisco State University. She earned her BA in Classics with an emphasis in Classical Languages at San Diego State University. Her interests include gender studies and translation theory, which lead to her research in gendered authorship in Latin poetry.

**Sarah Mable** is an applicant to the Classics MA program at San Francisco State, graduating this year with her Bachelors in Classics emphasizing in classical archaeology. She was the Vice President of the CSA 2015-2016, and will be President in the coming year. She was also one of the Co-Editor-in-Chief's this year's edition of Pithos.

**Katie Orwig** has been studying the Classical Era in history since she was a child. With a background in archaeology, she has recently become interested in the philology of Latin. When she started noticing patterns on how the same passage was translated over time, she wanted to see if taboos could be figured out by the way someone translates. She loves figuring out ways to see what makes people 'tick.'

**Luca Tantari** is an international student from Italy, and an undergraduate philosophy major minoring in classics with emphasis in Latin. His interests are on metaphysical and epistemological thoughts, concepts and their evolution during ancient and modern times.

**Erich Wieger** is a native of the Bay Area. He came back to school after 21 years of Christian ministry in Turkey, where he and his wife Diane raised their children. In 2014 he finished an international relations degree at SFSU with a minor in Middle East and Islamic Studies. He is an MA history student at SFSU, working on pre-modern Mediterranean and European History with an emphasis on religion and society. Erich travels on winter and summer breaks to Iraqi Kurdistan and to southeastern Turkey to teach and advise among churches and to help in refugee work. He studies Greek and Latin in the Classics department.

## Relative Truths in Cicero's Dream of Scipio

BY WILLIAM CHADWICK

Cicero's Dream of Scipio is a tale of augury and omniscience, grand ideas and our place in it all. The story begins with Scipio Africanus regaling the reader with a tale of how his grandfather, Scipio the Elder, appears to him in a vision and lays Scipio's future out before him. His grandfather describes the arrangement of the universe, man's position relative to the powers above, Scipio's path after death, and the meaning of life on Earth itself. As the story unfolds, Scipio's grandfather leads him through explanations of the division of the universe into nine circles, or spheres, and explains their positions and purposes relative to one another. He goes on to discuss things like harmonic resonance and other ideas that ancient Romans held about the ordering of the universe, presenting them as absolute truths. While discussing these facts of the universe Scipio sees both Rome's and mankind's position in the universe and realizes just how insignificant their empires and struggles are, but Scipio the Elder tells him not to dwell on this fact for the journey that man embarks upon after death is the more important journey, and our mortal lives are simply the prologue to this greater story. The relevance of this tale to modern readers is in no way diminished by the span between when it was written and today, and can have just as much impact and importance on us as it did on the people alive back then. Over the last two millennia there have been many scientific discoveries that contradict some of the more factual elements of the story, but the underlying message is still as poignant as ever and corollaries can easily be found in scientific thought and moral positions between ancient ways of thinking and modern ideas.

In today's modern understanding of our universe, we no longer subscribe to the idea of the universe as being divided into spheres, although we do use our own methods to divvy up the skies. The Big Bang theory is our leading theory of the origins of the universe and has led us to the discovery that the universe itself is constantly expanding, with planets and stars and entire galaxies moving away from each other in a phenomenon named cosmic expansion. In Cicero's time the universe was thought to be composed of the seven heavenly bodies of our solar system, placed in order extending outwards from Earth, and then an outer sphere that held all the other stars we see in the night sky. We now know that there exist nine planets, with the later addition of Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto, but the ordering has not significantly changed. The planets all rotate the sun in ellipses and can be placed into distinct circles of influence, much like the ancient ordering. The disparities become larger when the size increases, as we also now know that our sun is one star in a thousand billion stars composing the Milky Way that are all circling one central point. As stated in the tale, the ancients knew of the Milky Way (and were the ones to name it) as seen by Scipio the Elder's description of it as the place those "released from the body" inhabit.

The line, “There were stars which we have never seen from this earth of ours, and all of them had magnitudes such as we have never supposed to exist,” shows that the ancients’ understanding of the nature of stars was also incredibly advanced, for they had been able to deduce the difference in sizes between different stars, and they knew that there was much more to the universe than was visible from our small planet. All of these discoveries were made without the use of devices like telescopes, which makes them all the more incredible and impressive, especially because they were the foundation of every astronomical discovery to follow over the next two thousand years. The Milky Way, and all spiral galaxies we have observed, are ordered in similar ways, with stars rotating around a central point of incredible mass and gravitational pull creating arms that seem to spiral around each other. While it would be difficult to order these motions into distinct circles, we can see a similarity in general shape between spirals and circles or spheres, but unfortunately this scale is the last time these similarities are shown. As we go up the macro scale to the final level, we see galaxies clustering into what we call galactic clusters that range in size from several hundred galaxies to several thousand called superclusters. These clusters of galaxies follow no uniform pattern of motion, and so the similarities with circular motion end here. Despite this however, we see the theory of circular or spherical motion in so many aspects of science, from the motion of subatomic particles in distinct electron orbitals to the motion of stars and planets in space.

It is easy for modern thinkers to dismiss the theories and thought processes of ancient scholars as simply outdated and obsolete, but only because many fail to appreciate the beauty of their work and their minds. Ancient scientists were versed in a multitude of fields from philosophy to politics to chemistry to zoology, which is something we have lost with the onset of incredibly specialized fields of study. They were trained to think logically and to follow a theory or process to its completion, and to find errors with it along the way and to alter the theory as they did so. This methodology is where our modern scientific method arose from, and has served us well for centuries. Understanding that just because our ancestors lived in a different time and had different views on the nature of the universe than we do allows us to appreciate that some of the greatest human minds were alive and working during these times. From Plato to Aristotle, to Galen and Ptolemy, some of our greatest scientific discoveries and achievements were made without the use of advanced machinery or large think tanks that we have today. The window into the beauty of their discoveries and their minds is one of the greatest gifts we can receive from reading ancient works like the *Dream of Scipio*.

As Scipio the Elder continues to guide Scipio the Younger through our universe, Scipio the Younger begins to feel a sense of existential dread. Seeing how large our universe is and how small Earth is in comparison, and then even how small Rome is relative to just our planet, and finally how small one

man is to an empire the size of Rome's, he feels utterly insignificant. His grandfather's advice to this sense of insignificance is to, "ever lift your eyes to these heavenly realms and despise the concerns of men." This incredible thought, that instead of dwelling on how little one can achieve or influence in our lives and rather look to a greater purpose, has been a core tenant of so many philosophies and religions and personal systems of belief. The idea that man himself is utterly insignificant in the larger scheme of the universe is one that fills men with dread and a sense of loss at their very deepest level, for what is the meaning of our lives if whatever we achieve can be so easily lost in the ocean of time? Cicero posits that our greatest desire and achievement should be to live a successful and good mortal life so that we may continue onto the afterlife with pride and valor. The idea of a separation between a mortal life and an immortal never-ending afterlife has been an incentive for numerous religions that tell their followers that living a good and helpful life on Earth will lead to bountiful rewards after death.

The idea of a life after death is a fascinating one, but one that we have absolutely no evidence for. As far as science is concerned, when we die our consciousness simply ceases to exist and our now empty mortal coil just decomposes. We do not fully understand the full truths of consciousness yet, as we have no idea what could cause a conglomeration of nerves and cells like a brain to form into something as complex as a human psyche, and as such this is one of the greatest topics of research in the fields of neuroscience and neuropsychology. This idea of true death has led to new ideas about how people should live their lives on Earth.

Atheists who believe that humans do not reach higher plane after death arguably have it even harder than those who believe we ascend to a greater existence, as then their actions on Earth mean even less if they don't secure them a better place in an afterlife. What motivations does one have to do good deeds on Earth if they're all wiped away after you die? This kind of existential crisis is one that many ancients must have had as well, as the message in the Dream of Scipio is still incredibly relevant today and shows that there are many innate human traits that we share with the ancients. The need for a greater purpose or some kind of direction in life is one that every human has felt, and is perhaps the greatest connection between individuals. The motivation to live a good life solely for the promise of a reward is the first "level" of cognitive thinking described in one theory of child development. This theory describes the changing motivations for children as they grow older as levels with different motivators for each, becoming more complex and less basic as a child ages. Early stages are indicated by a fear of punishment and a desire to avoid punishment deriving from their actions, which can be seen in many ancient and modern religions. The idea of a hell that you go to after death if you do bad things in life, and this being the prime motivator for an individual's personal moral compass is indicative of the more basic level of moral development. The next level is one of personal reward, and how one's actions can further the goal

of obtaining said reward. By being good in our mortal life, we can obtain rewards in heaven. The next levels include motivators derived from social norms and the desire to fit in, and then later a law and order mentality stemming from a desire to maintain these systems through one's actions. The final stages are indicated by a belief in a more intrinsic universal truth of good and evil or law and order and a desire to uphold these, or a belief in making beneficial social contracts and the upholding of these to ensure a stable environment. All of these stages can be seen mirrored in various religions, from Christianity's system of heaven and hell or reward and punishment to Buddhism's belief in achieving a higher attunement with the universe, as well as in non-religious belief systems such as Satanism with its focus on social contracts and mutually beneficial relationships and considerations, or Atheistic beliefs in an intrinsic or relativistic law and order system.

Ancient religious systems of polytheism used similar structures to those of today's Christianity, where good behavior in this life would ensure a favorable position in the afterlife. Cicero's discussion of this in the Dream of Scipio when Scipio the Elder tells the Younger that to, "cultivate justice and loyalty, which is a noble spirit... is the way to heaven and to the company of those whose life on earth is done." These ideas conflict with science's understanding of what happens after death, but the moral issues are even farther reaching. Science makes no moral judgments, simply finding and presenting facts, but the implications of some of these discoveries on social systems or individual moral compasses can be profound. If there is no afterlife to reward or punish us in for our deeds now, what motivates us to acts of altruism? Scientific observations have shown and argued that there is no other animal on Earth besides humans that participates in purely altruistic actions, which perhaps speaks to a greater truth about what our higher consciousness means in terms of individual actions. The shift away from those early stages of reward/punishment or from doing something simply to fit in with societal expectations towards actions that follow the tenants of a personally constructed moral compass becomes an imperative and a necessary change when a heaven/hell system falls away. Doing things in this life because you believe in them, whether they are considered good or evil, is the eventuality that arises when you remove those previous systems of thought.

The majority (if not the entirety) of the ancient world believed in some religious system. These systems were as different then as they are today, but they all held onto the same basic tenants of reward/punishment or systemic expectations. For the first time in human history since the inception of religion, we are seeing a shift in modern society away from belief in religions and towards a more atheistic stance on the universe. The majority still believe in some higher power, although some studies in East Asia place the numbers of non-religious individuals at more than half of the population, but the shift is irrefutable. With this change in belief systems, and the requirement of personal mental and moral

growth to compensate, the question of the future of society's moral compass as a whole can be brought into question. When an entire society believes in similar tenants, such as the ancients in Rome and Greece did, the society has similar threads to hold it together. The reconciliation of a mortal and finite life, with no afterlife to affect actions in this one, with good deeds still being the prime necessity for societal cohesion is a difficult but nonetheless crucial requirement of the human race as we move forward.

The reconciliation of ancient views on universal truths, both scientific and moral, with our own modern perspectives on the same topics is one which we as a society are still working on, and might never find an acceptable end goal to. The ancients' understanding of the ordering of the universe, with its nine spheres and consistent movements, was simplistic in its nature but not completely incorrect, and many corollaries can be seen between those views and our own today. The stance on the religious and metaphysical issues of life and the afterlife, especially related to the deeds of individuals shaping their path in each, is one that has changed with the evolution of religion and society's acceptance of it. The meeting of scientific evidence and moral obligation is one that can be hard to reconcile, but the ever-changing and constantly growing ideas between the two is still shaping our views today.

Who knows if Cicero could have foreseen this crisis of identity when he wrote the Dream of Scipio, or what his stance on this topic would have been, but his words of advice through Scipio the Elder to the Younger are still poignant and relevant when considered against the backdrop of an atheistic or finite perspective: "Excellence itself, by its own inherent charm, must draw you towards true glory... Strive earnestly, and be assured that this only this body of yours, and not your real self, is mortal." We must learn to do good for the sake of good, rather than the promise of personal physical enrichment, for the common undertaking of a life of good throughout mankind will be our only salvation as the vestments of religious tenants are cast aside in favor of acceptance of the starker truths of our meager existence. We may be mortal and fleeting, but our individual lives matter, and our personal successes and kindnesses are what will shape our stories, even if we are never remembered for them.

## It Goes without Saying. Or Does It?: A Case for Poetry in Translating Virgil's *Aeneid*

BY KERRY GRAY

### Foreword

The *Aeneid* belongs to the genre of epic, in particular that of the Greco-Roman tradition. This is in one respect because of its content, in another because the tale is conveyed in dactylic hexameter. While the former may be to modernity the most obvious means of classification, it is the latter which would have spelled epic for the audiences of antiquity. Literary merit (fantastic or otherwise) notwithstanding, epic, like the *Histories* of Herodotus, has enchanted audiences of old and new, because their place in literature is difficult to pinpoint, more so than introductory courses would have us believe. They stand at a cross-roads between orality and literacy. Still, it is widely accepted that these were show-pieces, meant for aural consumption. It is for this reason that I contend: a translation of epic should appeal to the ears.

Epic means dactylic hexameter, and it carries with it a serious tone.<sup>1</sup> Its reputation, as it were, precedes itself. So when Ovid announces to his audience that, although he had set out to write epic, his project was transformed because Cupid had stolen a foot, he is in one sense yielding to a literary principle: genre determines style. His medium was not dactylic hexameter but elegiac couplet, and his style therefore became playful, sarcastic, in short out of line with what he knew to be the serious style of epic, given all the more gravity by its conservative poetic scheme long ago made firm by Homer. But that goes without saying. Does it not?

From the invocation of the muse, to the anthropomorphic portrayal of gods endowed with all of humanity's flaws except mortality, to the questioning of what constitutes manliness in a legendary age gone by, Virgil's *Aeneid* shares many characteristics with the *Illiad* and *Odyssey* of Homer. None of these are unintentional, least of all Aeneas' Trojan descent and his injection into the Trojan cycle. Such parallels were not lost on the Romans. Why, therefore, should they be lost on us? Dactylic hexameter not only evokes but signifies martial content. It is to epic what denotation is to the word. If a world based on martial virtue is the signified, then epic and dactylic hexameter must necessarily exist as sign and signifier. That claim, I believe, is not so

---

<sup>1</sup> Juvenal composed his *Satires* in dactylic hexameter. This, though, was a deliberate inversion of norms, done for different purposes.

difficult to advance. Still the skeptics will retort: English is not suited to that meter; moreover, it takes far too many English words to convey the highly inflected languages of Ancient Greek and Latin. Justifiably so. What follows is a choice based on the assumption that a poetic translation of poetry is in the first place desired, and that the epic tradition is not well enough accounted for unless one hears it from the lips of a poet. Consequently, an alternative poetic scheme must be sought in order to remedy the difficulty of conveying the tradition that dactylic hexameter evokes when received aurally. After that initial choice is made, I will explain my reasons for it and other choices. The goal is to provide for the English hearer the opportunity to *experience* a poetics that is structured, dynamic in pace, composed to be read aloud, and able to evoke what words (especially words read) alone cannot, the epic tradition.

The structure of this paper is as follows: Part I examines the different types of resources available to the translator of Virgil (including theory, commentaries, and translations), illustrating my rationale in opting for a sense-based translation that is also “foreignizing” and poetic; Part II is my own translation of *Aeneid* I.1-33 set beside the original; and Part III is a commentary which explains how and why I made some of the choices I did.

## **Part I**

*My* Virgil is on the one hand my interpretation of Virgil’s own words, but on the other it is the sum of the Virgilian tradition I have received from all those who have come before me. That tradition consists of Homer, who came before him, Dante, who came after, and all others, who have touched upon individual or various points of concentric and intersecting circles of the epic tradition made strong by Homer and varied by others throughout time and space. The tradition is the sum of the resources one has in translating a given author. Here I will have recourse to theory in order to force myself to question the role of the translator and his translation, various applications of theory in order to reveal consciously my own preferences, as well as commentaries and translations in order to aid my own translation.

### A Brief Introduction to Translation Studies

There is a long-standing quarrel within translation studies: which translation is more worthy of the name, that which adheres to the original’s word choice or that which adheres to its sense? Indeed the dispute can be traced as far back as Cicero, who, in his *De Optimo Genere*

*Oratorum*, explained his translation of speeches by Aeschines and Demosthenes by saying “nor in those [speeches] did I deem it necessary to render word for word, rather I preserved [their] style intact and the force of [their] words.”<sup>2</sup> Allegiance to either camp presents subsequent problems. For example, the translator who clings to the original’s word choice will inevitably find that he cannot always produce a fitting term, let alone an equivalent, whereas he who clings to sense runs the risk of wandering too far off the path of the original. Idealists, though, (e.g. Dryden) would have us tread some utopian middle ground. Still, for all their claims to mastery, the world has yet to happen upon that happy medium which they so adamantly advance. This is a question of what constitutes “faithfulness”, and theorists vary in the issues they most closely associate with this fundamental criterion. What is most significant to point out here is that because definitions of faithfulness are applied differently by all, ‘the’ (better put ‘a’) “proper” translation of any given text is different to everyone.

John Dryden (1631-1700) was both poet and translator. He is also one of our early sources for theory of translation. He classified all translations into three basic types: metaphrase, paraphrase, and imitation. Metaphrase he defined as the translator “turning” the original word-by-word and line-by-line. Paraphrase he aligned with sense-for-sense translation. As for imitation, Dryden held clear disdain, saying, “where the translator (if now he has not lost that name) *assumes* the liberty, not only to vary from the words and sense but to *forsake* them both as he sees occasion...”<sup>3</sup> Nor is there any love lost between Dryden and literal translations, which he calls “servile”.<sup>4</sup> Explicit in his definition of the ideal translator (who is implicitly himself), Dryden writes, “No man is capable of translating poetry, who, besides a genius to that art, is not a master of both his author’s language and his own...”<sup>5</sup> Yet that is not all. The translator must also be able to understand the original’s “turn” of both thought and expression. Dryden, though, was not alone in such a prescription of the ideal translator. To the list can be added Dolet (1509-46), and Chapman (1559-1634), who predate the theory he laid down in his 1680 edition of Ovid’s *Epistles*, as well as Pope (1688-1744), who came after.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> (3.7) In quibus non verbum pro verbo necesse habui reddere, sed genus omne verborum vimque servavi.

<sup>3</sup> Emphasis mine. p. 17 Chapter 2 “John Dryden On Translation” from *Theories of Translation: An Anthology from Dryden to Derrida*

<sup>4</sup> p. 18 see note 3.

<sup>5</sup> p. 20 see note 3.

<sup>6</sup> p. 59-67 Chapter 2 “History of Translation Theory” from *Translation Studies*

By the time Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) had begun to pioneer a new form of semiotic analysis known as deconstruction in the 1960s, several periods, and with them trends, in translation had come and gone. Evident in Derrida's *Monolingualism of the Other Or the Prosthesis of Origin* is a great shift in emphasis from the source text, translator, and translation, to that of language as both an agent and an object in the life of humanity, vis-à-vis Dryden *et al.* Whereas Dryden held the conviction that the right man could master language, Derrida would see that the relationship between man and language operated the other way around. On the contrary, language mastered man. As an illustration of that notion, he lays out the following antinomy, "we only ever speak one language; we never speak only one language."<sup>7</sup> The paradox serves to show that every language is derivative. The ultimate origin shared by each language is the concept, what Plato would have associated with the form.

Words, idiom, matters of grammar and syntax- these exist to both the advantage and disadvantage of man. They are advantageous in so far as they help convey concepts by means of a system that operates in a specific way for each language. Such a system facilitates the ability to understand and the ability to be understood, provided the parties engaged in a transaction of concepts share, so to speak, in a community established in the same or a comparable currency. When, however, two parties are dependent on distinct systems, no abundance of words, idiom, grammar, or syntax can reconcile the impossibility of exchange. In this way, man is beholden to language, not the other way around. Bringing this to bear on the practice of translation, one sees that in the first place it is not possible to master language, and that to have come at all close to "mastering" a single language is to have excluded every other system from the ability to understand oneself and to have excluded oneself from the ability to understand every other system. Is there anything constructive in all this deconstruction? If there is, it is this: not to have considered whether or not there exists the possibility of replicating across the boundary of distinct languages a "perfect" translation is to have failed an audience before it has had the chance to receive. It is a miscarriage of translation, which is detrimental not just to art, but to the societies and cultures, which act as the gatekeepers of that art.

Lawrence Venuti takes Derrida's analysis a step further by examining the ethics of translation. His contribution to translation studies is the distinction he draws between "domestic"

---

<sup>7</sup> p. 7 Chapter 2 Derrida, J. (1998) *Monolingualism of the Other; or, The Prosthesis of Origin* (transl. P. Mensah)

and “foreignizing” translations. Venuti, unlike many theorists before him, argues that translators should expose the fact that their work is of a derivative nature. By being “visible” translators can do away with the cultural hegemony associated with translation. A domestic translation is one which strives to become as fluent as possible for the target audience. This risks the implication that the source culture does not merit existence in the world of the target culture. In this way, the “invisible” translator has in effect, or worse purposely, purged the source culture from the literary record. Venuti is keen to point out that the damage issues forth in both directions. The target audience perpetuates its existence in isolation, while the source culture is either made to conform or else go extinct. The first place many of us encounter an ancient author is in translation. Still, I believe that the job of the translator also requires that he provide an audience with a translation that urges readers to return to the original, in the first place so that the student can see and interpret for himself the author’s words, but also so that the original does not fall out of use.

In conclusion, translation studies revolve around one fundamental question. Should a translator pull the audience toward the original or push it toward his own position in time and space? That relationship of push and pull reveals itself readily when commentators and translators are faced with making decisions in their own productions.

### Commentaries

There are several types of commentaries, but they all exist as works of reference to guide students and scholars toward a reading of a text. Each type reveals what it is most concerned with, and each advances an interpretation by directing (or daring) readers to compare its interpretation with another’s. The commentary is an important tool for the translator, provided he knows what he wants out of it. Most commentaries serve as an aid in at least the more difficult to translate grammar. The three I cite are no exceptions: Page, Williams, and Knapp. I often find that the introduction, however, is perhaps the most informative part, because the commentator can be explicit and emphatic as to where he stands in his judgment of author and text.

The first edition of T. E. Page’s commentary was published in 1894 and has since enjoyed over a dozen reprints. It begins with a biographical note, providing the reader with knowledge of Virgil’s place in both Rome and in the Greco-Roman literary tradition. Next

revealed are synopses of each book, followed by the commentator's personal judgment of the author and his work. Page remarks, "Although, however, as an epic poem the Aeneid is wanting in vitality and human interest, the praise of nineteen centuries is sufficient evidence of its striking merits."<sup>8</sup> Page is a Virgilian, but he acknowledges the debts owed to Homer. Virgil is derivative. So, too, is a translation of Virgil. This is an important consideration for the translator, because regardless of how appreciated a work is, there will always be critics ready to point to the artist's predecessors, citing the successor's inspiration as some sort of proof of inferiority when it is what it is, inspiration.

Charles Knapp's 1901 commentary contains an extensive introduction to Virgil. After giving literary and historical context for Virgil, he goes on to explain his observations of Virgil's peculiar use of diction and grammar, as well as commentary on his prosody and treatment of the gods and their relationships with men. Exhibiting characteristically human emotions, Juno plays the part of Aeneas' divine antagonist, which suggests at least initially that Virgil does not necessarily side with the gods in all matters. Knapp, however, reminds us that Virgil's work plays a profound role in Augustus' program of religious revival, which stated that Rome's gods had seen to and would continue to see to Roman imperial hegemony.<sup>9</sup> By this and phrases such as *fato profugus* (I. 2) and *insignem pietate virum* (I. 10), the translator is reminded to convey to the reader that Virgil, despite questioning Juno's motives, paints his hero Aeneas as a man with a divinely appointed mission, a man who is renowned for his religious devotion.

R. D. Williams introduces his commentary (1972) with a nod to Page, but goes on to disagree with the Victorian reading with which Page had treated Aeneid IV. This serves the translator as yet another reminder of what it is to translate. Translating is not simply a formula. It is a practice guided by and derivative of the tradition to which it belongs. It is also an opportunity to join that tradition by making it possible for others to join as well. Williams' text, though not a translation, has a similar responsibility. Book I's introductory note on lines 1 through 33 reads:

Virgil's statement of the theme of the poem is followed by the invocation to the Muse and by the mention of Carthage, Juno's beloved city. In her fear for Carthage and her

---

<sup>8</sup> p. xix

<sup>9</sup> p. 106. 306. The Gods in the Aeneid

hatred of the Trojans she has for long years kept the Trojans away from their promised home in Latium. So great a task it was to found the Roman race.<sup>10</sup>

Virgil's frequent use of enjambment (e.g. I. 2, 11, 14, 19, etc.) makes clear what the focal points of the Aeneid are. Nevertheless, because the task of translating is often spent on working out grammar and not content, the commentator's note does well to impress upon the translator that his translation should reflect the emphases of the original.

In conclusion, commentaries play an essential role in the work of the translator. Notes ranging from elementary points of grammar, to style, and to the work's place in literature all increase the possibility of conveying in a language other than the source a breadth of nuance, which might be lost in a literal rendering of the original.

### Translations

Except for the rare occasion of being the first for a particular target language, all translations are indebted to a predecessor. Whether or not a translator admires, approves of, or emulates one of his forebears is revealed in his own (re)production. Virgil's Aeneid has been read for over two millennia, and there is no shortage of comparanda. I will, however, confine my examination to three: Dryden's 1697, Hart and Osborn's 1882, and Lombardo's 2005. Dryden's may be the most influential English translation. It is metrical. Hart and Osborn employ an interlinear approach. Lombardo's is also poetic, but is not bound by meter.

John Dryden's Aeneid is clearly meant to be read aloud, which, is of singular importance in the case of epic. Dactylic hexameter requires brevity, which must have been Dryden's first challenge. Dryden succeeds by using iambic pentameter.<sup>11</sup> Yet, English translated from Latin does not lend to brevity, which results in Dryden's translation becoming sixteen lines longer. Except for a single triplet (5-7) he uses rhyming couplets.<sup>12</sup> Dryden, as is noted above, preferred a translation which places sense above word choice. For Virgil's *Tantaene animis caelestibus irae?*(I. 11)) Dryden supplies *Can heavenly minds such high resentment show,/ Or exercise their spite in human woe?*(17,18) A bit is added, but it in effect captures the sense of the entire stanza, in which Virgil places human emotion beside divine emotion.

<sup>10</sup> p. 155-6. Williams, R.D. *The Aeneid of Virgil: Books 1-6* (1972)

<sup>11</sup> *Arms, and the man I sing, who forced by Fate,/ And haughty Juno's unrelenting hate* (1/2)

<sup>12</sup> id.

Hart and Osborn's translation is interlinear, and was assembled for purposes of instruction in Latin grammar and syntax. "In offering to the public a new version of VIRGIL, the translators unhesitatingly acknowledge their desire to promote the system of classical instruction formerly practiced in the principal schools of England." (3) The translation is literal, and Virgil's original syntax is rearranged for ease of reading. Despite the fact that I do not enjoy reading it, I mention it for two reasons: it is helpful for the student, and its goal is to have people return to the original, a goal which not all translations have.

Lombardo's translation (like most) is indicative of its time of production. Like Dryden his verses are brief, e.g. *Arms I sing- and a man*. Unlike Dryden he uses neither meter nor rhyme. His verse is a clear reflection of his goal to make use of modern idiom. Compare Dryden's *Can heavenly minds such high resentment show,/ Or exercise their spite in human woe?*(17,18) to Lombardo's *Can there be/ Anger so great in the hearts of gods on high?*(15,16) It is far less poetic than Dryden's yet conveys the same meaning.

In conclusion, different translations provide the translator with the opportunity to observe what he thinks is or is not effective. My goal is to create a translation that appeals to the ears. Therefore I follow Dryden in using rhyme, but I put no metrical restraint on my verses.

## Part II

Arma virumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris  
 Italiam, fato profugus, Laviniaque venit  
 litora, multum ille et terris iactatus et alto  
 vi superum saevae memorem Iunonis ob iram;  
 multa quoque et bello passus, dum conderet urbem, 5  
 inferretque deos Latio, genus unde Latinum,  
 Albanique patres, atque altae moenia Romae.

Musa, mihi causas memora, quo numine laeso,  
 quidve dolens, regina deum tot volvere casus  
 insignem pietate virum, tot adire labores 10  
 impulerit. Tantaene animis caelestibus irae?

Urbs antiqua fuit, Tyrii tenuere coloni,  
 Karthago, Italiam contra Tiberinaque longe  
 ostia, dives opum studiisque asperrima belli;  
 quam Iuno fertur terris magis omnibus unam 15  
 posthabita coluisse Samo; hic illius arma,  
 hic currus fuit; hoc regnum dea gentibus esse,  
 si qua fata sinant, iam tum tenditque fovetque.  
 Progeniem sed enim Troiano a sanguine duci  
 audierat, Tyrias olim quae verteret arces; 20  
 hinc populum late regem belloque superbum  
 venturum excidio Libyae: sic volvere Parcas.  
 Id metuens, veterisque memor Saturnia belli,  
 prima quod ad Troiam pro caris gesserat Argis—  
 necdum etiam causae irarum saevique dolores 25  
 exciderant animo: manet alta mente repostum  
 iudicium Paridis spretaeque iniuria formae,  
 et genus invisum, et rapti Ganymedis honores.  
 His accensa super, iactatos aequore toto  
 Troas, reliquias Danaum atque immitis Achilli, 30  
 arcebat longe Latio, multosque per annos  
 errabant, acti fatis, maria omnia circum.  
 Tanta molis erat Romanam condere gentem!

Arms and a real man my song'll celebrate,  
 A pioneer from Troy spurred to Italy by Fate.  
 He found Lavinian shores expell'd, propell'd by Juno's Rage,  
 Tried by man and goddess, both, in the war that he would wage.  
 At last he founded Rome, bringing with him Priam's gods,  
 From which empire-to-be they would defy all odds.

O Muse, pray tell us now! What motives forced'er hand?  
 Upon what godly reason could such human sorrow stand?  
 How did it happen that the queen of heaven should requite  
 The paragon of piety with all too human spite?

An ancient town there was, that Tyrian colony.  
 Karthago was her name, the foe beyond the sea.  
 Rich and fierce in war they were, disciples of the game.  
 Hers, though, they were not, Juno loved 'em all the same.  
 Right here she held her arsenal, here, too, her cart of doom-  
 Cherished most of all, as though from her own womb.  
 Had the Fates themselves rewound, she'd've wound back here.  
 Rumor, though, she heard that let slip her fear:  
 A would-be-rival, far, from Trojan blood there sprang,  
 And on that Fated day the wolf would show his fangs.  
 So destined, as they were, a people strong and proud,  
 In war the bane of Libya, for Fate had thus allowed.  
 The dread of Saturn's girl recall'd a memory:  
 The pains for Greece she took at Troy for gods and men to see.  
 Nor did she fail give rise to the seeds of'er pain:  
 Grief and Rage let loose. Durst such the goddess deign!  
 For in her breast a wound did fester by the day.  
 Paris gave a verdict rash, for which his clan would pay.  
 Alas! her beauty scorned. Alas! her name defamed.  
 Woe to that rebel race! had Juno got'er way.  
 The house of Priam sacked, Achilles' Rage no more,  
 "O sons of Troy" she bade "quit now paternal shores!"  
 Year after year, upon the sea, until appointed time,  
 So great a feat they undertook to found the Roman line!

### Part III

Abbreviations:

*D.* = John Dryden (1697)

*H. O.* = Levi Hart and V. R. Osborn (1882)

*L* = Stanley Lombardo (2005)

*G* = Kerry Gray (2015)

\*Original Latin in bold type

1. **Arma virumque cano** Virgil announces immediately the two subjects of his song: warfare and the hero. **cano** takes as its direct object the subject of the song, hence *my song'll celebrate*, cf. *D. Arms, and the man I sing* and *L. Arms I sing- and a man* in which *D.* and *L.* preserve Latin idiom at expense of English. **Troiae qui primus ab oris** *who was the first man from the shores of Troy*, hence *a pioneer from Troy*. This relative clause serves to give Rome's hero Aeneas a place in the Trojan cycle.
2. **Italiam... Laviniaque** accusative of motion towards without preposition. **venit** would in a literal translation be taken with both accusatives, including **litora** of 3., but I opt to disjoin the zeugma in exchange for two sentences which effect the same meaning:  
**Italiam fato profugus** *spurred to Italy by Fate* cf. *L. exiled by Fate, to Italy/ And the Lavinian coast*.
3. **multum** neuter adjective as adverb, take with **iactatus**, which is from the frequentative, hence *expell'd, propell'd*.
4. **memorem Iunonis ob iram** *on account of Juno's lasting rage*. Virgil cites Juno's rage as a cause of the wars to come. Achilles' rage perpetuated the Trojan War in Homer's Iliad, here the goddesses' rage serves to juxtapose characteristics acceptable for humans but not gods. I chose to preserve the phrase's emphatic place at the end of a line, marking the end of the first complete sentence.
5. **multa quoque et bello passus** *he also suffered many things in war*. **quoque** links the previous idea, Juno's rage, with **multa... bello passus**, hence *Tried by man and goddess, both, in the war that he would wage*.
6. **genus unde Latinum** *whence the Latin people*

7. **Albanique patres, atque altae moenia Romae** *and the Alban fathers, and Rome's high walls*. **genus unde Latinum/ Albanique patres, atque altae moenia Romae** (6/7) The Latin people, the Alban fathers, and Rome's high walls are all nominatives with no expressed verb, presumably, though, *esse*. From here, I looked at the relationship of the previous verbs. The imperfect subjunctives **conderet** (5) **inferret** (6) both express potential with **dum** *until*. As everyone knows, Rome fulfilled that potential. Next, because it is understood that the nouns serve a metonymical function for the Roman Empire, I opted for *From which empire-to-be* and supplied a verb for the unexpressed *esse* that would convey the end of this grouping of lines (1-7) which serve as a very succinct synopsis for the entire epic. cf. *D. the long glories of majestic Rome* and *L. everlasting Rome* which have the same effect.
8. **Musa, mihi causas memora** *Muse, recall for me the causes*. The invocation of the muse is Homeric allusion. It serves to make quite clear that Virgil has joined the epic tradition. **quo numine laeso** *how was her godhead offended*, ablative absolutes are circumstantial, and therefore may be translated as complete sentences.
9. **quidve dolens, regina deum** *or why the queen of the gods, suffering*. **tot volvere casus** *to run into so many calamities*
10. **insignem pietate virum** *a man famous for piety*. **tot adire labores** *to undergo so many toils*
11. **impulerit**. *she forced*. Virgil at last ends the sentence, which starts at 8. In full: *Muse, recall for me the causes, how her godhead was offended, or why the queen of the gods suffering, forced a man famous for piety to run into so many calamities, to undergo so many toils*. There are two indirect questions following the imperative **memora**. I opted to make the questions direct, which allowed greater freedom to move words and concepts around for the purpose of rhyme.
12. **Urbs antiqua fuit** *There was an ancient city* takes a prominent position as the first word of the next grouping of lines. English prefers adjectives come before the nouns they modify, hence *An ancient town there was*.
13. **Karthago** *Carthage, the goal here was to preserve the enjambment*, **Italiam contra Tiberinaque longe** *facing Italy from afar and facing also the entrances (ostia 14) of the Tiber*. Having played with a lot of different word choices because of my decision to use

rhyiming couplets, I opted for *foe beyond the sea* to convey the two opposing spatial relationships.

14. **dives opum studiisque asperrima belli** *rich of resources and most fierce in war's pursuits*
15. **quam Iuno fertur terris magis omnibus unam** *which single city Juno is said to have cared for (coluisse 16) more than all lands*
16. **hic illius arma** *here were her arms*
17. **hic currus** *here was her chariot*
18. **si qua fata sinant** *if any fates allowed* cf. G. *Had the Fates themselves rewound* serves as an opportunity to convey the same meaning while making my own original.
19. **Progeniem Troiano a sanguine duci** *that offspring was drawn from Trojan blood.* cf. G. *from Trojan blood there sprang.*
20. **audierat, Tyrias olim quae verteret arces** *She had heard someday he would overturn the Tyrian citadels*
21. **hinc populum late** *that from here a people extensively, late* as adverb, from *latus (fero)*. **regem belloque superbum** *and that a ruler proud in war.*
22. **venturum** *would come.* The enjambment here is quite emphatic and suspenseful, fulfilling **audierat** (20), cf. G. *A would-be-rival.* **excidio Libyae** *to the ruin of Libya.* **sic volvere Parcas** *that the Fates had spun it thus*
23. **Id metuens, veterisque memor Saturnia belli** *fearing that and mindful of the ancient war, Saturn's daughter.* Here, Juno's "lasting dread" is given prominence, and it is her dread, not necessarily herself, which serves as the opponent of Aeneas and his mission. For that reason I make her dread and not her the subject, leaving her as a subjective genitive and making the memory the object.
24. **prima quod ad Troiam pro caris gesserat Argis** *which, she first had waged at Troy on behalf of her beloved Argives*
25. **necdum etiam** *not yet, even now.* **causae irarum saevique dolores** *the causes of her wrath and untamed grief.*
26. **exciderant animo** *had fallen from her mind.* **manet alta mente** *there remained high in her mind*

27. **judicium Paridis** to be taken with **repostum** (26) the fixed judgment of Paris.  
**spretaque inuria formae** *as well as the offence to her spurned looks*
28. **genus invisum** *hated race*, in the context of the Aeneid, the Roman people are a hated in so far as they receive the favor of the gods, with Juno as their greatest opponent. In a contrary to fact past condition I express that idea *Woe to that rebel race! had Juno got her way* (30)
29. **His accensa super** *infuriated over these things* **aequore toto**
30. **Troas** to be taken with **iactatos** (29) **reliquias Danaum atque immitis Achilli** *Trojans having been hurled and what remained of the Greeks and of fierce Achilles*
31. **arcebat longe Latio** *She staved off far from Latium* **multosque per annos** *and for many years*. Juno has throughout these lines been an agent, which I intensified by giving her a quote, which is also an imperative.
32. **errabant acti fatis maria omnia circum** *they wandered, driven by the fates, around all the seas* cf. *G. Year after year, upon the sea, until appointed time*. The effect needed by the Latin is to show that the divine is in control, hence *until appointed time*.
33. **Tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem!** *Of such proportion was the burden to found the Roman people!*

### Conclusion

Translation is no easy task. Effective and responsible translation is all the more difficult, especially when dealing with poetry. Epic is meant to be read aloud and experienced by an audience. The tradition, the martial implications, the power of the concepts and not only the words are left unattended to in translations which do not account for that fact. But that goes without saying. Does it not?

### Bibliography

- Bassnett, S. (1980) "History of Translation Theory," in *Translation Studies* (3<sup>rd</sup>. edition) London: Routledge Press, pp. 45-78
- Derrida, J. (1998) *Monolingualism of the Other; or, The Prosthesis of Origin* (transl. P. Mensah) Stanford: Stanford University Press
- Dryden, John (transl.). *The Aeneid of Virgil* (1975). The Franklin Library, Franklin Center, Pennsylvania.
- Dryden, J. (1992) "On Translation," in *Theories of Translation: an Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida* (ed. Schulte, R. and J. Biguenet) Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 17-31
- Knapp, Charles. *The Aeneid of Virgil: Books I-VI, Selections VII-XII* (1951). revised ed. Scott Foresman and Company, Glenview, Illinois.
- Lombardo, Stanley (transl.). *The Aeneid of Virgil* (2005). Hackett Publishing Company Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana
- Page, T.E. *The Aeneid of Virgil: Books I-VI* (1962) revised ed. MacMillan and Co. Ltd., St. Martin's Press, New York.
- Williams, R.D. *The Aeneid of Virgil: Books 1-6* (1972). MacMillan and Co. Ltd., St. Martin's Press, New York.

**Authority and Authorship: Who Writes Whom?**  
**An Analysis of Catullus' Poems 8, 51, and 70**

BY ANNIE HUYNH

**1. Introduction.**

Gaius Valerius Catullus was a Roman poet who lived during the late Republic. Born in Verona into a wealthy family, his surviving collection of poetry mentions many famous Romans, including Cicero, Caesar, and Pompey. He spent most of adult years in Rome amongst other poets of that time, perhaps being influenced by them and influencing them as well. Catullus' style of poetry varies from poem to poem; some talk about his love life, others talk about his disdain for his contemporaries. He also utilizes many different meters as shown by the poems that I have chosen to analyze, which are poems 8, 51, and 70. These poems, among many others, are about Catullus' lover, Lesbia.

There is a long history of translation regarding Catullus. In fact, some of his poems were not translated until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century due to translators deeming them too inappropriate. Some translators have taken great liberties in their translations, sometimes using a foreign language to translate words or phrases they did not feel were appropriate. In this paper, I will argue that Catullus is not the sole "author" of his poems on Lesbia. In fact, authority is given to several other sources including: Catullus himself as the poet, Catullus as the persona, the translators, and Lesbia, who is given a voice through Catullus. I will begin by analyzing the different "authors," which are Catullus the poet, Catullus the persona, and the translators as author for each of the poems, and follow that by explaining how each of them have a role in "writing" the poem. Finally, I will show how Lesbia has a voice in these poems and how she is an author as well.

In order to fully understand the extent of what I am trying to prove, I must first define certain terms. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, authority is "the power to give orders or make decisions: the power or right to direct or control someone or something" and authorship is "the identity of the person who has written something." However, both words are from the Latin *auctor*, meaning an originator or founder. Quite literally, *auctor* is an author. *Auctoritas* in Latin means power or command. These words have a deep-rooted idea that the one who writes is the one who holds power. Then we go to the idea of voice, which Merriam-Webster defines as "wish, choice, or opinion openly or formally expressed; right of expression; also: influential

power.” For the sake of this paper, I will be using the word ‘voice’ to mean the person who is speaking. In other words, the person who has a ‘voice’ is a person who has power.

## **2. The Relationship Dilemma.**

After defining these terms, the next natural step would be to identify the voices, or authors, in these poems. The first author seems to be the most obvious one, and that is Catullus the poet. This is the Catullus that I will refer to as Catullus ipse in this paper. He is the man behind the page, the man with the pen, the actual author himself. The next author is Catullus the persona. He is the character that Catullus ipse writes about, usually in the third person, in the poems. This split between the parts of Catullus is what Ellen Greene calls the “divided consciousness of the Catullan ego” (77). The next author is the translator. The translator is given much authority on how he should wish to write, or rather, rewrite, the poem. There have been many translators of Catullus, and each becomes an author of the poems. The last author that I will be looking at is Lesbia, who is the topic of these three poems I have chosen. Lesbia is never given a direct voice. If she ever has anything to say, Catullus ipse usually writes her words in an indirect statement and never a direct quote. However, her authority comes from an emotional aspect. She has control over what Catullus ipse writes and how even Catullus the persona responds because he is so ensnared by her that his writing is affected by his feelings. There is a very complicated relationship between these authors, which begs the question of how they are all related.

This is what I call “the relationship dilemma.” The first relationship chain is when the translator is the author of Catullus ipse, who is then the author of Catullus the persona, who is then the author of Lesbia. This is to say that the translator has authority over Catullus ipse because the translator is the one who chooses how he will convey the text in the target language, which is the language he translates the poem into. He could also choose to translate visibly, meaning he would change the style into something fitting for the target language he is translating into or perhaps put his own writing flair onto the translation, or invisibly, meaning he would render the style of meaning as closely to the original as possible, essentially staying unknown and removed from his translation. How the translator chooses to translate affects how the audience reads the poem. The translator can only translate what was written by Catullus ipse, but Catullus ipse is the author of Catullus the persona since he is the one that actually pens the poem. Then Catullus the persona is the author of Lesbia because of the nature of the relationship between the character Catullus and the character Lesbia. Lesbia only interacts with Catullus the

persona because she is a character in the poem. The audience only knows about her through the eyes of Catullus.

The next relationship chain is completely reversed from the first one. In this case, Lesbia is the one who has authority over Catullus the persona, who then seems to have authority over Catullus ipse, who then has authority over the translator. Lesbia, in this case, holds authority because she has emotional authority. Catullus, both ipse and the persona, is responding to his feelings about her. She has him on, what we consider, an emotional roller coaster. Because Catullus the persona is the character with which she is interacting, he controls what Catullus ipse has to write about. And lastly, the translator can only translate what has actually been written by Catullus. Even though the words might belong to the translator, the content will still belong to the original author, so in that way, Catullus ipse dictates what the translator can actually translate.

The last relationship that I will look at is the much simpler relationship between Lesbia and the Catullus ipse. His writing reflects his desire or his anger for her. She controls what he has to say because she has him so extremely wrapped up in his own feelings for her, his poetry in conveyed in that same way. Catullus ipse questions himself and talks to himself (or perhaps to Catullus the persona) and tells himself to stop feeling a certain way. Poem 8 reads quickly because the pace is in match with Catullus ipse's inner emotional turmoil. To continue this analysis in context, I want to begin by looking at poem 8 of Catullus.

### **3. Carmen 8:**

In poem 8, Catullus has the realization that Lesbia no longer wants to be with him. This begins his progression through stages of grief over being betrayed by a lover. There is no possible reconciliation with Lesbia, and once he realizes that, he begins to question himself. He belittles himself, but then he suddenly turns the table and begins cursing Lesbia while trying to find strength in himself.

#### **The Latin Text.**

The following Latin text of Catullus' poem 8 quoted below is edited by E.T. Merrill (1893), accessed from the Perseus website.

Miser Catulle, desinas ineptire,  
 et quod vides perisse perditum ducas.  
 fulsere quondam candidi tibi soles,

cum ventitabas quo puella ducebat  
 amata nobis quantum amabitur nulla.  
 ibi illa multa tum iocosa fiebant,  
 quae tu volebas nec puella nolebat.  
 fulsere vere candidi tibi soles.  
 nunc iam illa non vult: tu quoque, impotens, noli,  
 nec quae fugit sectare, nec miser vive,  
 sed obstinata mente perfer, obdura.  
 vale, puella! iam Catullus obdurat,  
 nec te requiret nec rogabit invitam:  
 at tu dolebis, cum rogaberis nulla.  
 scelestas, vae te! quae tibi manet vita!  
 quis nunc te adibit? cui videberis bella?  
 quem nunc amabis? cuius esse diceris?  
 quem basiabis? cui labella mordebis?  
 at tu, Catulle, destinatus obdura.

### **A Literal Translation.**

In order to analyze any translation, one must understand the passage at which one is looking. By translating it myself, I was able to get a better feel for what the passage was about. I also had the power to keep the translations in the most literal form, unlike other translators who change the literal translations for various reasons. In this sense, my role as translator is affecting my analysis of the poem. I am using my authority to rewrite the poem as I see fit. Below is my translation:

Pitiful Catullus, cease to be foolish,  
 And consider it to be destroyed what you see to perish.  
 Once, bright days shown for you,  
 When you frequently come where the maiden leads you  
 Loved to an extent as no one will ever be loved by you.  
 There many things were happening with her fun-filled,  
 Which you were wishing nor was the maiden unwilling,  
 Truly the bright days shown for you.

Now that girl no longer wants you; and do not desire, weak man,  
 Nor chase the girl who flees, nor live in misery,  
 But with a stubborn mind, endure, hold firm.  
 Farewell, maiden. Now Catullus holds firm,  
 Neither will he ask about you nor will he beg for you unwilling.  
 But you will grieve, when you will not be asked for.  
 Woe to you, wicked girl! What life remains to you?  
 Who will you go to now? To whom will you seem beautiful?  
 Now whom will you love? Of whom will you say you are?  
 Whom will you kiss? Whose lips will you nibble?  
 But you, Catullus, be firm and stubborn.

### **A Professional Translation.**

This translation was done by A.S. Kline in 2001. I chose a rather recent translation because, like I stated in my translation, many translators took great liberties with translating Catullus. I find that the more recent translations are more candid (probably on account of a more progressive society) or truthful. I wanted a translation that was both sufficient in content as well as grammar and vocabulary.

Sad Catullus, stop playing the fool,  
 and let what you know leads you to ruin, end.  
 Once, bright days shone for you,  
 when you came often drawn to the girl  
 loved as no other will be loved by you.  
 Then there were many pleasures with her,  
 that you wished, and the girl not unwilling,  
 truly the bright days shone for you.  
 And now she no longer wants you: and you  
 weak man, be unwilling to chase what flees,  
 or live in misery: be strong-minded, stand firm.  
 Goodbye girl, now Catullus is firm,  
 he doesn't search for you, won't ask unwillingly.  
 But you'll grieve, when nobody asks.

Woe to you, wicked girl, what life's left for you?  
 Who'll submit to you now? Who'll see your beauty?  
 Who now will you love? Whose will they say you'll be?  
 Who will you kiss? Whose lips will you bite?  
 But you, Catullus, be resolved to be firm.

### **Catullus Ipse as Author.**

In this poem, Catullus begins with a dialogue with himself. Then there is a change when instead of addressing himself in the second person (when he talks to himself), he then addresses "Catullus" in the third person (Greene 79). This shows that there are two different Catulluses at play in the same poem. I chose to look at the first Catullus, the one directly speaking to himself (or even perhaps he is speaking to Catullus the persona), as Catullus ipse. It is as if he is a friend offering support; he is sympathetic and tells himself to remain strong. The ipse is an author to the persona, in the sense that he is responding to the actions of the persona. In conclusion to this, I actually believe that Catullus ipse is speaking to Catullus the persona. If he were speaking to himself, then it would be written in a different structure. This will be shown later in relation to poem 51.

### **Catullus the Persona as Author.**

Almost immediately after Catullus ipse tells himself to be strong, he begins using the third person. Immediately after that, he begins cursing at Lesbia, calling her a "wicked girl" (Kline). This is the beginning of the confusion in Catullus' personality. There are two parts of him and he refers to them differently. This shift from second to third person happens because Catullus ipse is incapable of insulting Lesbia; only Catullus the persona can do so. The persona carries a much different tone than the ipse. One is angry, the other is pitiful, respectively. It is as if Catullus ipse pities the persona so much for being so angry over this one woman and questioning everything about her life. The persona still cares, which is why he bothered to ask the questions. He truly needs to know what is going on with Lesbia. The persona acts as an author here because he says the things that the ipse cannot say. The ipse is a man with a pen, rather far removed from the characters in the poem. The characters in the poem however, Lesbia and Catullus the persona, act with each other. The persona responds to the heartbreak in anger. He writes the narrative and tells the story. The ipse is a distant friend who offers condolences and support. So now the next step is to think about why Catullus would have both voices in the

poem. By doing so, the poem has added depth because there is yet another layer which the audience has to peel through in order to get to the content. “The multivoiced *ego* in Catullus’ poems does not merely dramatize ambivalence in Catullus’ feelings toward his mistress but illustrates in a more general way the fragmenting effect of *amor* in the self” (Greene 77). Catullus ipse needs to stand back and watch while Catullus the persona needs to participate in the emotions.

### **Translator as Author.**

There are two translators in this paper: the professional translator A.S. Kline, and me. It is not often that I find a professional translation that is more straightforward and literal than mine. The reason I produce my own translation is for the very fact that I can deconstruct the poem and piece it back together as literally as possible. However, after reading Kline’s translation for this poem, it almost seems as if I have taken more liberties than he. However, regardless of how we translated, both of us are now authors of this poem. By taking different approaches to translating the text, we have created two different reading experiences for the same (English-speaking) audience. I will say, though, Kline’s translation is more “readable” than mine. Lawrence Venuti agrees that, “a fluent strategy enables the translation to be a transparent representation of the eternal human verities expressed by the foreign author” (72). That is to say, Kline makes it so the reading is more fluent in the target language. This is in part because his is a published translation with the intention that it should be read by a large audience. My translation is meant for only one purpose, and that is to render the grammar and vocabulary most accurately.

### **4. Carmen 51:**

Poem 51 is interesting because it is very similar to Sappho’s poem 31. In this poem, Catullus acts also as a translator (he translated from Greek to Latin). What we do know is that this poem is a mirror of Sappho’s. The meter is the same as is most of the content. The last (and fourth) stanza in Catullus 51 differs greatly from the fourth stanza of Sappho 31. Here is the fourth stanza of Sappho 31 taken from D’Angour’s article:

A cold sweat grips me, trembling  
 Seizes my whole frame, clammier than meadowgrass,  
 Am I, and little short of dying  
 I seem to myself.

Unfortunately, we are unsure whether Catullus had access to the entire poem and chose to only translate the first four stanzas, or if he had only the same fragments that we had and made do with it.

### **The Latin Text.**

This text was also taken from the Perseus website, edited by E.T. Merrill (1893).

Ille mi par esse deo videtur,  
 ille, si fas est, superare divos,  
 qui sedens adversus identidem te  
     spectat et audit  
 dulce ridentem, misero quod omnis  
 eripit sensus mihi: nam simul te,  
 Lesbia, aspexi, nihil est super mi  
     <deest v.1>/ <vocis in ore>  
 lingua sed torpet, tenuis sub artus  
 flamma demanat, sonitu suo  
 tintinant aures gemina, teguntur  
     lumina nocte.  
 otium, Catulle, tibi molestum est:  
 otio exsultas nimiumque gestis:  
 otium et reges prius et beatas  
     perdidit urbes.

### **A Literal Translation.**

He seems to me to be equal to a god.  
 That man, if it is allowed by divine law, to be superior to the gods,  
 Who sitting opposite you endlessly  
     Sees and hears you  
 Laughing sweetly, which from my misery  
 robs all senses: for at the same time,  
 Lesbia, I beheld you, nothing remains of me  
     <of my voice in my mouth>  
 But my tongue becomes numb, under my slender limb

Flames run down, with its very sound  
 My ears ring, both covered  
 With the light of night.  
 Leisure, Catullus, is tiresome to you;  
 You exult in leisure and you desire too much;  
 Leisure destroyed both former kings  
 And fortunate cities.

### **A Professional Translation.**

This following translation was translated by A.S. Kline (2001).  
 He seems equal to the gods, to me, that man,  
 if it's possible more than just divine,  
 who sitting over against you, endlessly  
 sees you and hears you  
 laughing so sweetly, that with fierce pain I'm robbed  
 of all of my senses: because that moment  
 I see you, Lesbia, nothing's left of me.....

<\*\*\*\*\*>

but my tongue is numbed, and through my poor limbs  
 fires are raging, the echo of your voice  
 rings in both ears, my eyes are covered  
 with the dark of night.  
 'Your idleness is loathsome Catullus:  
 you delight in idleness, and too much posturing:  
 idleness ruined the kings and the cities  
 of former times.'

### **Catullus Ipse as Author.**

Similar to poem 8, Catullus ipse is again the speaker. However, in poem 8, I was still unsure of whether Catullus ipse was speaking to himself or if he was speaking to Catullus the persona, which I then settled on the persona. I chose that because in poem 51, Catullus ipse uses the first person and while poem 8 used the vocative to address Catullus the persona and the imperative to command him. Having "I" as the subject makes everything a lot more personal.

The “I” can refer to any of Catullus’ own speakers, meaning that Catullus himself is not always the person we know him to be (Greene 81). We can only associate the Catullus “I” in this specific poem. In this case, it is as if Catullus ipse was really there in front of Lesbia and her other man watching and scrutinizing them.

### **Catullus the Persona as Author.**

Suddenly he addresses Catullus the persona again when he uses the vocative. He is then removing himself from the situation and looking at the situation before him. Instead of being the man that stands in front of Lesbia and her new man, he is the man that is watching the man stand in front of Lesbia and her new man. These degrees of separation are important to note because it helps visualize the situation of the that Catullus (both ipse and the persona) is in. After he has removed himself, he is now talking to Catullus the persona, telling him that “idleness” will be his ruin.

### **Translator as Author.**

Kline made some interesting translation choices here. There is a manuscript difference in line 8. It is missing, but I had a text that had inserted a line for line 8, so I had a translation for it while Kline completely bypassed it. Kline also changed the tense of *aspexi*, changing it into the present tense. The other notable change is how metaphorically Kline translated the second line of the poem. He grabbed onto the essence and the content of the poem. According to Venuti, this is an acceptable way of translation because the goal of translation is to make the “cultural other” recognizable in the target context (68). Kline intentionally “cleans up” the translation so the audience can understand the content of the poem better.

### **5. Carmen 70:**

Though poem 70 is a rather short poem, it is filled with important content. At this point, Catullus has failed in his love-affair and he has completely given up hope.

#### **The Latin Text.**

The Latin text was edited by E.T. Merrill in 1893, which can be found on the Perseus website.

Nulli se dicit mulier mea nubere malle  
 quam mihi, non si se Iuppiter ipse petat.  
 dicit: sed mulier cupido quod dicit amanti,  
 in vento et rapida scribere oportet aqua.

### **A Literal Translation.**

My woman says that she prefers to marry no one  
 Rather than me, not if Jupiter himself seeks her.  
 She says (this); but what a woman says to her eager lover,  
 It is right to write it in the wind and rapid water.

### **A Professional Translation.**

This translation was done by A.S. Kline in 2001.  
 My girl says she'd rather marry no one but me,  
 not if Jupiter himself were to ask her.  
 She says: but what a girl says to her eager lover,  
 should be written on the wind and in running water.

### **Catullus Ipse and Person as Translator.**

It is difficult to pinpoint whether it is one or the other Catullus speaking in this poem. Is it possible that they can be one person? This poem shows how little faith has in Lesbia. He has given up his hope for her because she broke his trust. This is also a classic case of “he said-she said” rhetoric. He wants to hold her accountable for her words, yet he cannot because her words are seemingly meaningless. So who is the actual author of this poem? I believe it is Catullus ipse because he seems to, yet again, be stepping away from the scene. It sounds as if he is telling a story or perhaps a warning to some young fool who has fallen in love.

### **Translator as Author.**

It is interesting to note that Kline uses the word “girl” to translate *mulier* in order to keep what he calls Lesbia consistent through his translations. However, that does affect how the poem is read overall. If one were to only read this poem, then the fact that Kline uses “girl” consistently would not be known. However, because I have looked through many of Kline’s translations, I understand that he is doing this on purpose and that this is how he wishes to convey his style in the translations. In Wilson’s article, he says that Venuti “calls for translators to be more visible,” and Kline is doing just that (Intro).

### **6. Lesbia’s Voice?**

Why should we even consider the voice of Lesbia when she does not actually speak? Well, according to Halett in “Women’s Voices and Catullus’ Poetry,” a “substantial number of lines... which Catullus assigns women speakers warrants our close attention as one good reason

to listen more carefully for female voices” (421). Perhaps the most important thing to do before analyzing Lesbia, then, is to consider who she is and why we should listen to her. It is believed that she is the Roman matron Clodia, with whom Catullus was reported to have had a real life affair. Lesbia becomes the representation of Clodia in the poems, but she is not a direct reflection of her. Lesbia takes on a character of her own and is given life through the words of Catullus. The actual name, Lesbia, is perhaps taken from the island, Lesbos, where Sappho dwelled. This is incredibly important because Catullus pulls inspiration from Sappho a lot, especially in poem 51 where his poem is almost completely a translation of her Poem 31. He even kept the meter in elegiac couplets. Even with this knowledge, Catullus still created a rounded female character that resembles a person and not an object.

### **The Representation of Lesbia.**

In poem 8, Kline uses the word “girl” to translate *puella* in reference to Lesbia. Understandably, that is the most basic translation of that word. However, it is interesting that Catullus should use that word, considering that *puella* is a term used for unmarried, untainted females. We know that with Lesbia, this is not the case. She was having a love-affair with Catullus. I used the word “maiden” to translate it because I wanted a word that fully represented the connotations of *puella*. It allowed me to think that Catullus used this term for Lesbia in the early poems because he was still ensnared by her and she could do no wrong. In his eyes, she was still pure.

This leads to my next point, where in poem 51, Catullus uses her name. At this point, Catullus has gotten very familiar with her and she is no longer a pure and intangible thing anymore. In this poem, he is forced to let go because he sees her with another man. Also, since this poem was modeled after Sappho’s poem 31, and Lesbia is derived from the island from which Sappho comes (Lesbos), perhaps Catullus purposely used her name to show the parallel and connection between the two poems. Catullus wanted the audience to know from where he was getting this poem.

Lastly, in poem 70, Lesbia is referred to as *mulier*, which could mean “woman” or “wife.” This is the poem where he finally comes to term with the fact that she is no longer his. This term to describe her at this point fits perfectly. She is someone else’s wife and he cannot have her. She is not young and innocent like a *puella* nor is she his equal (indicated by the use of her name, Lesbia). She is above in ranks in society and married to someone who surely has a

name for himself. She is a matron and a woman, meaning she is not someone with whom he should be fooling around.

### **Lesbia as Author.**

Lesbia “writes” these poems in more ways than one. She is an indirect author. That is to say, she has no true power and she is not the one actively writing. Because of this, she has no “real” voice. Her only voice is represented through Catullus who acts like a filter for what she has to say. And even then, we are unsure if we could trust Catullus to be honest in transcribing her words.

That leads to my next point, which is that Catullus seemingly has the authority over her because he has control over her voice. Yet, Catullus has given up his authority to her when he gave in to his feelings. His emotions, which are dictated by Lesbia, now dictate the way he is going to write poetry. There are dynamic power shifts between Catullus and Lesbia. At times, one may think that Catullus seems to be in complete control of his faculties, but then he makes mention of Lesbia, and his entire poem ends up being about her or what she said or how she made him feel. Everything that concerns Lesbia’s voice and authority is always indirect. For example, in poem 70, all that Lesbia has to say is written in indirect statements.

Throughout all of that, Catullus manages to still personify Lesbia. Even with no real voice, Lesbia is still given her own intellectual and emotional attributes. Essentially, Catullus “breathes life” into her through his poetry. This is indicative of just how wrapped up he is in thoughts of her.

### **7. Conclusion.**

Throughout this paper, I have showed that there are many authors that contribute to how the audience eventually reads Catullus’ poems. Authority is given to many sources, not solely to Catullus. I acknowledge that I have only brushed lightly on a dense topic. The relationship between the authors of these poems are convoluted and intertwined. I also acknowledge that there are many other authors besides the ones I mentioned. There are so many possible factors that contribute to how Catullus wrote his poems, including but not limited to possible patrons, readers, scholars, and theorists. Throughout this analysis, I myself have been inserting my voice and showing my opinion. It is my paper, and therefore I have the authority to do with it what I will (within reason to the scholarly community). My topic has led to a mountain of questions and there are many future possibilities to address them. For now, I will go over the ones that are a

direct result of my paper. Knowing of so many authors, this question begs to be asked, what other authors directly influenced Catullus? I looked at one: Sappho. He took her poem and translated it. There must be other authors, poets, and scholars from which Catullus drew inspiration. Furthermore, with all these authors in play, who are we able to trust? Which Catullus do we believe if we can believe either of them? Can we trust Lesbia, or have Lesbia's words been contorted by Catullus already? Can we trust translators, and if so, which one? Why can we trust them? These are just a few of the questions that have spawned in my mind. All these authors are valid in their own way. They give many different views of the poems and that, in turn, leads to opening up one's frame of mind.

## Bibliography

- Adams, James Noel. The Latin Sexual Vocabulary. London: G. Duckworth, 1982. Web. 20 Oct. 2015.
- Copley, Frank O. "Emotional Conflict and Its Significance in the Lesbia-Poems of Catullus." *The American Journal of Philology* 70.1 (1949): 22-40. *JSTOR*. Web. 21 Oct. 2015.
- D'Angour, Armand. "Conquering Love: Sappho 31 and Catullus 51." *The Classical Quarterly* 56.1 (2006): 297-300. *JSTOR*. Web. 09 Dec. 2015.
- Greene, Ellen. "The Catullan Ego: Fragmentation and the Erotic Self." *The American Journal of Philology* 116.1 (1995): 77-93. *JSTOR*. Web. 20 Oct. 2015.
- Hallett, Judith P. "Martial's Sulpicia and Propertius' Cynthia." *The Classical World* 86.2 (1992): 99-123. *JSTOR*. Web. 20 Oct. 2015.
- . "Women's Voices and Catullus' Poetry." *The Classical World* 95.4 (2002): 421-24. *JSTOR*. Web. 20 Oct. 2015.
- Kutzo, David. "Lesbia in Catullus 35." *Classical Philology* 101.4 (2006): 405-410. *JSTOR*. Web. 20 Oct. 2015.
- Rankin, H.D. "Catullus and the 'Beauty' of Lesbia (Poems 43, 86 and 51)." *Latomus* 35.1 (1976): 3-11. *JSTOR*. Web. 20 Oct. 2015.
- Venuti, L. "Translation as Cultural Politics: Regimes of Domestication in English," (2009) in *Critical Readings in Translation Studies* (ed. M. Baker) Routledge, pp. 65-80.
- Wilson, A. *Translators on Translating: The Invisible Art* (2009). Vancouver: CCSP Press, Intro.
- Zarker, John W. "Lesbia's Charms." *The Classical Journal* 68.2 (1937): 107-115. *JSTOR*. Web. 20 Oct. 2015.

**Ovid, Love and War: A Comparative reading of *Amores* 1.1 and the story of Daphne and Apollo in the *Metamorphoses* 1.452-567**

BY SARAH MABIE

As one of the most famous Roman love poets, Ovid is most known for his *Amores*, *Ars Amatoria*, and the *Metamorphoses*. I focus on the first poem of the *Amores* 1.1 and the story of Daphne and Apollo in his *Metamorphoses* (1.452-567), drawing out interesting thematic parallels between the two, namely the presence of Cupid, the concepts of Love and War, loss of authority, and the consequent suffering. I first provide context of the two poems, followed by an examination of the parallels in theme, narrative, and poetic style. I present the complexities of these parallels, after which I theorize on the impacts that Ovid, Apollo, and Cupid have, followed by the effects and implications of the similarities between the objects of desire, and a close reading of Ovid's method of narrative production. These examinations provide a richer complexity of the two poems.

The opening poem of the *Amores* and the story of Daphne and Apollo serve different purposes in Ovid's works. In *Amores* 1.1, the programmatic introductory poem for the three books of love poems, Ovid states his original intentions in writing poetry. Otis argues that he had no intention of ever writing epic poetry, but he simply was following the customary tradition of elegiac poets excusing themselves for not doing so.<sup>13</sup> He contextualizes his situation: his goal is to write epic war poetry, but he has been foiled by Cupid and forced to switch to love meter and subject matter, "*risisse Cupido/ dicitur atque unum surripuisse pedem*" (*Amores* 1.3-4) (But Cupid (they say) with a snicker lopped off one foot from each alternate line.)<sup>14</sup> Ovid uses enjambment for the main verb, *dicitur*, for emphasis, playfully placing the line about stealing a

---

<sup>13</sup> Otis, 1996, 14

<sup>14</sup> This and all subsequent translations of the *Amores* are by Peter Green, 1982, *Ovid The Erotic Poems*, London: Penguin Books

foot of meter in the pentameter line of the elegiac couplet. As it is the first poem of many, it does end completely within itself; it ends as the *introductory* poem, but it also contributes to the whole of book one and extends through the *Amores*' entirety. By contrast, the tale of Daphne and Apollo is a fixed story, standing alone, but it is also set within many others in the *Metamorphoses*.<sup>15</sup> It has its own take, but it does relate to the other stories inasmuch as the parallels of Ovid's narration in role change. It is a love story written in epic meter beginning with the origins of Apollo's love for Daphne. The *Amores* is written in elegiac couplets, yet has much to do with war and epic. Inversely, the *Metamorphoses* is written in epic meter, yet is a love story. This draws out the complexities between them as poems and makes me question why Ovid chooses the meters he did.

These two poems share interesting thematic parallels. Cupid plays a role of inciting chaos for Ovid, as a poetic persona, and for Apollo. In both poems, cheeky Cupid shoots love arrows in order to retaliate once he feels challenged. Ovid laments: "*Questus eram, pharetra cum protinus ille soluta/ legit in exitum spicula facta meum*" (*Amores* 1.21-22) (When I'd got so far, presto, he opened his quiver, selected an arrow to lay me low). The emphatic enjambment of *legit* gives notice to the similarities in form and content in the line above. In line 22 of *Amores* 1.1, the use of chiasmus in *exitium spicula facta meum*, with the emphatic placement of *meum*, draws attention to the piercing form and content of *spicula facta*. The placement of *meum* brings notice to the *exitium*, destruction, being his, the emphatic *my* destruction. This arrangement also places *spicula facta* piercing the middle of his destruction, with the words placed in-between *exitium* and *meum*. Cupid is portrayed as a vengeful narcissist that is easily riled up.

---

<sup>15</sup> Otis draws immediate parallels in the stories of Daphne and Io, "the liaison is wholly Ovid's intention. (Otis, 1996, 350)

The interactions between Cupid and Ovid, and Cupid and Apollo, in the *Amores* and *Metamorphoses* respectively, both resemble the flyting between soldiers in Greek Epic. Inspired by the poetic trope common in Homeric epic of soldiers flyting before they battle to prove their authority, they quarrel back and forth in order to see who is more powerful and whose realm of influence spreads farther. In the *Amores*, Ovid asks Cupid, “*Quis tibi, saeve puer, dedit hoc in carmina iuris?/ Pieridum vates, non tua turba sumus.* (Amores 1.5-6) (Nasty young brat, who made you Inspector of Metres? We poets come under the Muses, we’re not in your mob.) To Ovid’s argument, Cupid, “*lunavitque genu sinuosum fortiter arcum,/ “quod” que “canas, vates, accipe” dixit “opus!”*” (Amores 1.23-24). (Then bent the springy bow in a crescent against his knee, and let fly. “Hey, Poet!” he called, “you want a theme? Take that!”) Cupid’s retorts begin with anaphora, with *lunavitque* and *quod que*, drawing parallels between his actions and words. In the *Metamorphoses*, Apollo begins the flyting with proving that he is more skilled with his bow:

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>“quid” que “tibi, lascive puer, cum fortibus<br/>armis?”</p> <p>dixerat: “ista decent umeros gestamina nostros,<br/>qui dare certa ferae, dare vulnera possumus hosti<br/>(<i>Metamorphoses</i> 1.456-458)<sup>16</sup></p> | <p>What are you doing with grown-up weapons,<br/>you mischievous boy? That bow would be<br/>better carried by me. When I fire my shafts<br/>at my foes or beasts, they’re unfailingly<br/>wounded.</p> |
|--|--|

In line 457, *ista gestamina* and *umeros nostros*, match in form and content, in that the weapon is placed on his shoulders. In the *Metamorphoses* 1.456, we see the use of *lascive puer*, which is an intertextual reference to *saeve puer* in Amores 1.1.5. In response,

filius huic Veneris “figat tuus omnia, Phoebе,      The son of Venus replied: ‘Your arrows,

---

<sup>16</sup> This and all subsequent translations of the *Metamorphoses* are by David Raeburn 2004, *Ovid Metamorphoses*, London: Penguin Books

te meus arcus” ait: “quantoque animalia cedunt Apollo, can shoot whatever you choose, but I’ll  
 cuncta deo, tanto minor est tua gloria nostra.” shoot you. As mortal creatures must yield to a  
 god, your glory will likewise prove to be  
 (*Metamorphoses* 1.463-465) subject to mine.”

The parallel structure seen in *quantoque* and *tanto* contributes to just how greater Cupid’s glory is, and as it says, he will prove so by shooting Apollo.

The themes of Love and War are prevalent in multiple aspects of the two poems. The *Amores* is written in elegiac couplets, love meter. The beginning of *Amores* 1.1 presents Ovid’s intention to write epic poetry about war and glory, all while being written in elegiac couplets, “*Arma gravi numero violentaque bella parabam/ edere, materia conveniente modis./ par erat inferior versus...*” (*Amores* 1.1-3) (Arms, warfare, violence – I was winding up to produce a regular epic, with verse-form to match). Contrary to the *Amores*, the *Metamorphoses* was written in dactylic hexameter, epic meter. “*Primus amor Phoebi Daphne Peneia, quem non/ fors ignara dedit, sed saeva Cupidinis ira,*” (*Metamorphoses* 1.452-453) (Apollo’s first love was Daphne, the child of the river Peneus. Blind chance was not to be blamed but Cupid’s spiteful resentment.) These lines are the first of the story of Daphne and Apollo and they explicitly state that the subject matter is about their love being incited by evil Cupid. The placement of *ira*, as the last word of the line, puts extra emphasis on the rage of Cupid. In line 453, *dedit* exhibits both enjambment and zeugma, in that it is governed by the *non* and it is the finite verb form for both sides of the comma. The story of Apollo and Daphne is a love story with suggestions of war, yet written in epic meter, keeping with the rest of the book. *Amores* 1.1 opens with very epic and war-evoking language, as I quoted above, and it ends using similar language, “*Me miserum! Certas habuit puer ille sagittas./ ferrea cum vestris bella valet modis!*” (*Amores* 1.25,

28). (His shafts – worse luck for me – never miss their target...Goodbye to martial epic, and epic metre too!). Line 25 has chiasmus word arrangement, drawing attention to *ille puer* being caught in the middle of Cupid's arrows, *certas sagittas*. Line 28 has synchysis word arrangement; this interlocking word order signaling the relation between the *ferrea bella* and *vestris modis*. The whole poem continues to utilize certain war-like words, creating something of a violent scene.

The Daphne and Apollo story begins with Apollo's military conquest over the vile, giant serpent, "*qui modo pestifero tot iugera ventre prementem/ stravimus innumeris tumidum Pythona sagittis.*" (*Metamorphoses* 1.459-460) (My numberless arrows have just destroyed the venomous Python, which filled whole acres of mountainside with its belly's infection.) Line 460 begins with enjambment, *stravimus*, and is followed by a chiasmic line where parallels can be drawn between form and content: the Python is engulfed with countless arrows, just as in the sentence, *innumeris* and *sagittis* are on either side of the swollen *Pythona*. This is a clear allusion to *Amores* 1.1.25, as I quoted above, where the *ille puer* is also surrounded with arrows, *habuit sagittas*. Ovid, as a poetic persona in the *Amores*, provokes Cupid, arguing that he has his own empire and should not intrude on his intention to write war poetry: "*sunt tibi magna, puer, nimiumque potential regna;/ cur opus adfectas, ambitiose, novum?/ an, quod ubique, tuum est?*" (*Amores* 1.12-14) (Look, boy, you've got your own empire, and a sight too much influence as it is. Don't get ambitious, quit playing for more.) Apollo and Cupid debate who is more skilled at, and deserving of the bow, and Apollo concludes with, "*tu face nescio quos esto contentus amores/ inritare tua, nec laudes adsere nostras!*" (*Metamorphoses* 1.461-462) (You be content with your torch and use it to kindle some passion or other; but don't usurp any honours belonging to me!)

In response to the flyting in the *Amores*, and as I noted, Cupid steals a foot of Ovid's meter, forcing him to write in elegiac couplets, and then shoots him with a love arrow to provide him with the appropriate subject matter. "...*certas habuit puer ille sagittas/ uror, et in vacuo pectore regnat Amor.*" (*Amores* 1.25-26) (His shafts never miss their target: I'm on fire now, Love owns the freehold of my heart.) In the *Metamorphoses*, Cupid shoots, graphically described arrows, one dull and one sharp, at Daphne and Apollo, to force Apollo to chase after her, knowing that he would be unsuccessful:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| eque sagittifera prompsit duo tela pharetra       | Once there he drew from his quiver two        |
| diversorum operum: fugat hoc, facit illud amorem, | arrows of contrary purpose: one is for        |
| quod facit, auratum est et cuspidem fulget acuta  | rousing passion, the other is meant to        |
| quod fugat, obstusum est et habet sub harundine   | repel it, the former is made of gold, and its |
| plumbum   | head has a sharp, bright point, while the     |
| hoc deus in nympha Peneide fixit, at illo         | latter is blunt and weighted with lead one    |
| laesit Apollineas traiecit per ossa medullas;     | side of the reed shaft. That was the arrow    |
| ( <i>Metamorphoses</i> 1.468- 473)                | which Cupid implanted in Daphne's             |
|   | bosom; the other was aimed at Apollo and      |
|   | some to the core of his being                 |

The anaphora in lines 470 and 471 highlight the juxtaposition of the sharp and dull arrows fixed in Daphne and Apollo. It invites the reader to prepare for the gravity of the upcoming situation now that they have been shot with such different arrows.

After being shot, both Ovid and Apollo lose control to Cupid's arrow. It causes them to completely lose sight of anything from before the effects of Cupid and are left with the raging desire he caused. Ovid is made impotent in the choice of subject matter for his poetry, now that, "*regnat Amor*" (*Amores* 1.1.26) (Cupid reigns), abandoning his pursuit of epic war poetry and

accepting his fate of the subject of love while being subjected to love.<sup>17</sup> Apollo in the *Metamorphoses*, loses his free will to the compulsion of love. He chases after an unwilling Daphne in an uncontrollable frenzy, attempting first to persuade her with speech, which Curran argues Ovid's tendency to describe his seducers' speeches in a somewhat comic way, does not lessen their intention of pursuing to achieve what they want by whatever means necessary.<sup>18</sup>

Ovid uses the metaphor of a Gallic hound chasing a bunny:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>ut canis in vacuo leporem cum Gallicus arvo<br/>vidit, et hic praedam pedibus petit, ille salute;<br/>alter inhaesuro similis iam iamque tenere<br/>sperat et extent stringit vestigis rostro,<br/>(<i>Metamorphoses</i> 533-536)</p> | <p>Imagine a greyhound, imagine a hare it has<br/>sighted in open country: one running to<br/>capture his prey, the other for safety. The hound<br/>is about to close in with his jaws; he believes<br/>he is almost there; he is grazing the back of her<br/>heels with the tip of his muzzle.</p> |
|--|---|

This metaphor makes vivid the fear of Daphne.<sup>19</sup> The alliteration in line 534 of the *praedam pedibus petit*, evokes the onomatopoeic effect of running paws pounding the ground. It continues with “*alter in ambiguo est, an sit comprehensus, et ipsis/ morsibus eripitur tangentiaque ora relinquit.*” (*Metamorphoses* 537-538) (the hare isn't sure if the hunter has caught her, but leaps into freedom clear of the menacing jaws and the mouth which keeps brushing against her). It illuminates how unknowing Daphne was made a victim. Greene presents Ovid as uninterested in the responses of the female victims, instead he offers only the *amator's* perspective.<sup>20</sup> She is running with abhorrence and fear from Apollo.

Cupid's arrows cause consequent suffering for both Ovid and Apollo. Ovid suffers to renounce war epic and write three books on love poetry as a result of Cupid stealing a foot of his

<sup>17</sup> As Cahoon notes, his *amator* accepts without question that his conscience and reason will be taken captive along with himself. (Cahoon, 295)

<sup>18</sup> Curran, 1978, 220

<sup>19</sup> The rivalry for love is violent... is suggestive of rape as seduction. (Cahoon, 1998, 297)

<sup>20</sup> Greene, 1998, 94

meter to prove his authority: “*Sex mihi surgat opus numeris, in quinque residat:/ cingere litorea flaventia tempora myrto,/ Musa, per undenos emodulanda pedes!*” (*Amores* 1.27, 29-30) (So let my verse rise with six stresses, drop to five on the downbeat...Come on the, my Muse, bind your blonde hair with a wreath of sea myrtle, and lead me off in the six-five groove!) The last word of the last line is *pedes*, emphatically placed, but also a pun on feet: without a foot, one literally limps, and elegy is a limping meter. Ovid has completely succumbed to Cupid and accepted writing love meter. As Keith observes, Ovid characterizes elegy’s subject matter with an epithet that evokes the stylistic attributes of elegiac poetry: *nec mihi materia est numeris levioribus apta,/ aut puer aut longas compta puella comas* (*Am.* 1.1.19-20).<sup>21</sup> Apollo suffers, in that he vainly pursues the unrequited love of Daphne, which results in losing her to the form of a laurel tree: “*Hanc quoque Phoebus amat positaque in stipites dextra/ sentit adhunc trepidare novo sub cortice pectus*” (*Metamorphoses* 5.553-554) (Tree though she was, Apollo still loved her. Caressing the trunk with his hand, he could feel the heart still fluttering under the new bark.) In a sense, Ovid sustains worse consequences: while Apollo may endure heartbreak, but Ovid is forced to change his meter and subject matter.

The consequences of the love arrows extend beyond the loss of authority. Ovid and Apollo are not the only ones affected but also seemingly innocent bystanders.<sup>22</sup> In the remainder of the *Amores*, Ovid pursues his love for Corinna, an unattainable married woman. In the *Metamorphoses*, Daphne is brutally affected, being chased against her will by Apollo, and in order to escape, begs her father to help her, turning her into a tree. Her life was perpetually changed because of the dispute between the egos of Apollo and Cupid. As Cahoon describes in

---

<sup>21</sup> Keith, 1994, 28

<sup>22</sup> Greene argues that this representation of the victims and extended to depiction of rape, is a commentary on Roman life. (Greene, 1998, 95)

The Bed as Battlefield, “the lover regards a woman’s grief as a sexual attraction, rather than feeling any sympathy for sorrow, he feels only desire”.<sup>23</sup>

I have illustrated the parallels in both poems and now move into the complexities, in which we see that a surface reading can be misleading until you look deeper. Curiously, Apollo is present in both poems. In the *Amores*, he plays the role of a peaceful figure in the argument Ovid presents to Cupid, using a metaphor of a topsy turvy world in which the gods go against their counterparts: “*crinibus insignem quis acuta cuspide Phoebum/ instruat, Aoniam Marte movente lyram?*” (*Amores* 1.11-12) (Imagine longhaired Apollo on parade with a pikestaff while the War-God fumbled tunes from Apollo’s lyre!) Apollo, standing for peace, music and culture, is set against Mars, representing war, arms, and epic. In the *Metamorphoses* however, Apollo begins by bragging about his conquest over the giant serpent, as noted above (1.459-460). He is presented as a war like figure, who is skillful and powerful with his bow. This echoes back to the theme of Love and War, and the discontinuity in meters and subject matter. He is a war like figure in epic meter juxtaposed with the subject matter of falling in love. It is questionable as to why Ovid chose to use such different traits of Apollo in the two poems. I theorize that he simply needed the effect and influence of a god to enhance his work, and in doing so, he utilized the culture side of Apollo to set him against Mars in the *Amores*, just as in the *Metamorphoses*, he needed an influential god to prove Cupid’s power over. This example supports what I call the ‘convenience argument’: Ovid chose to use Apollo for two such different purposes, based on the convenience of certain character traits.

There are more complexities of parallels, providing a richer opportunity for the reader. At first glance, it seems Cupid is the main culprit of inciting the chaos; however, Ovid and Apollo

---

<sup>23</sup> Cahoon, 1998, 297

are not free from blame in either case. Ovid baits Cupid into shooting him. But, in a sense he is rewarded with desire and love and the subject matter that they provide. Perhaps Ovid wanted to ‘fall in love’ and experience that aspect of life. Or Ovid’s need for writing epic poetry was perhaps undermined by the presentation of a new opportunity. It follows the convenience argument: Ovid used the power and influence of Cupid to transfer the blame of not writing elevated epic poetry.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, Apollo, in the *Metamorphoses*, boasts about his successes in other aspects of his life, excluding love, which may also suggest a subconscious desire for that which he did not have. Or, following the convenience argument, Ovid might have wanted to write the Daphne and Apollo myth since it would be fitting for his *Metamorphoses*, due to the theme of Love and War woven throughout. This Ovidian formula -- a trope of excuse, as the transference of blame -- is seen in the persona of Ovid and Apollo as they transfer their blame to Cupid, thus relieving themselves of personal agency. The formula parallels Ovid, as the author, who assigns the blame of writing love poetry to Cupid.

At a closer reading of the flyting and contest between Cupid and the persona of Ovid and Apollo, we can grasp Ovid’s understanding of, and play with the reference he is making to Homeric epic--that of a winner and a loser resulting from a quarrel. In Ovid’s poems, the difference between victor and vanquished becomes difficult to distinguish. Ovid and Apollo are presented, upon further inspection, as both winner and loser. In adopting Homeric epic style, Ovid is pushing the boundaries of love poetry. Ovid, in as much as *Amores* 1.1 and *Metamorphoses* 1.452-567 makes love epic, is at the same time, forging his own style and tropes of love and epic all at once.

---

<sup>24</sup> As Volk states, Ovid transfers the blame from himself onto his poetic persona as well as Cupid. (Volk, 2005, 94)

As stated, the themes of Love and War dominate both the *Amores* and the *Metamorphoses*' Daphne and Apollo story. Ovid presents these concepts as opposing entities; however he also identifies them as inseparable, one depending on the existence of the other. *Amores* 1.9 is an ideal illustration of his realization of love and war in, "*Militat omnis amans*", (*Amores* 1.9.1) (Every lover is a soldier), in which he draws out the similarities between lovers and soldiers. Cupid is a figure of love and desire, yet he asserts his influence in a very militaristic manner, his bow. Both love and war incite immediate and drastic action, and both cause immense joy in victory and deep-cut pain in defeat. This renders Ovid's style of representing epic in context with love harder to distinguish. The themes of Love and War push and blend what seem to be obvious boundaries.

Ovid and Apollo suffer the repercussions of being shot and the ensuing loss of control to desire, but this again raises the question of blame: both characters react to desire according to their own volition. Cupid did not *physically* force Ovid to write love poetry, or Apollo to chase vehemently after a girl; in a sense, he only redirected their objects of desire. They were both active participants: Ovid chose to write three books of the *Amores*, and Apollo commits to pursuing Daphne. Given their participation here, we might extend this idea further regarding their relationship to the consequent suffering from these effects. I argued that it appears that Ovid suffers more than Apollo. This is true when looking solely at the immediate effects of Cupid's arrow. In the long-term effects however, Ovid seems to reap greater advantages. Ovid, as a writer, may not have initially wanted to write love poetry, but obviously it worked out to his advantage, especially considering his work is widely studied some two thousand years later. Apollo also benefited from the consequences of Cupid's disturbance. He gains his sacred tree, the laurel, forever immortalizing Daphne; he also commemorates her by the wearing a crown of

laurel leaves, and she lives on through temples, and even in much later art by sculptors like Bernini. I argue that Ovid receives a greater advantage as result because Apollo, an immortal god, was already known, studied, and remembered: Ovid created this opportunity for himself, in essence immortalizing himself through his work.<sup>25</sup>

I have argued the parallels in theme, narrative and style, unpacked the richer complexities between the two, and theorized on the effects and implications that Ovid, Apollo and Cupid have upon a closer reading. This closer reading only sparks more questions for research: why did he choose love poetry over epic? Does he use intratextual allusions simply to further his career? Does the fame that these poems reached elevate love poetry to the status of epic? What are the effects of Ovid changing his meter? Why does that matter? These questions raised from my exploration of *Amores* 1.1 and *Metamorphoses* 1.452-567, can stand as a springboard to further investigation.

---

<sup>25</sup> Volk argues that the perceived immortality of his poetic works determine an assessment of the poet's character. (Volk, 2005, 84)

## Bibliography

- Cahoon, L. "The Bed as Battlefield: Erotic Conquest and Military Metaphor in Ovid's *Amores*." *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 118 (1998) 293-307.
- Curran, L. C. "Rape and Rape Victims in the *Metamorphoses*." *Arethusa* 11 (1978) 213-41.
- Greene, Ellen. *The Erotics of Domination: Male Desire and the Mistress in Latin Love Poetry* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).
- Keith, A. M. "Corpus Eroticum: Elegiac Poetics and Elegiac *Puellae* in Ovid's *Amores*." *Classical World* 88 (1994) 27-40.
- Otis, Brooks. *Ovid as an Epic Poet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
- Volk, Katharina. "Ille Ego: (Mis)Reading Ovid's Elegiac Persona." *Antike und Abendland* 51 (2005) 83.

## **Projections: how dare the Romans not think like us?**

### **Taboos causing problems for translators of Catullus**

*A very great part of the mischiefs that vex this world arises from words.*

-Edmund Burke, British statesman (1729-1797)

BY KATIE ORWIG

#### **Introduction**

Do or do not. There is no try (Yoda). Society separates taboos into black and white labels and actions. Taboos are in the 'do not' category. The blessing of taboos is that they inform a society what it is allowed to do. There are a number of categories of taboos of which one has to abide. There are taboos that vary based on gender, age, career, or placement within the society. Their deeply intrinsic nature manifests in a number of actions that people take for which they are unaware of the underlying cause. A translator, someone who crosses the boundaries between cultures, is the one who has to take a number of layers around taboos into consideration in order to do their work. If one wants to shock their own society, to bring attention to absurd rituals whether they are daily or religious rites, or to open a society's eyes to a new way of thinking, translating from another language/culture is a practical way to go.

It's an easy out to claim the translator is only a messenger. There's a common saying: Don't shoot the messenger. But could it be that the translator is intending to cause an uproar? If that is their chosen path, then they need to know which author will cause the perfect riot. In Latin, it is common knowledge that Catullus, Martial, and Ovid are difficult to translate, not because the meanings of their words are lost but because of modern day taboos which forbid the utterance of such crude language. Even though current Western culture has inherited a number of societal traits and beliefs from the fatherland (Rome), the 2000 intervening years have caused the culture to evolve. There are similar taboos and there are drastically different taboos. Then there are taboos that have a guise of difference, but stem from the originating taboo therefore causing it to be nearly identical. All three types of comparisons are universal because of time. It doesn't matter when the taboo originated, there will be some semblance of the original in the new taboo. For example, patricide was a taboo in Ancient Rome. They did frown on murder, just like today; however, patricide was despicable. Nowadays, murder is still bad, but it's slid more to matricide

being slightly more insulting. If someone today hears about patricide, the common first question is ‘what did he do?’ On the other hand, if one hears about matricide, it’s no question that a grave injustice has occurred.

As the study of the art of translation is starting to broaden to include the complexities that go into the process of translating, it’s no wonder that in-depth thoughts are going into what causes the translator to interpret one word literally, ignore another word entirely and/or add some exotic flavor. There are many who have talked about the pressures the translator faces. Penrose gives step by step instructions in how to teach pederasty, in the classroom. Other topics such as rape and slavery come up as hard topics to teach because of our cultural boundaries.

These boundaries need to be understood in order to enjoy benefits from the cultures surrounding us physically and temporally. In this paper we will be analyzing taboos throughout time from the Ancient Romans to 21<sup>st</sup> century. Because many ideals are so ingrained in us, we don’t realize the true reason we have issues with certain topics. Taboos cause more significant word choices than have been considered in Classics. If we take the time to understand what fears, morals, and taboos are being affected from either the source text to the target text, the translator can then make logical decisions. With those logical decisions, they can become more pure and accurate in their message. Catullus is an Ancient Roman author living during the time of Julius Caesar and has been considered to be quite immoral. Through analyzing his poems 2B, 15, and 16, we will understand how taboos, not only those of the Ancient Romans, and the translator’s culture but also the cultures that existed between the two, affect the translation.

### **What are Taboos?**

Restrictions, taboos, societal expectations are so common place that people often don’t even realize when they are following those structures. We are taught at a young age to believe these rules such that they become instinctual. Unless someone is personally aware of their own thoughts, beliefs, and what is driving their actions at all times, these taboo infected beliefs come out. Sexism and racism are two modern day attitudes that are deeply engrained. Based on religious beliefs or morals, a taboo is an activity that is forbidden or sacred. Breaking a taboo is objectionable to society as a whole. Around the world, an act may be taboo in one culture and

not in another. (*Examples of Taboo*) There are many categories and types of taboos. The ones upon which we will focus later concern crude language and sexual beliefs.

### **Categories**

It will be easier to discuss the variety of taboos across the ages by comparing them in categories. For this purpose, we are focusing on language and sex primarily; however, there are categories for excrement, bodily functions, menstruation, dress, and many more.

Many people will argue that they aren't sexist or racist, when subtle word choices, or actions say otherwise. This unknown force which drives our choices is a part of what makes translating difficult. How are we going to be able to objectively translate a piece of art from another culture without interjecting our own beliefs and taboos into them? How can we ensure that the message from the original author can cross the boundaries of the original culture and those of the translator? One first needs to consider the purpose of the translated piece. Is it just for fun? Is it going to be used as a way to teach us about the ancient culture? Is it because the translator likes philosophy, crude humor, satire, or something else? Not only are these questions imperative but they are a hidden foundation that drives translators unknowingly while they strive to translate.

### **Roman Taboos**

There are a number of things that we can claim have been passed down from the Roman culture; this includes taboos. The traditions have morphed with time and ultimately look different. The underlying beliefs are generically the same, just with different justifications. One can often identify the link between the older version of the taboo and the newer version. The interesting thing about Roman taboos is how focused they are in religious justification for the taboos. Perhaps this is a thought that comes from being trained to think that religions are the primary reason for taboos in any culture; this coming from a society who has studied the history of the Christian Church and has noticed its heavy influence worldwide. There are a few taboos that had explanations for their origin, but in all honesty many don't know why they observe the taboo. An example of this is the observance of chastity with beekeepers before they could handle their hives. It was believed that if they were unchaste previous to taking care of the hives the bees which make the honey will fly away. (Buriss, CH. 3) There are more examples of how sexual purity around agriculture was deemed necessary for the good of the crops. The theme comes

down to the fact that the individual had to cleanse themselves before interacting with supplies in storerooms, beehives, crops in the fields, or religious rites for Gods or Goddesses of the earth; Bacchus, Vesta, Juno, Diana, just to name a few.

It's also believed that the Roman's thought that a woman's fertility and was directly linked to the earth's fertility. Perhaps this is one of those justifications of why women are more commonly required to be chaste before religious rites. For instance; the Vestal Virgins would be buried alive if they were judged to be impure.

One common example is how people react to strangers. The Romans viewed any foreigner to be contaminated. It didn't matter if you were born in Rome, if you had ancestors who were slaves or foreigners, then you were definitely contaminated. This generalization could have come about because many of the slaves were foreigners to begin with.

### ***Major Time Periods of Western society***

#### *Middle Ages (around 5<sup>th</sup> Century CE)*

One thing that needs to be kept in mind is the percentage of literacy and what the society at the time defines as literate comes into play for translators. Fewer than 20% of the elite were literate, meaning they could read Latin, during the Middle Ages. One must keep in mind that the Christian Church had taken a firm hold of Europe and was in control of societal life and taboos. Rigby talks about how literacy began to increase in England around the time of the invasion of the Normans in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. He also claims that even by the 16<sup>th</sup> century, literacy among men still hadn't surpassed 25%. Because of this, one can expect less textual translations but instead artistic translations of paintings and sculptures, since after all translations aren't restricted to text. Translations can be in paintings, sculptures, text, music, or movies. That doesn't mean those select few who could read Latin didn't translate Ancient Latin source texts; it was just less common. One other huge factor ensured less freedom for the translator, this literacy percentage decreased the choices of potential audiences.

Could this mean that the translations found from these time periods could give insight into how the men in the Middle Ages talked with one another? They wouldn't have to be worried about their wives reading taboo riddled material, or heaven forbid, the children either! Does this mean

that as time went on and more individuals became literate, that the emphasis of following societal taboos<sup>26</sup> is more evident?

*Renaissance/Early Modern (around 14<sup>th</sup> Century CE)*

The Early Modern Era continued the growth and ingenuity of the Middle Ages around 1300 CE. Having once been called the Renaissance Era, the Era of Rebirth, for generations, it's now taboo to think of these centuries as the cultural rebirth. As more research was coming out about 500-1900, people were starting to vocalize the previous explanations of the time periods, and why they were named accordingly "rebirth" was wrong. It made the Middle Ages sound like it was stagnant. It's first few centuries, originally titled the Dark ages, that made those years sound primitive and immoral. Many people consider this an insult to innovations that took place in the Middle Ages, which was previously split into two periods called Dark Ages and Middle Ages. These two time periods were combined for the same reason the Renaissance Era became the Early Modern Era. The Middle Ages were riddled with inventions such as the vertical windmill, spectacles, and Gothic architecture. It's funny to think how something so small can be made into a big deal. Why couldn't the Renaissance stay labelled the Renaissance? A lot of rebirth took place throughout the world during those centuries. Usually it has to have one person that is openly insulted, makes enough noise and argues with the right people and insists on change. This results in two ways annihilating or creating taboos. For example, it's now a taboo to call 1300-1800 the Renaissance whereas it's no longer a taboo for a woman to show her ankle in public. This is the very problem why the last time period talked about is only 15 years long. The 20<sup>th</sup> century has been dealing with a societal upheaval of taboos that taboos have been changing left and right. Unless we specify one very detailed category of taboos, the 20<sup>th</sup> century must be divided up by decades instead of centuries. We've changed voting rights, who counts as free citizens, clothing expectations, public language, and eating expectations, just to name a few.

After the Normans invaded England in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, literacy began to include both French and Latin. For two centuries, this new set of ideals began to influence Europe and their opinions on the written word. As the Early Modern Era progressed in countless arenas, so did the drive to have written works. One invention made mass production of texts seamless: the printing press. The printing press was introduced into Europe around the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century. The populous could

---

<sup>26</sup> Check the Appendix for a list of Taboos known from the Middle Ages.

no longer use the excuse of not having enough literate hands to make copies and the audience base grew.

### *21<sup>st</sup> Century*

It's hard to deny that the past century has seen so many changes that more gray areas have been created. No matter where you look or travel, you'll end up bombarded by a variety of cultures, cultures that have mixed with others, and areas where it's hard to tell there are two different cultures without deeper analysis. Even in the past fifteen years, taboos both personally and governmentally have been shifting their lines. One day it was extremely taboo to be smoking marijuana anywhere and now a number of States have made it legal. Judgmental micro expressions are still seen when it's talked about but no one can deny that it's happened and going to stay that way. Society reacted in a similar fashion when the Prohibition was retracted in the 1930's. They reacted with relief. Because there has been consistent changing of taboos in the United States and Europe, we will skip comparisons and major analysis of 1800-2000CE.

### ***Examples of taboos that are masked but really the same***

Many people like believing that they are different. If two individuals hailed from different cultures, there seemed no possible way that the two individuals could be similar. The problem with this thought process is that a majority of humans have more in common than not. It's just what is vocalized the most that illustrates the differences. For example, the racial issue that has been raging through societies throughout time stems greatly from the different colored skin folks have. People who think they are privileged have a tendency to judge a book by the cover instead of looking at what's underneath. There could be a group of ten people, none from the same culture or background; however, it is very easy for each of the ten to find something in common with the others just by listening. The hardest part in this example is for the person to admit the similarities to themselves. This idea of communication and being open to the different ways things are explained could bridge the gaps of difference people insist need to be there. Thus, comes the realization that there are taboos that may appear different on the surface, but they completely are the same. For example, we've talked about how in Rome they feared foreigners and created restrictions for any natural Roman who interact with a foreigner. If we recall, the *verbenarii* priests who accompanied Roman armies into foreign lands who brought with them sacred herbs with the intention to cleanse the army from the contagion of the blood and foreign influences. Going another direction, slaves would usually be ordered away from any rituals that were taking place whether they were religious or the Great Games. If a slave walked in,

accidentally or no, the whole ritual would have to be redone. These two taboos appear to be different but are identical. This is because a majority of slaves were of foreign ancestry. Foreign to the Romans' meant contamination.

Superficially, modern day racism sounds like it could be different. After all, it's all about someone's skin color that automatically precludes commonality. It also means that one is inferior the more melatonin their skin carries. It's been a taboo for the past century to discuss how there are different types of slavery still presently going on. Sex trade causes women or girls to be sold on the black market. There is also child slavery in the work houses. Those in power are still trying to ensure that the populous talk about other topics because of the profits they are gaining. Because of this, when our society talks about slavery, the primary image people get are about the African Slave trade, aka Black Slavery. Those with dark skin, for centuries have been used as slaves, a conquering tradition passed down from the Romans. For a majority of the Early Modern Era and on, inter-racial marriage was a big no-no. This caused a lot of rape, infidelity, and bastard children. After all, if someone couldn't marry the one they were in love with they would marry for convenience and be unfaithful. Another scenario stems from those who feel extremely privileged take what they want resulting in rape. Both of those situations resulted on many bastard children. A major fear that underlies all these taboos come from the belief that "foreign" equals "contamination".

Taking things one step further, taboos and beliefs about how words are used fall under the same three groupings. The slight problem with translating Latin is there are no living descendants of the Latin culture, who were raised speaking Latin from birth. Therefore, the nuances that are passed on through tone, body language, and societal reaction must be guessed, surmised, and in all Latin's glory left a partial mystery.

### **Results from translator's taboos**

#### *Which Author should I translate?*

Authors can be passed over because their work pressures the translator to forgo their own taboos in order to translate. Because people are raised in a variety of situations, no two people are going to react to the taboo the same. There are a number of individuals who revel in the use of taboo words because it ruffles feathers. There are others who shy away from them because it's

taboo, it's not done, and or it's definitely impure. Since various translators will differ by degrees there can be substantial variation between translators, it is understandable to find a wide range of interpretations of the same text.

### *Separate dictionaries*

Even today, there are many variations of dictionaries for English. That's bound to happen for a language that has over 800,000 words. It's unknown if the Romans maintained their own written dictionary as a large portion of their texts have been lost. But that isn't the only area where we find different types of dictionaries. Because of a modern taboo of certain language being allowed in polite society, there is a separate book designated to those select words. Trying to find those words, such as *pedico* or *futuo*, in a normal dictionary putting Latin into English is maddening. They use the word itself in the definition, which results in limited understanding of the meaning. Often times, it tells the translator to go to another word in the dictionary. This new word repeats the pattern of the previous word. After about three or four different levels of being sent to new words, then and only then is the definition given. It's almost like the dictionary "gives in" and says "it's clear to me that you are determined to know what this forbidden word really means." Of course, those words aren't defined in the dictionary. The eventual definition is usually three layers deep, which results in the definition being in a different location of the dictionary than the words entry. However, the necessity of having to hunt through layers upon layers to just get the English word for the Latin says it all.

This is similar to how polite society handles the taboo language for its own culture. It's common to be required to go into a private hushed room to utter certain language. It's kind of like an on-going joke of knowing the word and being able to use it correctly, but gasps of horror follow if it's actually done in public. Modern society has been breaking out of these taboo molds in a number of different areas, however the books used by translators aren't always modern. Because the Romans have been considered an elite society, members of polite society are all but required to study the Roman culture and language necessitating countless books, translations, commentaries and interpretations of Roman literature. The time span of thousands of years between the Roman Era and modern translators drastically outweighs the last fifty years during which Western culture has experienced countless taboo shifts. Because of this, the amount of

updated material that will be used to pick which authors one will translate is minimal and almost obsolete.

### **Problems translators will run into**

#### *Translating a dead language-*

There are many issues with translating dead languages. The primary one is discerning how the source society would have reacted to the source text. When words are put on a page, the subtle clues given by micro expressions, tone, or speed are completely lost. One has to do an extensive study of the source language and culture to deduce if the word that is written is more or less offensive than another one in its category. As discussed before, the groupings of taboos have their own hierarchies. These hierarchies are passed down in all societies, even the ones that don't use written language. And because of this, the only way it can be conveyed through text, is if it is written down. A critical problem with this thought poses the question; what if the author of said instructional manual about taboos had the intention of being satirical? What if the author had every intention of the audience laughing at the piece? What if the author made up the hierarchy for their own purpose?

These problems get stacked onto other problems. As a translator, the intricate web of puzzles and psychological mazes compel the translator to make a number of choices. Some are relatively easy; others are more complex. Both internal and external forces of society influence everything we do, usually without our awareness. So much gray area exists around taboos compounded by many layers of personal belief that bleed into the societal ones all of which make difficult to truly, completely, unravel the web. But as a translator, we must do the best we can to ensure that the audience we chose receives the best translation possible.

This does mean that certain decisions of censorship end up being taken. Just as Tymoczko teaches that self-censorship and censorship based on the chosen audience are important factors, it is guaranteed that no translation will exactly match the source text. The translator must, then, choose which taboos to respect or ignore. Every author will have his or her own taboo layers of interpretation. Some will be influenced by the beliefs and taboos of the Middle Ages, others from those of the Early Modern Age. We would have to do a case by case study in order to pick out what is going on in the translator's work.

### *Hierarchy of offensive words for a dead language*

Nevertheless, there are ways to tell when one needs to figure out how to compare similar meaning words. It's common to compare the source text to what is known of the historical time period that it was written. One can also take the pieces known genre as a starting point. For example, Juvenal is known to write satires. Because he's known for satire, the translator can analyze the word choices and compare what is most likely to be more offensive. Luckily, the Romans were writing so consistently that they often referenced each other. Because of these references, a chronology of authors can be established and then compared to the knowledge of the time period. After taking the knowledge from both categories, the translator is able to figure out the likelihood of how offensive a word could be. This makes the process of knowing the hierarchy of crude language a long process that isn't guaranteed to be correct.

### ***What's the message of the source author?***

The clarity of the message from the source author varies. After much research has been done or if the author outright says it, knowledge of the time period and how that author related to that period comes into play in figuring out that message. If the author is still alive, it's very easy to just go get the answer from them. However, when years, centuries, or millennia separate the reader and the author, knowledge passed down through the ages is how the message is kept alive.

### ***Does the translator realize their own societal constructs that will hinder unbiased judgment in their word choice and overall effectiveness?***

It could be said that a number of translators who chose Catullus or Martial have an interesting reaction to their societal taboos. A number of people react to taboos in two different ways: to follow the taboos, or test the limits. Translators who test the limit can be labeled. Sure, generalization is the easiest way to categorize these translators. Anything past that is difficult and inappropriate because free-will comes into play and causes variety. A number of translators are trained to include introductions and commentaries on their works. These inclusions help to bring to light the motives for some of the author's choices. Those reasons can be found in what is said, how it's said, and more importantly what is left out.

With how the modern society is changing viewpoints, it makes things even trickier to pinpoint exactly why an author may have chosen this specific poem. It doesn't make it impossible. It just

means that the person trying to figure out the message needs to understand the taboos around as many aspects involving their translations as possible.

## **Catullus**

Gaius Valerius Catullus was born 84 BCE in Verona to a very wealthy and connected family. As a youth, he left home for Rome enabling him to interact with other literary men. His sophisticated, urbane, witty, short and technically polished poems exemplified the neoteric style (Negenborn). In comparison the other Roman writers during his time wrote on large themes, more elaborate and extensive literature, or polished carefully their literary jewels. (Harrington) Harrington states that even though Catullus' work disappeared for centuries during the Middle Ages, he had a strong influence on modern poetry and music. For this reason alone, we should bless the poet how saved the one surviving manuscript of Catullus Poetry. This makes sense in the fact that Catullus is considered practically the father of Roman lyric poetry, the erotic and the aetiological elegy, the *epithalamium* and the epigram. (Harrington) For simple terms, Catullus adapted Greek meter into Latin and showed those who followed that it was not only possible but could be amazing.

As a poet, Catullus influenced modern day literature significantly. But that doesn't change the fact that he is one of the few Roman authors whose work has been subjected to the taboos of cultures which followed him. One can argue that it's his style that has influenced the modern day. But what about his poems specifically? Throughout the Middle Ages it's clear that his popularity slipped into a black hole. Poets through the 500-1300's demonstrated little knowledge and understanding of Catullus. If he was quoted, it was more inaccurate than not. If he was referenced, it was a little bit. His glory after death faded.

It was in the 14<sup>th</sup> century when a manuscript surfaced in Verona that the flame of our Catullus sparked again. He may have had a significant influence over the Italian productions soon after, but that's not the point here as it only refers to his style in addressing Lebia. What about translating his work? What about putting him into another language so people could read him more easily? There are a number of his poems that managed to consistently get translated over the years. Carmen 16 and 31 are famous for being gasp worthy. Following the analysis of the

taboos influencing the screening by which Catullus poems were commonly translated, we will compare translations of Carmen 2B, and 15. They aren't talked about much;

### ***Taboos surround Catullus and his poems***

Some taboos are subtle; these are ones that a majority of the culture wouldn't realize were taboos. It's interesting to note that societies which exert a lot of control over its citizens tend to thrive on scandal. Throughout the Early Modern Era, people were much talked about if they broke sex taboos such as an unmarried woman getting caught in a "scandalous" affair.

Something as simple as 'making out' in a dark corner nowadays wouldn't make society scream scandal; but a few centuries ago the couple would be faced with two choices: either marry or allow the woman to be dishonored and condemned to a life as a spinster.

The primary taboos we will be looking at are the ones about crude or sexual language and discussions of emotions by men. These two categories of taboos could be a large reason during the Early Modern Era that Catullus was viewed with caution. It could be that the joke was lost on many people. Many commentaries today state that Catullus uses extensive metaphors, exaggerated language, and humor to soften the blows of his 'questionable' poems. Carmen 2B is an example of how women were talked about casually when they gave up their virginity, and Carmen 15 has crude language half exaggerated to show the reader he's not fully terrified but has to say these things just in case.

### ***The poems that cause the biggest uproar in polite society***

The poems that follow are just examples of how taboos throughout time have been affecting translations. Carmen 2B, a poem that causes an uproar; it's so common place to talk about a female falling in love and finally giving up her virginity that it's not a bad thing to talk about per say. However, the way each translator has taken specific words speaks to how they think and from there we can deduce which taboos affect them and to what degree.

Carmen 15 is an exaggerated poem with a backhanded compliment to his friend Aurelius to keep his business in his pants involving his lover Juvenius. The taboo around this one is about sexual relations with not only an adolescent, but male to male. The former was a taboo involving those 12 or younger. Because mortality rates were at younger ages, they married young and started

having kids around 12-14 years of age. Their idea of adolescent's specific age differed from today's norms, however the taboo severity has increased over the past century. The latter taboo is more for 500-2000. As the taboo of coupling between adults and adolescents increased the taboo of couplings of adult males has decrease.

Carmen 16 is one that causes an uproar because of the openly aggressive sexual threat. Not only does Catullus talk about having sex with another person, he talks about types of sex that have nothing to do with procreation. For many centuries, it was frowned upon to just have sex for pleasure. Of course, what happened behind closed doors stayed behind closed doors. It included the mentality of what was allowed with the wife. You'd be encouraged to have procreation sex with your wife, just get it done. And no one would shame you for having a mistress or visiting brothels for the pleasure aspect of sex. Because Carmen 16 is such a well-known poem that affects delicate sensibilities, we are only going to analyze less commonly discussed poems 2B and 15 in the following section.

***Poems 2B and 15, and comparisons***

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Tam gratum est mihi quam ferunt puellae<br>Pernici aureolum fuisse malum,<br>Quod zonam soluit diu ligatam.             | This was as pleasing to me as the golden apple was to the fleet footed girl, which unloosed her girdle long-time fastened. (Smithers 1894) |
| Catullus, 2B  | Smithers, 1894   |
| This is as welcome to me as to the swift maiden was (they say) the golden apple, which loosed her girdle too long tied. | This was as pleasing to me as to the girl who was persistent about the golden apple, which unties the girdle long since bound.             |
| Cornish, 1912   | Orwig, 2015  |

This poem is a subtle example of taboos and censoring. We don't have the full poem that we know of and because of this there are a lot of questions that can't be answered. How does this show an example of taboo one could ask? One thing that has been allowed in society is the talk of female virginity. It has been a selling point in many a marriage since the Middle Ages. When

we look at the actual Latin of Poem 2b, we notice that *diu* is used. This word can mean “all day”, “a long time”, “even long enough”, but Cornish chose “too long”. This word choice screams the impatience people would have when a female was desired but never caught. The male aristocracy would talk about their females as property. They were considered too delicate and easily offended by crude topics of sex, even in the marital bed. It was common practice in the Early Modern Era that sex with the wife was just to procreate while the enjoyment of sex was with the mistress or prostitutes; this being common.

When it comes to my translation, because I am a woman I have the feeling of freedom when the thought of the girdle coming off. It’s like a weight that has been lifted. There is so much pressure from society on females to protect their sex and to stay as pure as possible. Society has let up a lot on the expectations of virginity for marriage for women, however, it’s constantly nagging us in the back of our minds. Many women fight depression because they think they are inadequate. We have been taught for so long that our sex and virginity is tied with a healthy relationship that we will have self-doubt eat us alive when a relationship ends. For nearly a thousand years, women would be forced to marry the man that took her virginity, forced into exile, or placed in insane asylums. These solutions preserved the family honor. It doesn’t matter that today we don’t face the same ramifications because ideas are the last thing to change in a society and the idea we must protect a woman’s sex life is still a heavy influence in society today.

### **Carmen 15**

The poem Carmen 15 poses an aggressive stance by the Catullus persona to Aurelius, warning him away from seducing his boy Juventius. It was common in Ancient Rome and Greece for boys to pair with men. This tradition was a variation on taking on a pupil. It wasn’t uncommon for them to have sexual relations. After all, it wasn’t taboo for a boy to be on the bottom also called the female position. However, it was extremely taboo for an adult male to do so. They’d be considered to be less masculine and therefore less of a man for being on bottom. Thus, you don’t hear much about adult men ‘couples.’ For us today, it’s opposite in which coupling is acceptable. Within the last few decades the age consensual sex was raised from 12 to 16. We are horrified at the idea of adults having sex with adolescents. How dare someone consider it okay to ruin someone’s innocence! After all people are considered innocent when they are still virgins.

Because of this, it very well could be the reason this poem isn't widely translated. Could it be that the translator is worried that anyone who reads their translation will immediately jump to the conclusion the translator approves of this situation? There is an undercurrent laced with fear of being labelled someone who approves of sex with boys (or girls). It could cause people to censor the words that are chosen in the translation, force an extended introduction and or commentary that goes with their translation, or avoidance of the poem all together.

The understanding of how jokes are told in Latin come in handy with translating this poem. There are a few lines that are over exaggerated, almost absurd. The only way to understand that this is an exaggeration is to understand more of the Latin culture. Certain phrases, word choices, and intuition can help clue the reader and or translator in to the jest. Garrison points out in line 4, *castum ... et integellum* overstates the innocence of the boy for comic effect. Catullus wanted to invoke protection of the boy and knew that if you think of someone as pure and innocent, you're less likely to take advantage of the situation. He's invoking a sense of guardianship, a sense of being honor bound to decrease the chances of seduction. Garrison then goes to point out how *paratum* in line 12 is "ready for business" and relates it to an insatiable satyr and his consistent erection looking for action.

This mentality matches similar idioms today used to avoid talking about sex but instead alluding to them. When I first read and translated the poem I took it at face value, the words meant exactly what they said. But the more I reread the poem and understood what Catullus was pleading the idiom came to me. I didn't think about a satyr per say, however, that's a cultural mentality difference. Smithers and Cornish both kept the erection allusion to proper pretenses, meaning they took Catullus literally, and translated it even farther away from the "hint." Smithers translated "you find opportunity" where Cornish translated "when you walk abroad." Both of these word choices take a softer way of describing being ready. When I read these translations, I had completely lost the feeling of the poem being about seduction, sex, and protection of Catullus's boy. This mirrors the mentality of the late 1800's to early 1900's of how men talked about sex without making it appear that they were.

On the other hand, they translated the word *pene* on line 9 literally as penis. This is an interesting comparison between talk of sex and anatomical body parts. They could have taken the route of

translating it as tail, *pene*'s other definition. This could suggest that they anticipated anyone reading their translations would be male and therefore that word is permitted.<sup>27</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Overall, taboos affect us in everything we do. As translators, the communicators between languages, cultures, and time, need to be aware that it's not just about being the invisible translator, or completely true to the source author. It's about being as true to the message the translator him or herself wishes to portray. What needs to be taken into consideration is how everything is affected by everything. There can be ties linked efficiently if the person just looks for it. Those ties needs to be examined and understood to make the most logical and objective decisions when translating in general. It doesn't matter if the source author is known or not known. It doesn't matter if the source author has a reputation. What matters is the goal the translator has in doing their translations and understanding what drives their decisions in order to increase accuracy rates and increase awareness or societal knee jerk reactions that sometimes make no sense. The Romans believing that having sex before collecting honeycomb would drive away the bees is absurd to us today. What taboos do we currently treasure that are ridiculous and hindering our judgments?

---

<sup>27</sup> If you wish to read the complete translations and compare them yourself, please go to the Appendix. This is where you will find poem 15 in Latin and those who translated it into English

Appendix

Carmen 15 and Translations

|   |
|---|
| (Catullus 15)   |
| <p>Commendo tibi me ac meos amores,<br/> Aureli. Veniam peto pudenter,<br/> Ut, si quicquam animo tuo cupisti,<br/> Quod castum expeteres et integellum,<br/> Conserves puerum mihi pudice,<br/> Non dico a populo: nihil veremur<br/> Istos, qui in platea modo huc modo illuc<br/> In re praetereunt sua occupati :<br/> Verum a te metuo tuoque pene<br/> Infesto pueris bonis malisque<br/> Quem tu qua lubet, ut lubet, moveto,<br/> Quantum vis, ubi erit foris, paratum :<br/> Hunc unum excipio, ut puto, pudenter.<br/> Quod sit e mala mens furorque vecors<br/> In tantam inpulerit, sceleste, culpam,<br/> Ut nostrum insidiis caput laccessas,<br/> A tum te miserum malique fati,<br/> Quem attractis pedibus patente porta<br/> Percurrent raphanique mugilesque !</p> |
| (Smithers 1894)   |
| <p>I commend myself and my lover to you, Aurelius. I come with a modest request that,—if you longed for anything with your heart which you desired chaste and untouched—you will preserve my boy's chastity from—I do not say from the people: I fear not at all those who hurry along the thoroughfares here</p>   |

and there occupied on their own business: in truth, my fear is from you and your penis, pestilent to boys fair and to foul. Set it in motion where you please, as you please, as much as you want, outdoors wherever you find the opportunity: for this one object I make an exception, to my thought a reasonable request. But if your infatuation and senseless passion push you forward, scoundrel, to a crime so great as to assail our head with your snares, ah!, then an evil fate will make you suffer, when, with feet taut bound, radishes and mullets will pierce through the open hole.

(Cornish 1912)

To you, Aurelius, I entrust my all, even my loved one, and I ask a favour of you, a modest favour. If you have ever with all your soul desired to keep anything pure and free from stain, then guard my darling now in safety—I don't mean from the vulgar throng; I have no fear of such as pass to and fro our streets absorbed in their own business. 'tis you I fear, you and your penis, so ready to molest good boys and bad alike. Set it in motion to your heart's content, where and how you please when you walk abroad. This one boy I would have you spare: methinks 'tis a modest request. And if infatuate frenzy drive you to the heinous crime of treason against *me*, ah! Then I pity you for your sad fate. For before the city's gaze with fettered feet you shall be tortured as cruelly as an adulterer.

(Orwig 2015)

I confide myself and my affections to you,  
Aurelius. I come seeking with a modest request,  
That, if you desired anything for your soul  
Which you were demanding to be pure and in fair condition,  
You spare my boy's modesty for me,  
By no means do I affirm from the people: we fear nothing  
Of those whom by measure hither and thither into the avenues  
In matter they go past with their own business:  
In truth I fear you and your penis,  
That which disturbs boys good and evil.  
These matters please you, so that it pleases to set in motion  
So much do you wish, where it will provision through the gate:  
For this one thing here I object, so that I arrange a request,  
But if your lust and passion drive you forward, wicked fool,  
To so great a crime that ensnares your head with our trap,  
Ah, then an evil fate will make you lamentable,  
  
When, with feet pulling, radishes and mullets, will hasten  
through the open rectum.

### Chart of some Taboos per time period

| <u>Romans (prior to 500CE)</u>      | <u>Middle Ages (500-1300CE)</u> | <u>Renaissance/Early Modern Era (1300-1800)</u> |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Patricide                           | Women≠fighters                  | Women≠showing ankles or wrists                  |
| Sex before handling beehives        | Incest                          | Talking about Sex                               |
| Slaves not allowed at many rites    | Bastards                        | Bastards  |
| Men/Women not allowed to many rites | Women≠workers                   | Cussing in front of Women                       |
|                                     |                                 | Women≠talk about their emotions or ideas        |
|                                     |                                 |   |

| <u>Victorian (1800-1900)</u>   |
|--------------------------------|
| Women≠showing ankles or wrists |
| Adultery                       |
| Bastards                       |
| Abortion                       |
|                                |

| <u>21<sup>st</sup> Century</u>    |
|-----------------------------------|
| matricide/murder                  |
| No alcohol/smoking while pregnant |
| Bigotry                           |
| Abortion                          |
| pederasty                         |

## Bibliography

- "Examples of Taboo." YourDictionary, n.d. Web. 10 November 2015.  
 <<http://examples.yourdictionary.com/examples-of-taboo.html>>.
- Adams, J.N. *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1982.
- Buriss, Eli Edward. *Taboo, Magic, Spirits: A study of primitive elements in Roman religion*. New York: Macmillan Co, 1931.
- Cornish, G. P. *The Poems of Gaius Valerius Catullus*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1987.
- Dettmer, Helena. "Catullus 2B From a Structural Perspective." *The Classical World*. Vol. 78, No. 2 (1984): pp 107-110.
- Ferguson, John. "Catullus and Ovid." *The American Journal of Philology*. Vol. 81, No. 4 (Oct. 1960): pp. 337-357.
- Garrison, Daniel. *The Student's Catullus*. Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989
- Harrington, Karl Pomeroy. A.M. *Catullus and his Influence*. New York. Cooper Square Publishers, INC. 1963
- Harriss, G. L. *The English Historical Review* 119.481 (2004): 441–443. Web.
- Myers, Reney, and Robert Ormsby. *Catullus, the Complete Poems for American Readers*. New York: E. P. Dutton & CO, 1970. 190. Print.
- Negenborn, Rudy. "Gaius Valerius Catullus. *Catullus*. Feb 2003. Web. 31 Oct. 2015.  
<http://rudy.negenborn.net/catullus>
- Penrose, W.J., Jr. (2014) "A World Away from Ours: Homoeroticism in the Classics Classroom," in *From Abortion to Pederasty: Addressing Difficult Topics in the Classics Classroom* (Rabinowitz, N.R. and R. McHardy, ed.s) Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, pp. 227-247
- Smithers, Leonard. *The Carmina of Gaius Valerius Catullus*. Leonard C. Smithers. London. Smithers. 1894.
- Tymoczko, M. (2009) "Censorship and self-censorship: ethics and ideology, resistance and collusion," in *Translation and Censorship: Patterns of Communication and Interference* (ed. Chuilleanain, E.N., Chuilleanain, C. O., and D. Parris) Four Courts Press, pp. 24-45

## Skepticism among the first Greek Philosophers

BY LUCA TANTARI

Skepticism is a broad term which encapsulates many years of philosophical doubt. It comes in many flavors and it covers many subjects. For example, Academic Skepticism's main claim is that it is impossible to have any knowledge of the world; while Pyrronian Skepticism's main claim is that every process of justification given to support any kind of knowledge will end up in an infinite regress. These are the two main schools of Skepticism that are usually considered as the primary examples of this attitude. Ancient Skepticism, however, is defined according to different ideas and assumptions. It mainly focuses on epistemology and language focusing on beliefs and the value of its consequent actions. In fact, for the purpose of this paper I will define Skepticism as the belief that certain knowledge is impossible. The Presocratic philosophers focused primarily on perceptual knowledge, cosmology, geometry and language; but they also often acknowledged the impossibility of fully comprehending every feature of these fields. Nonetheless, it would be improper to label their attitude as fully Skeptical; for it is often accompanied by a hope for intellectual and epistemic improvement. Thus, quasi-skepticism will be the term which best defines this hopeful attitude. The skeptical ideas in classical Greek philosophy arise from natural observation and the Belief/knowledge distinction; like in the case of Xenophanes or Democritus whose attitude is labeled as proto-skeptic (Katja Vogt, 2014)<sup>28</sup>. Presocratic figures distinguished belief from knowledge creating the framework in which this kind of skepticism takes place.

---

<sup>28</sup> Ancient Skepticism, Katja Vogt, First published Wed Feb 24, 2010.

2. Skeptical Ideas in Early and Classical Greek Philosophy.

2.1 Early Greek Philosophy.

In this paper, I will describe the evolution of a quasi-skeptic thought among the first Greek philosophers in which this kind of attitude toward beliefs about the world is shown to increase only when the understanding of the world itself progresses.

This skepticism arises from evaluations of pure empirical observations and from the evaluation of the limitations of human capacities as compared to the gods. Thus, it involves doubts about the knowledge of the natural world which arises from both the senses and from the comparison of human capacities with the higher forces which supposedly organize the world. The Milesian philosophers (600 BC), such as Anaximander and Anaximenes, are often considered as the starting point of the philosophical enquiries of western thought. After profound reflexions on empirical observations, they tried to make sense of and give rational explanation for natural phenomena. Moreover, they were transitional figures who had to balance the huge mythological and religious background with the little amount of what nowadays would be called scientific notions. They simply relied on sensory observations in order to explain what only advanced math, telescopes and other modern technologies can do. They offer very different theories and a variety of cosmologies and first principles which are supposed to explain and offer knowledge of the external world. The overall extent of knowledge is very little; thus, a skeptical attitude toward these beliefs is practically absent. In fact, they seem to have significant confidence in their claims.

With Xenophanes ( $\cong$ 560 BC) there is the immediate need to rely on a different source of knowledge, namely the intellect. His speculations cover notions regarding the evaluation of the gods as a mere human projection and many observations about the natural world. Thus, recognizing the relativity of certain beliefs toward the forces or that organize the world which mitigate the attitude toward the extent of certain beliefs. In fact, he explicitly states that if a horse

or a lion had the drawing capacities as a human being, they would graphically represent their divinities respectively with horse-shape and lion-shape designs (F8).

F8 (DK 21B15; KRS 169)

*“If cows and horses or lions had hands,  
Or could draw with their hands and make things as men can,  
Horses would have drawn horse-like gods, cows cow-like gods,  
And each species would have made the god’s bodies just like their  
own”.*

(Clement, *Miscellanies* 5.109.3 Stählin/Früchtel)

Moreover, and thanks to these doubtful assumptions, this philosopher can be recognized as the founder of a Skeptical attitude toward human beliefs. For he is the first to distinguish beliefs about the world from knowledge of it; or in other words he distinguished beliefs or approximation to the truth from knowledge or truth itself.

F16 (DK 21B34; KRS 186)

*“Indeed, there never has been nor will there ever be a man  
Who knows the truth about the gods and all the matters which I  
speak.  
For even if one should happen to speak what is the case especially  
well,  
Still he himself would not know it. But belief occurs in all matters”.*

(Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professor* 7.49.4-7 Bury)

He begins this fragment by stating that no agent can have knowledge of these facts. However, contrary to full Skepticism, his brand of quasi-Skepticism leaves a vast window of

opportunities for improvement. In fact, he explicitly states that whether from divine intervention or from intellectual enquiries, these beliefs will eventually improve (F19).

F19 (DK 21B18; KRS 188)

*“The gods did not intimate all things to men straight away,  
But in time, through seeking, their discoveries improve”.*

(John of Stobi, *Anthology* 1.8.2 Wachsmuth/Hense)

This epistemic distinction creates the ground and fundamental assumptions for quasi-Skepticism which allows these beliefs can come to approximate truth over time. A new brand of Skepticism is now in a process of formation that, distinct from the similar proto-skeptical attitude, describes a peculiar relationship between skeptical attitudes and the extent of knowledge.

In the same century (5<sup>th</sup> B.C.), through the ambiguity of Parmenides’ thought and expression, more discoveries and speculations about the world appear. These notions and ideas will affect every later thinker in a way that will predispose later thoughts, from Anaxgoras to the first Sophists. In fact, Parmenides himself allegedly set up the canon of enquiry and of fundamental assumptions about the world, which every later philosopher will necessarily feel an urge to either obey or deny. Parmenides’ contribution to this early form of skepticism regards the reliability of the senses. His thought can be identified as an early form of logic which seems to exploit the principle of non-contradiction.<sup>29</sup> He believed that there are two possible ways to reach the truth. First, the idea or the way of “things that are, cannot not be” which is the only way to the truth and the only possible and thinkable method of inquiry (the way of which *that is*). Secondly, the way of “things-that-are-not are” which is immediately discarded as impossible and

---

<sup>29</sup> This view is only one out of many. Parmenides’ controversial ambiguity allows for several interpretations which are thoroughly listed at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/parmenides/>.

unthinkable. Here, a primordial logical scenario is created; it is a “way” which is accessible only through the intellect. Thus, the weakness of the senses is revealed. For, they cannot operate in the realm of logic. Therefore, they must be replaced by a stronger form of understanding, namely reason (F7).

F7 (DK 28B7; KRS 294; C 7)

*“For never shall this be overcome, so that things-that-are-not are;  
You should restrain your thinking from this way of seeking.  
And do not let habit compel you, along this well-tried path,  
To wield the aimless eye and noise-filled ear and tongue,  
But use reason to come to a decision on the contentious test  
I have announced”.*

(pieced together from: Plato, *Sophist* 237a8-9 Duke *et al.*; and  
Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professor* 7.114.37-4I Bury)

After Parmenides, there are a number of mathematical, geometric and logical discoveries which affect knowledge in two significant ways. First, these human tools (logic and geometry) allow for more accurate and profound understanding of the natural world that does not solely rely on the senses. Second, as a consequence, there is an increase in the understanding of the extent of the knowledge about the external world: with all of these new theories and discoveries, people begin to realize how much they still do not know.

As a peculiar and notable example of these speculations about the external world, the Atomist are an interesting case of skepticism toward the sensible phenomena. They definitely were ahead of their time, for they roughly understood matter and motion almost twenty centuries before the invention of any kind of microscope. In order to understand atoms, Democritus

recognizes two different kind of knowledge, distinguishing sensible knowledge from knowledge attained through reason; and he defines them according to his view on their quality. In fact, he completely condemns sensible knowledge, for it can never truly explain phenomena (F3). Evaluating empirical sensible knowledge and using an early form of relativity, Democritus demonstrates that perceptions given by the senses almost always have multiple truths. For example, the sweetness of a candy is not given by the treat itself, but from the perceptions of it; it is not given by the atoms which compose the candy but from the perceptions of these entangled entities.

F3 (DK 68B9a, 9b, 10, 6, 7, 8, 11; KRS 549, 550, 554; T 179a)

*“Democritus occasionally does away with sensible phenomena, saying that none of them really and truly present itself to the sense, but is only thought to do so, while the truth in existing things is the existence of atoms and void. He says: ‘Sweet exist by convention, and so does bitter, warm, cold, and colour; in reality there are atoms and and void’.*

*...“In actual fact we have no certain understanding, but our grasp on things changes depending on the condition of our bodies, of the things that enter into it, and of the things that impinge upon it”.*

*...His actual words are: ‘There are two forms of knowledge, one genuine, the other bastard. To the bastard kind belong all the following: sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch. But the other kind is genuine and is far removed from the bastard kind’”.*

(Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professor* 7.133.1-139.4)

Clearly, Democritus implies that human beings cannot have a clear understanding of how the world works; for sensible knowledge cannot advise us on the true nature of things. In other

words, everything is constituted by atoms that when “entangled” with each other create what we call matter. Thus, everything we perceive is a mere illusion or a personal interpretation or perception of matter itself (T12). Therefore, a completely negative attitude toward sensible observation, the second fundamental step of quasi-Skepticism, is created. This true understanding of the world is a significant step toward the truth; however, it comes with an immense burden. This burden clearly demonstrates that skepticism progresses as knowledge progresses. In fact, now that there is an almost true understanding of the external world (atoms), Democritus recognizes the immense amount of “bastard” knowledge that conceals the truth (“bastard” refers to sensible knowledge, for it is not purely objective but mediated by the mind) (F3). Accordingly, as a desperate skeptical attitude due to this recent discovery emerges, Democritus makes an extreme and controversial statement (F4).

F4 (DK 68B117; T D15)

*“In reality we know nothing; for the truth  
Is hidden in the abyss”.*

(Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 9.72.10 Long)

This unabridged Skeptical claim seems to arise from the understanding of how little we can know about the phenomena surrounding us. It is given by the overwhelming feeling created by the falsity of sensible knowledge and the reality of a hidden truth. However, it still leaves chances of improvement: for it is only hidden, not unreachable. The fact that the theory of atoms was abandoned for centuries serves as a proof of both the difficulty of reaching the truth and of the hope for a better understanding of the external world.

Lastly, Gorgias and the Sophists finalize the Presocratic philosophies which through more modern inventions (dialectic and rhetoric) demonstrate to the world the power of language and its capacities to not only hide the truth but also to arbitrarily shape understanding and knowledge. Gorgias himself seems to believe that words can be dangerous and deceitful, and that they are not things in themselves but simply a way to refer to them (T11).

T12 (Dk 82B3a [Untersteiner])

*“Gorgias says (1) that nothing has being, (2) that nothing has being, (2) that if it did have being it would be unknowable, and (3) that even if it did have being and was unknowable, it could not be communicated to others.”...*

(Ps.-Aristotle, *On Melissus, Xenophanes and Gorgias* 979a12-980b21

Bekker)

His quasi-Skepticism involves relativity and language, two powerful instruments that do not allow people to reach the truth. For we only have beliefs about the world, not knowledge of it (T11). Moreover, as a reaction to Parmenides’ use of language (T12), these beliefs are subject to powerful transformative forces namely the power of language and relativity which allow the foundation of infinite combinations of justifications. In other words, language can shape reality according to the mind; thereby, enlarging the abyss of ignorance that lies between human understanding and the truth.

The term quasi-Skepticism now defines that skeptical attitude toward human beliefs which arises from Presocratic epistemic speculation about the extent of our knowledge. The evolution of this thought among the first Greek philosophers allows for a hopeful attitude toward the improvement of these belief. Mistrust of the senses and intellectual observations are the key

to the construction of this attitude which is shown to increase only when the understanding of the external world progresses.

## Bibliography

- The First Philosophers, The Presocratics and the Sophists. A new translation by Robin Waterfield. Oxford World's Classics (2000).  
Translated by Robin Waterfield:  
Xenophanes **F8** (DK 21B15; KRS 169) Clement, Miscellanies 5.109.3 Stählin/Früchtel.  
Xenophanes **F16** (DK 21B34; KRS 186) Sextus Empiricus, Against the Professor 7.49.4-7 Bury.  
Xenophanes **F19** (DK 21B18; KRS 188) John of Stobi, Anthology 1.8.2 Wachsmuth/Hense  
Parmenides **F7** (DK 28B7; KRS 294; C 7) pieced together from: Plato, Sophist 237a8-9 Duke et al.; and Sextus Empiricus, Against the Professor 7.114.37-4I Bury.  
Democritus **F3** (DK 68B9a, 9b, 10, 6, 7, 8, 11; KRS 549, 550, 554; T 179a) Sextus Empiricus, Against the Professor 7.133.1-139.4  
Democritus **F4** (DK 68B117; T D15) Diogenes Laertius, Lives of Eminent Philosophers 9.72.10 Long  
Gorgias **T12** (DK 82B3a [Untersteiner]) Ps.-Aristotle, On Melissus, Xenophanes and Gorgias 979a12-980b21 Bekker
- Parmenides, John Palmer, First published Fri Feb 8, 2008; substantive revision Sun Jun 3, 2012 <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/parmenides/>
- Ancient Skepticism, Katja Vogt, First published Wed Feb 24, 2010; substantive revision Sat May 31, 2014. (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy).

## A Mediterranean Pope: Gregory the Great and His Correspondence

BY ERICH WIEGER

Pope Gregory the Great (540-604) while serving as the pope in Rome (from 589 to his death) maintained correspondence with Church colleagues, the imperial elite, and personal friends throughout the Mediterranean region. He exchanged letters with Constantinople, Antioch, Jerusalem, Alexandria, Africa, Sardinia, Corsica, Spain, the Mediterranean coast of Gaul, and with places northward as far as England. He corresponded with Ravenna, small island monasteries, and especially Sicily and the Italian Peninsula.<sup>30</sup> This paper begins to probe the letters as a window into the relationships between the Gregory, the Mediterranean Sea and its human societies. Through his letters he sorted out problems for monastic communities and churches and restructured agricultural management on papal estates. Shipping the grain yields of those estates over the waters around Italy, he fed desperate populations in an era of extraordinary disasters. The letters that bore his instructions and cemented bonds of friendship, often went by boat. One should imagine these missives arriving wet with sea spray. The late sixth century was a time of dramatic demographic and urban decline in the Mediterranean region. In spite of this, Gregory's correspondence as well as the shipments of grain he directs, identify him as an important node in a surprisingly vibrant Mediterranean network of communications and transportation. The content of the letters reveal a man rooted in the classical past, conscious of the sea as his connector to friends and resources, and captured maritime metaphors for human life.

---

<sup>30</sup> R. A. Markus, A. *Gregory the Great: and his World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, xx-x

Gregory's the Great's *Registrum epistularum* reveals the author as inextricably bound to the sea in both his consciousness, his friendships and his administrative duties during a series of crises which he repeatedly likened to a shipwreck. The window on the sea, which the letters frame, looks out on the transition between Late Antiquity Mediterranean and the Early Medieval Mediterranean. The letters show the sea's place in the classical heritage of Gregory, in the sacred texts he sought to embody, in the relationships between mobile elites, and in the existential crisis in which Rome and the Italian peninsula found itself during his time.

The letters are in polished Latin, wearing some of the classical colors of Virgil and Cicero and graced with self-revealing passages in the manner of Saint Augustine. Gregory writes as a Roman elite handling sacred, administrative, and personal business in consummate detail.<sup>31</sup> John R. C. Martyn has translated and published all 848 letters of the *Registrum* with thorough introductory remarks, including topical and literary analysis.<sup>32</sup> Papal scribes organized the *Registrum* in 14 books, one for each year of Gregory's papacy. They are designated by book number, followed by the epistle's number. Martyn's footnotes to each letter provide cross references so the reader can identify the correspondent, and track other letters addressed to him or to her. Gregory and the scribes of the papal scriptorium have provided a reservoir of historical data. The pope manifests a self-revealing but subtle personality. He can be witty. The *Registrum* bears a huge freight of data about dialogs with a wide variety of sixth century men and women, on subjects ranging from filings of St. Peter's chains, to military action, from plagues to theological contemplation, and from agricultural slavery to monastic discipline. The careful reader can extract micro historical detail and prosopographical data from the letters, not only

---

<sup>31</sup>John R. C. Martyn, *Introduction and Notes for The Letters of Gregory the Great*, 3 volumes. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2004. ix-xi

<sup>32</sup> Martyn, *Introduction*, 1-116

about the author and the addressees, but also about the carriers and their plausible routes. Not only is the medium of papal letters a message beyond their content, but also the medium of the sea, sailing routes, carriers, and correspondents themselves create a complex of messages about the Mediterranean world of Gregory's day.<sup>33</sup>

## Map

In this paper I will first present some highlights of Gregory's life in order to situate the letters we will examine, and the issues they present. Then I will examine three letters to get an idea about what Gregory was accomplishing with each text. We will dwell on his imagery of the sea in each letter. The most extensive sea-storm metaphor is in 1.41, to Leander of Seville, later Saint Leander. We will first probe one of its literary roots in Gregory's classical mind to consider the resonances. We will look at the rest of the letter, to see what it is designed to accomplish in the relationship between Gregory, his correspondent and the Mediterranean world. The second letter I will examine the Ep. 1.4, a shorter missive to John the Faster on the eastern corner of the Mediterranean region. There I will probe the biblical allusions in Gregory's ship metaphor. The ambiguity of literary roots to the ship wreck metaphor coincides with ambiguities in the increasingly inter-twined roles of spiritual and temporal powers at the dawn of the medieval Mediterranean. Finally I look at Gregory's short epistle to the imperial secretary in Constantinople. In it the pope gives him queasy comfort about the contrary winds in the secretary's life, and sets him straight about how to translate the papal Latin letters into imperial Greek. The problem of Latin-Greek translation indicates Gregory's position as a man who,

---

<sup>33</sup>Marshall McLuhan, "The Medium is the Message," *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, 1964. Accessed on December 23, 2014 at <http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/mcluhan.mediummessage.pdf>

although he was dead sure that he was living at the end of the world, in fact was living betwixt two eras and two cultural spheres.

### **Highlights of Gregory's Life**

According to Jeffery Richards classic work, *Counsel of God* Gregory was born about 540, in Rome.<sup>34</sup> His parents christened him with the name Gregorios, the only Greek name among his siblings. They all had unambiguously Latin names. Gregorios means “watchful”.<sup>35</sup> Gregory's family was from the most elite circles remaining in Rome at the time. They owned large properties in Sicily as well locally.<sup>36</sup> His family, for several generations was associated with the papacy, with convents and monasteries. Gregory's father was a *defensor* of the Church. *Defensors* advocated for the Church's rights and enforced canon law with regard to them. Gregory later developed an organized association of *defensors* as his personal agents to carry out the business of the papacy across the Western Mediterranean. In 542 the plague swept through Rome.<sup>37</sup> When Gregory was a boy of 10 the Ostrogothic king Totila expelled the entire Roman population, including Gregory's family, to the Campanian countryside<sup>38</sup>. When Gregory was 14 imperial rule was restored to Rome, but very little rebuilding actually happened (4). As a boy he received the best education available in Rome, before the schools broke up in the wake of Justinian's invading armies. There is some debate about what kind of education he received, but close evaluation of his use of the classics indicates a broad and deep instruction in them.

---

<sup>34</sup>Jeffrey Richards, *Counsel of God: The Life and Times of Gregory the Great*, Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980.

<sup>35</sup> Richards, *Counsel*, 25

<sup>36</sup> Richards, *Counsel*, 25

<sup>37</sup> Markus, *Gregory*, 4

<sup>38</sup> Andrew J. Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes*, New York: Lexington Books, 2007.

Gregory would later assert to a Byzantine correspondent who dared write him in Greek, that he was not a Greek speaker. He may have been put off because the lady who had written him in Greek was a Latin, and he found her Greek pretentious.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, when Gregory ordered the destruction of sermons in Greek falsely circulated in his name, he claimed that he did not read or write Greek.<sup>40</sup> It may be that scholars have taken him too seriously on that point. Richards thinks that Gregory's ignorance of Greek is remarkable given his six years in Constantinople as a papal legate.<sup>41</sup> Martyn, the translator of the *Registrum*, on the other hand, concludes after carefully sifting the evidence, "Politically he was a Latin speaker, but as a diplomat and scholar he was bilingual."<sup>42</sup> Martyn thinks Gregory's boyhood education was not only in the Latin classics, but also included some Greek language work on Plato and Homer. Not surprisingly Gregory's classical education included music. He learned to play an instrument he called an organ. He had a hand in the composition of liturgical music and the growth of the school for liturgical singers in Constantinople while he was there—hence the connection with a musical form loosely attributed to him by the phrase "Gregorian Chant."<sup>43</sup> He continued to study rhetoric for the first five years of his papacy, in order to hone his writing and speaking skills.<sup>44</sup>

Gregory's first work experience seems to have been the administration of family estates. When he writes to the administrators of papal estates he reveals a level of detailed awareness that only extensive experience could have given.<sup>45</sup> In his early thirties it seem that he first held the honorary title of *praetor*, then later served as urban prefect of Rome for a year or two between 572-

---

<sup>39</sup> Richards, *Counsel*, 52

<sup>40</sup> Richards, *Counsel*, 27

<sup>41</sup> Richards, *Counsel*, 27

<sup>42</sup> Martyn, *Introduction*, 102-3

<sup>43</sup> Martyn, *Introduction*, 6

<sup>44</sup> Martyn, *Introduction*, 2

<sup>45</sup> Martyn, *Introduction*, 29

4 (32-3). Upon his father's death in 574 or 575, he converted from his secular career and became a monk. It may be correct to see him as a renegade aristocrat, breaking ranks from his class. He devoted one of the family homes to become Saint Andrews Monastery, where he prayed and studied with other ascetics.<sup>46</sup>

Pope Benedict died in 579, while the Lombards were besieging Rome.<sup>47</sup> The new Pope Palegius II (579-89) recruited Gregory out of his urban monastery to send him to Constantinople as a papal legate (*apocrisarios*) with a senatorial embassy to petition the Emperor for military intervention against the Lombards. Gregory brought with him some of the monks from St. Andrews and established their communal spiritual discipline in the palace of the papal legate.<sup>48</sup> In Constantinople he balanced palace diplomacy with prayer, expositing Christian morality from the Book of Job to his fellow monks, and spiritually advising the aristocrats there. Later he would maintain a heart-felt correspondence with individuals among them.<sup>49</sup>

Gregory also formed a life-long friendship with Leander of Seville. He was in the capital because his labors against Arianism among the Visigoths prompted them to exile him from his episcopal see. Gregory made friends with John the Faster who was a deacon at Hagia Sophia and a patriarchal vicar for monasteries. While Gregory was in the capital the emperor Tiberius II exalted John to the patriarchal throne in spite of John's strenuous resistance (epistle 1.4). Gregory became a friend of the imperial family of Maurice and corresponded with the empress. He became the godfather of Maurice's son Theodosios and was a friend to Theoctista, the emperor's sister (ep 1.5). He also became companions of bishops who were in the capital like

---

<sup>46</sup> Martyn, *Introduction*, 32

<sup>47</sup> Martyn, *Introduction*, 37

<sup>48</sup> Richards, *Counsel*, 38

<sup>49</sup> Economou, *Byzantine*, 10

Anastasius. Anastasius had been removed from his office as Patriarch of Antioch, but Gregory would always honor him as having the patriarchal rank. Later he offered the exile a home and friendship in Rome (1.7). The extent of Gregory's social network is not an indicator of mere political skill, but of his new pastoral ideal. As pope he wrote to the patriarchs among whom he was acknowledged as first among equals—those of Constantinople, Antioch and Alexandria—that true pastors labor to be “very close to individuals, with compassion” (1.24). His correspondence suggests that he was entirely sincere and committed on this point.

Gregory was charming, engaging and very clear in his thinking. He embodied a synthesis of ancient Roman senatorial qualities, extensive legal knowledge, and intensely focused monastic ideals.<sup>50</sup> Richards detects some dark sides to Gregory's biting humor, and highlights a few instances when his treatment of others was devastating; yet his humility and generosity were also without question. He also seems to have fasted so much as to create his own chronic illnesses. His close friendship with the best doctors of the Empire only allowed him to barely manage, often doing his duties from a sick bed. Gregory practiced the ancient Roman virtue of fortitude in spite of his debilitating stomach pains.<sup>51</sup>

Pope Pelagius II recalled Gregory to Rome in 586 where he served as a deacon at the Lateran palace and continued his monastic life at St. Andrews.<sup>52</sup> In 589 the Tiber flooded Rome to an unprecedented degree. The plague festered in the wet city during the spring of the following year.<sup>53</sup> After Pope Pelagius II died from the plague, “the clergy, nobles and the

---

<sup>50</sup> Martyn, *Introduction*, 9; Richards, *Counsel*, 44-50

<sup>51</sup> Martyn, *Introduction*, 6; Richards, *Counsel*, 49

<sup>52</sup> Richards, *Counsel*, 39

<sup>53</sup> Paolo Squatritit, “The Floods of 589 and Climate Change at the Beginning of the Middle Ages: An Italian Microhistory,” *Speculum* 85.4 (2010): 799-825. The article argues that we cannot know that there was any climate change, but that the micro-region and Mediterranean-wide climate variability is

people” unanimously elected Gregory.<sup>54</sup> They chose him for his traditional Roman administrative competence. If his patterns of ministry in Constantinople and in Rome were analogous to each other, we can surmise they chose him also because of his close interpersonal and pastoral friendships with the Roman Christian elite. Gregory immediately preached a sermon calling people to repentance. He organized three days of Psalm reading and seven simultaneous processions on the third day, April 25, to plead with God to remove the plague. During the processions some 80 people perished from the disease while Gregory continued leading the people. All seven processions converged on the church of Maria Maggiore.<sup>55</sup>

Economou thinks that Gregory’s choice to have all seven processions meet at the greatest church dedicated to Mary reflects the impression that the growing cult of the Virgin in Constantinople had made upon Gregory when he was there. Processions were not yet popularized in the West, but the seven-fold procession converging on the church of the *Theotokos* (Mother of God) at Chalkoprateia, with constant chants of “*kiriye eleison!*” was a regular Byzantine response to danger.<sup>56</sup> Economou regards the Greek influence upon Gregory as the beginning of an era in which Rome can be called Byzantine. After Gregory a series of Greek popes ruled in Rome.

It was autumn of 590 before the Emperor sent confirmation of Gregory’s election to the papacy. Gregory had used his epistolary skills to attempt to dissuade the Emperor from confirming his nomination. He preferred as much monastic tranquility as possible. It was also a hard time to be pope. Gregory’s little brother was the urban prefect of Rome at the time. He

---

sufficient to explain the phenomenon, whereas the theological outlooks of those who recorded or omitted the floods are the best explanation for why we know of them at all.

<sup>54</sup> Richards, *Counsel*, 41

<sup>55</sup> Richards, *Counsel*, 41-2

<sup>56</sup>Economou, *Byzantine*, 17-8

intercepted Gregory's letter to the emperor, destroyed it, and wrote instead to tell Maurice how all of Rome had unanimously favored his appointment. Gregory was consecrated in September 590. His most pressing duty was to feed Rome with the grain from about 400 papal agricultural estates, "scattered over southern Italy (Bruttium-Lucania and Apulia-Calabria), Tuscany, and elsewhere in Italy, Corsica and Sardinia, Dalmatia, Gaul and North Africa."<sup>57</sup> Much of his correspondence is dedicated to this complex task. He gave detailed instruction to the subdeacons and *defensors* who were his direct agents to handle court cases concerning lands, to ensure that slaves could survive and that manumitted slaves were not reclaimed by agents of Church lands. They also confronted contractors who farmed papal lands when they tried to infringe upon monastery lands. The overall impression is that this complex arrangement for feeding the people of Rome could only work well if the pope attended to it like a chief operating officer. The constant factor in the background is the sea, without which shipments of grain would have been impossible. In the midst of Lombard invasions, in spite of an imperial government stretched thin by wars in the east, and while suffering waves of the plague, Gregory coordinated a complex sea-borne operation. The maritime network of the Mediterranean was still working efficiently. Ships brought administrative direction from Rome and brought back shiploads of grain for the city.

### **Three Epistles of Gregory with Sea Storm Imagery**

There is a contrast between the desperate sea storm imagery in Gregory's letters and the easy confidence with which he consolidates the Lateran Palace's agrarian thalassocracy of grain production and supply. Real sea storms do not effectively impede the complex of transportation and travel which he is coordinating. He is confident while he carries on a flow of correspondence with long-lost friends that the letters will arrive. Perhaps the normal reliability of maritime travel

---

<sup>57</sup> Martyn, *Introduction*, 26-9; Markus, *Gregory*, 112

lent poignancy to the unpredictable storms and wrecks—boats should not be caught in perfect storms, ships and their planks should not be rotten and the sea should not pour in.

#### **1.41 Gregory to Leander, bishop of Spain, April 591**

Gregory, servant of the servants of God, greets our very reverend and very saintly brother, Bishop Leander.

I should have liked to have replied to your letters with total application, if the hard work of my pastoral care were not wearing me out in such a way that I would prefer to weep than say anything. Your Reverence with your vigilance understands this even in the very text of my letter, when I speak without care to the person whom I love so dearly. For in this position I am being shaken by such great waves of this world, that I can in no way direct my ship into port, a ship old and rotting, which I undertook to control through God's hidden plan. Now waves crash into me from the front, now foaming waves swell up in the sea on my side, now a storm attacks me from the rear. And in the middle of all this I am confused, and am forced now to direct the rudder into the same adversity, and now to deflect the threatening waves away to one side, with the ship's curving flank. I groan because I know that through my negligence, a bilge water of vices is rising, and that the tempest violently accosts me, and at this very moment the rotten planks give the sound of shipwreck. Weeping, I recall that I have lost the placid shore of repose, and I look with sighs at the land that I nevertheless cannot reach, as the winds of duties blow against me. So if you love me, my very dear brother, stretch out the hand of your prayer to me in these waves, so that as you aid me in my troubles, you may stand stronger in your own troubles also, by way of payment in exchange.<sup>58</sup>

Leander of Seville was back in Spain now. The intensity of Gregory's longing for his friends is a function of the sea. The water and ships had brought them together in that thalassocratic capital on the Bosphorous where seas meet. The same currents and winds had now separated them again permanently with the Tyrrhenian Sea in between.

Martyn identifies two sources for Gregory's extended imagery: Virgil's *Aeneid* 1.81-123, and Homer's *Odyssey* in 5.291-381. In the *Aeneid*, Aeneas the forefather of Rome is sailing with his fleet loaded with refugees from the ruins of Troy toward their new homeland in Italy. Then

---

<sup>58</sup> *The Letters of Gregory the Great: Translated with Introduction and Notes*, Trans. John R.C. Martyn, 3 volumes. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2004, vol 1, p 160.

Juno commands Aeolus to send out the winds from his lofty mountains down on them while they were in the Tyrrhenian Sea.

So having said, his spear he turned and thrust  
Against the hollow mountain-side: the winds  
As in compact array, where vent is given,  
Rush forth and with tornado scour the world,  
Swoop on the sea, and from its sunken bed  
Upheave it whole in one wild onset, east,  
South, and southwester with thick-coming squalls,  
And roll huge billows to the shore. Anon  
Rises the creak of cables, cry of men:  
Clouds in a moment from the Trojans' eyes  
Snatch heaven and day; black night broods o'er the  
    deep:  
Skies thunder; the air lightens, flash on flash;  
No sign abroad but bodes them instant death.  
Straight are Aeneas' limbs with shuddering loosed;  
He groans and, stretching his clasped hands to heaven,  
Thus cries aloud: "O thrice and four times blest  
Who won to die beneath Troy's lofty towers  
Under their kinsmen's eyes! O Tydeus' son,  
Bravest of Danaan blood!...  
Such words out-tossing, a loud blast from the north  
Strikes him full-sail, and lifts the floods to heaven:  
Crash go the oars, then swerves the prow and gives  
The waves her broadside: on rolls, heaped and sheer,

A watery mountain: on the wave-tops some  
 hang poised; to some the sea deep-yawning shows  
 Bare ground amid the billows, surge with sand  
 Raving; three ships the south wind's sudden clutch  
 Hurls upon hidden rocks—Italian folk  
 Name them the Altars rising 'mid the waves—  
 A vast ridge on the sea-top: three the east  
 Drives on to banks and shallows from the deep,  
 A piteous sight, and breaks them on the shoals,  
 And heaps the sand about them: one which bore  
 The Lycians and Orontes true of heart,  
 Even as he gazes, a huge sea astern  
 Strikes from above: dashed headlong from on board  
 Down goes the helmsman: her, spun whirling thrice  
 Even where she lies, the eddying gulf devours.  
 Here and there scattered on the weltering waste  
 Swimmers are seen, and heroes' arms, and planks...  
 Toil-worn the children of Aeneas strive  
 To make what shores they are nearest, and at length  
 To Libya's coast they come. (1.82-119, 158-160)<sup>59</sup>

Gregory consistently keeps his own dignity when he uses the classics or the scriptures.

He has internalized his sources and re-creates from them what he in his own context needs to say.<sup>60</sup> His allusions to the Aeneid are unmistakable. The winds come from every side; the ship turns its side to the great wave, the helmsman is the tragic focus, the prayer of desperation is tossed out like an anchor. The ship wrecks and there are planks scattered in the water. Other

---

<sup>59</sup>Virgil, *The Aeneid*. Chicago: William Bentley, 1952, 158-160

<sup>60</sup>Martyn, *Introduction*, 2-3, 14-17

elements of this passage will emerge in Gregory's epistles. Gregory has identified himself with the mythical father of the city by putting himself in the shipwreck of Aeneas and the first Romans. Gregory's mood is desperation while being acutely aware that he the one at the helm. He is astounded at the task before him and sees no possibility of success. The Lombard's violent occupation of the peninsula, the Empire's incapacity to provide military help, the plague, recent floods and the constant threat of famine conspired, 'from his eyes to snatch heaven and day.'

Conrad Leyser traces two rhetorical strategies by which ascetics constructed relationships of authority: by the language of spiritual expertise and moral authority, as with Cassian, or by rhetoric which came out from monastic community life in which the self-deprecating leader makes himself vulnerable, while in fact his authority is firmly in place, as with Augustine.<sup>61</sup> Gregory is Augustinian in this respect. His imagery of the ship wreck reflects the vulnerability that Mediterranean heroes faced when confronted by storms of divine proportion. The storm and the desperation it creates make the hero as important as he is helpless.

Virgil, in his Aeneid, has described 'the perfect storm' scenario in which the various winds of the Mediterranean together with their waves collide in one of the extreme local manifestations of the region's unpredictable climate.<sup>62</sup> Gregory has travelled by sea to the family estates in Sicily, and once to Constantinople and back again. He knows the considerable reliability of sea travel and also the risk of sudden squalls. They can sweep men and shiploads of grain away suddenly. Leander shares the same experiential knowledge, having travelled from one end of the Mediterranean to the other and back again. Gregory uses the allusion to both the

---

<sup>61</sup> Richard Valantasis, Richard, Book Review of *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great*. by Conrad D. Leyser. Oxford University Press, 2001. 221 pages. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 71.1 (2003):215.

<sup>62</sup> Squatritit, "The Floods"

Roman poet and the sea that they know to renew the bonds of friendship with Leander. Now he is not only his friend but also the vicar of Saint Peter to Leander. Through Leander he cultivated a political and religious bond to king Reccared of Visigothic Spain. The king had recently become Catholic and his friendship with Leander and Gregory had momentous consequences for the religious identity of Spain. The pagan poet and the Mediterranean sea help to create one of the most determinative Catholic relationships of early Medieval history.

### **Religious Mobility and Connectivity in Gregory's Mediterranean World**

Gregory and Leander's Christian faith are geographically mobile. Their responsibilities intensify with geographical moves and generate correspondence with sea-storm imagery. Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell in *The Corrupting Sea* devote a chapter for building theoretical frameworks that describe religion in the Mediterranean. They do not explore the institutional and dogmatic dimensions of religion in the Mediterranean region. They assert that just as Mediterranean history should be rooted in the human and natural ecologies if it is to be properly "of the Mediterranean," even so only religious manifestations that emerge from the interconnectivity of micro-regional human ecologies are properly "the religion of history: history of, and not just in, the Mediterranean."<sup>63</sup> Intriguingly, however, they divide Mediterranean religion into the "the religion of mobility" on the one hand, and "the religion of borders and belonging" on the other.<sup>64</sup> Gregory and his friends belonged to the religion of mobility and letters were the means by which they recorded human connectivity in motion from Spain to Constantinople.

---

<sup>63</sup> Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*, Malden MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2000, 460.

<sup>64</sup> Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, 438-57

Horden and Purcell write that connectivity and mobility on connective routes tends to create resemblance.<sup>65</sup> The context of their comment was interchange in local religious festivals, but the principal is larger. Later they point to the wider horizons Christianity and Islam attain through large-scale mobility with great centers, and associate the institution of centers for these religions to the sacral centrality pre-Christian Rome:

It is therefore in a context that might at first seem surprising that we should look for the most developed equivalents in the ancient world of the great conceptual unification brought about by Christian and Islamic pilgrimage, that wider patterning of the Mediterranean world through sacral movement. The context is the enormously wide pull on Mediterranean communications exerted by that ultimate Hellenistic king, the Roman emperor—a pull centered, through him, on the city of Rome. ‘If a person ask you, “Where is your God?”, reply to him, “In the great city of Rome.”’<sup>66</sup>.

Gregory and his friends were not medieval pilgrims, but their journeys were sacral missions for the Church. Rome was no longer animated by the Emperor, but remarkably by the tomb of Saint Peter and the charisma that adhered to the pope who occupied the See of Peter.<sup>67</sup> Gregory’s correspondence with Leander of Seville was an act of using the bonds of friendship, drawn taught by the distances of the sea, to pull Spain tighter into the institutional and sacral orbit of Rome. Gregory writes,

But I can in no way express my joy with words, as I know that our shared son, the most glorious King Reccared, has been converted to the Catholic faith with the most sincere devotion. As you describe his character to me in your letters, you have made me even love someone I do not know (1.41).

The mobility and connectivity of Leander and Gregory became an instrument for creating a Catholic resemblance between Rome and Spain.

---

<sup>65</sup> Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, 447

<sup>66</sup> Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, 449

<sup>67</sup> Horden and Purcell caution that what looks like a survival may carry a very different meaning than its pre-cursor in their section, “The mutability masked by apparent survivals” (422-23). Peter’s tomb and See, is a radically different concept of centralized power from the Senate and People of Rome with their multiple temples and Ceasars.

## Negotiating Difference while Pursuing Resemblance

The nascent bond between Rome and Spain was part of Gregory's missionary vision. His missionary philosophy would evolve into a remarkably accommodating methodology. In this epistle he continues on to advise Leander on the right way to think about a different mode of baptism among the Visigoths:

However, concerning the triple immersion of baptism, no truer reply can be made than what you yourselves feel, that in one faith, a different custom is in no way harmful to the Holy Church. But as we are immersed for the third time...(1.41)

Gregory proceeds to explain two different but equally valid ways to interpret the Visigothic triple baptism. He then gives another way to interpret a single immersion. He draws the line not at form, but at misusing a form to justify an anti-Catholic (here anti-Trinitarian) understanding:

But if until now, an infant was immersed three times in baptism by heretics, I do not think that this should be done among you, in case they divide the divine while counting the immersions, and boast that they have defeated your custom, while doing what they used to do (1.41).

In Late Antiquity St. Augustine's parents did not baptize him when he was an infant, so that he would not sin against his baptism. By the time of Gregory's transitional era things had changed. Infant baptism appears to be the norm. This is part of the transition toward the Medieval world, when whole populations were baptized from infancy and large societies saw themselves as the Body of Christ. The method of the ritual was open to a variety of practices or interpretations within orthodox faith, but the Chalcedonian Trinitarianism was the *sine qua non* for being a part of Mediterranean Christian unity. The catholic and orthodox mind must not divide the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The West of the Mediterranean was broken up into Germanic kingdoms and Gregory felt obligated to enforce catholic orthodoxy and discipline wherever his connections would allow him to do so. He later mobilized his representatives in Sardinia to catholicize a warlike North

African tribe called the Barbaracini that had fled to the island from the Vandals, and later still orchestrated very successful mission to the English.<sup>68</sup> His institutional efforts promoted a trajectory which hind sight, built medieval Catholic Europe.

### **Gift Giving to Cement Bonds and Create Order**

I have sent codices to your Fraternity, so very dear to me, and I have inserted a note below about them. Those things which had been said in my exposition on the blessed Job, and which your write should be sent to you, because I had made these remarks with words and sentences that flow through my Homilies, I was keen anyway to change them into the form of books, which are now still being written down by the copyists...Most of all because I wrote this work itself for your Reverence, so that I might seem to have worn myself out on my work, for him whom I love before all others...Although still absent in body, I always see you present before me, because I carry an image of your face imprinted in the depths of my heart...(1.41)

Gregory exercised power and friendship through gift giving. The volumes of his massive commentary on Job called *Moralia* were perhaps his greatest gift to his dearest friend. It was a labor of love he began in Constantinople at Leander's request and for the brothers who accompanied him there from St. Andrews in Rome. But he could not finish it before they had to return to Rome. He completed it upon his return. At the time of this letter in about the eighth month of his papacy the work was complete but the copyists were not finished with all of the codices of the multi-volume set. The first volumes arrived in Seville with this letter and with a surprise: the whole work was dedicated to the recipient. Gregory's gift-giving reached to the level of royal gift exchanges. This was an act among "princes of the Church." The bonds of affection toward Leander are doubtless genuine, but the gift was also strategic. By honoring the bishop of Seville with a kingly gift, the king of the Visigoth's would be well impressed by the

---

<sup>68</sup> Martyn, *Introduction*, 50-1; *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great, By an Anonymous Monk of Whitby*. Trans. Bertram Colgrave. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1968 Chapter 11 and 12. The early Medieval monk represents Gregory as sending Augustine, Mellitus and Lurentius to England "with as little delay as possible" after his election. The monk's perspective was very distant from Rome, and very appreciative of Gregory.

importance of his own bishop and the centrality of the pope in Rome. Soon royal gifts from Reccared to express his new bond to the See of Saint Peter were forthcoming.<sup>69</sup>

**Epistle 1.4** is a cover letter for 1.24, a synodical letter in which Gregory initiates his duties to the greater Church by addressing his fellow patriarchs, among whom he is by virtue of his consecration to the See of St. Peter, first among equals. In both 1.4 and 1.24 he expresses his need for his colleagues' prayers and pity.

### **1.4 Gregory to John of Constantinople, October 590**

If the virtue of charity consists of love for one's neighbors, and if we are accordingly ordered to love our neighbors as ourselves, why is it that your Beatitude does not love me as much as you love yourself? For I know with what ardor, with what zeal you wished to escape the burdens of the episcopate, and yet you did not prevent these same burdens of the episcopate from being imposed on me. And so it is certain that you do not love me as much as you love yourself, for you wanted me to undertake those burdens that you did not want imposed on yourself. But because, while unworthy and infirm, I have taken on an old and very broken down ship (for the waves pour in from all sides and the rotten planks, shaken by daily and powerful storms, suggest a shipwreck), I ask by our almighty Lord that in this danger of mine you stretch forth the hand of your prayer. For you are able to pray all the more earnestly, as you are situated further away from the confusion of the tribulations from which we suffer in this country.

But I am sending over a synodical letter, to follow post-haste, as I have released the bearer of this letter, Bacauda, our brother and fellow bishop, at the very beginning of my ordination, although under the pressure of many occupations.

Gregory had been engaged in a regimen of fasting more intense than was normal Italian monks.

His monastery's rule resembled the discipline of the Egyptian Desert Fathers.<sup>70</sup> While he was in Constantinople he had continued his discipline with a number of brothers who accompanied him.

---

<sup>69</sup> Gregory the Great. *The Letters of Gregory the Great*. Trans. & Ed. John R.C. Martyn. 3 Volumes. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2004, 9,229 a,b, and c. pp 698-704. Reccared sends as a votive offering to the Pope for Saint Peter's shrine, a bejeweled golden chalice, and 300 cloaks for the poor (699, 704). Gregory sends a golden key with iron shavings from the chains of St. Peter, a cross with wood from the true cross and hair from the head of Saint John the Baptist. He assures Reccared of "the comfort of our Saviour from the intercession of his predecessor [Gregory's predecessor, Saint Peter]" as well as that the chains that bound Peter for his martyrdom would free Reccared from all his sin (703).

<sup>70</sup> Richards, *Counsel*, 35.

He also developed a close friendship with a local cleric in Constantinople—a fellow ascetic named John the Faster. One of the memorable events of Gregory’s six or seven years in Constantinople was a controversy with the patriarch of Constantinople, Eutychius, about the nature of the resurrection. The story was that an intense and erudite debate among Greek theologians and the emperor in which the Patriarch maintained that resurrection bodies would be ethereal seemed unresolvable. Gregory however, silenced the controversy by speaking the words of the resurrected Christ, “...handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have.”<sup>71</sup> Eutychius repented from his error and died. Gregory’s friend John the Faster took his place. The Roman papacy took on the aura of the pure and simple authority of the Word of God in the face of complex metaphysical arguments among Greek theologians.

According Gregory’s letter to John the Faster the ascetic had tried hard to avoid being appointed as patriarch. At the time of the letter it appears that he had supported Gregory’s appointment to the papacy. The duties of the papacy required Gregory to part with his beloved monastic contemplation of God, and hurled him into an impossible job. The letter works on several levels. It is a friendly jab at the inconsistency in the Christian ideals of his colleague. It looks like a child-like and coy expression of, “You don’t love me.” At the same time it is a way of mutually re-assuring each other that their authority must be from God, because neither of them sought the office egotistically. They both sought to avoid it. But just a bit more darkly and between the lines, the letter suggests that each one had in fact recommended the other to the vertiginous pinnacle of his ecclesiastical career. Were they now colleagues out of coy collusion? The missive also extends Gregory’s characteristic vulnerability in order to bind his colleague more dearly to him. He will need his cooperation in the future. Finally, the letter is a genuine

---

<sup>71</sup> Luke 24:39

plea for prayers of intercession from a man in a very dangerous situation in Rome, to a man who lives in the quieter sanctuaries and palaces of Constantinople. Perhaps as an addendum, as a trajectory of the mind, we can read unwritten words here: “As you appeal to God for me, appeal to the Emperor for the military defense of the City of Rome!” But their interaction is too holy to mention the muddy infantry explicitly.

The sea-storm imagery holds the same function as it did with Leander: to beg for prayer, and to sustain a brotherhood of mutual vulnerability. The passage is less despairing and less dramatic than his appeal to Leander. The difference may reflect the relative depth of friendship. The pope also must be a bit more on guard against Constantinople’s tendency to forget the traditional authority of Rome. The emperor and the patriarch were a formidable pair and Gregory could not afford to be overly vulnerable. The imagery of waves and swells is not as pronounced in this letter, but the ship remains central. That leaves us to consider the ship itself. Gregory introduced the rotting ship into Virgil’s imagery.

What was the rotting ship which he had boarded as an infirm and unworthy captain? Is it the Church or the City or something else? Aeneas’ ship was the head of a fleet of refugees from Troy. They were, mythically, the Roman state in seminal form. The story from which Virgil takes his imagery of the barque tossed upon waves is Odysseus’ raft on the swells in the *Odyssey*. The raft carried a lone man and is a better analogy of the existential desperation of Gregory on his journey home to final belonging with God. We cannot however, equate Gregory’s rotting ship with Odysseus’ raft. He has only recently been appointed as the helmsman, where as his existential and individual journey toward God is rooted in his original conversion to monastic contemplation. There are other sea storms and vessels on Gregory’s mind. His Latin expression with which he concludes his storm imagery passages in the epistles

1.5, 1.7 and 1.25 is a quote from Psalm 68:3 in the Vulgate (69:2b in the English Bible): “I have come into deep waters and the flood sweeps over me.” After this expression he says in his epistle 1.7 and 1.25, “therefore as I am in danger, extend the hand of your prayer for me.” Gregory is not only thinking classically, but also biblically. The Mediterranean storms blew into biblical passages about the waves of the sea.

The most obvious passage that probably informed Gregory’s imagery is from The Gospel according to St. Matthew. The story of a storm that rolled down from the mountains of Lebanon into the basin of the Sea of Galilee focuses the mind of the reader on extended hands. In Matthews account the disciples are in a boat caught in a squall on the Sea of Galilee—a sudden, violent and highly localized storm as happens in the micro-climatic systems of the Mediterranean region. It is night, and Jesus is not with them, but he comes to the walking on the water, saying

“Take heart, it is I; have no fear.”

And Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, bid me come to you on the water.” He said, Come. So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus; but when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me.” Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, “O man of little faith, why did you doubt?”<sup>72</sup>

The boat in the story was probably Peter’s own. Gregory now occupies the See of Saint Peter. In the story all the men aboard are apostles. Gregory is accompanied by many colleagues in his apostolic work. But the boat in the story is not rotten although it is in danger. Jesus extends his hand to Peter who is sink after walking for an instant on the water. Gregory feels that he is being overwhelmed and asks his colleagues to extend their hand of prayer as if he himself is Peter and they are in the place of Christ. Gregory employs a rhetoric of conspicuous humility on the one hand, and on the other, he frames it in a way that reminds his fellow patriarchs that he is the

---

<sup>72</sup> Matthew 14:27-31

representative of the chief of the apostles. The story makes sense of some of Gregory's sea-storm imagery, but it does not tell us where he got the rotten ship imagery nor what it means.

There is another story of a shipwreck in the Mediterranean on the way to Rome. This time it is not Aeneas but Saint Paul in the ship. As Gregory wrote these letters Saint Paul's bones were still entombed in Rome. Gregory jealously guarded his relics from imperial and patriarchal designs. In the story Saint Paul was a prisoner on board going to trial. He was neither helmsman nor captain. The ship was a large grain ship sailing from Alexandria to Rome with prisoners, soldiers, a centurion, the owner of the ship and a captain and crew.<sup>73</sup> It was a microcosm of the empire and its commerce. When the storm had driven them and gave them no more hope than Aeneas and his men had, Paul received a revelation and related it to all the people on board: that the ship and all the cargo would be lost, but all their lives would be saved.<sup>74</sup> That picture looks more like the ship of state in the Roman West, and especially in the city of Rome as Gregory knew it. Saint Paul's role on board was an excellent analogy of Gregory's pastoral duties to cure and save souls with no guarantee of earthly safety. The anomaly was that Gregory was not only a prisoner on board serving against his will, destined fated to endure the storm and the coming wreck, but he had also been appointed helmsman. At the end of the story, all the souls that were on board float ashore to Malta, on planks.<sup>75</sup> In this story Jesus was not walking and Paul does not try. Peter's successor and the guardian of Saint Paul's tomb, pope Gregory, has no sense at all that he can tread upon the waves that are crashing upon his metaphorical ship. Gregory however believed that Christ was in his fellow bishops, and he begged them to stretch out their hand of prayer. So in Gregory's imagery, the waves are from Virgil and David (Psalm 69), the

---

<sup>73</sup>Acts 27-8

<sup>74</sup>Acts 27:21-6

<sup>75</sup>Acts 27:44

planks are from Virgil and Saint Luke (Acts), the stretched out hand appears in Saint Mathew, but the rotting ship is from Gregory's own imagery of Rome. Both Gregory's ship and Luke's look like the ship of state. Luke's is a mighty grain ship of the golden era of the empire. Five centuries later Gregory's is old, and about to be broken up, and it has a successor to the apostles at the helm.

Gregory is mixing elements from the various sources for his metaphor. Like Aeneas he is the helmsman. Like Peter he is sinking and reaches out his hand to be saved. Like Paul he is in a ship wreck in which souls but not property can be saved. Unlike Aeneas he is not about to take part in the birth of Rome, but feels that he is at the helm during its final days of Rome and of the world. The new hybrid metaphor reflects the conditions on the ground in Mediterranean societies during the slow transition from late antiquity to the early middle ages. Gregory has been appointed as captain of a rotting ship, not because the Church or papacy was rotting, but because the city was buffeted and disintegrating. The role of bishops in Mediterranean cities had changed.<sup>76</sup> The old metaphors no longer served. The apostolic man could no longer be like Saint Paul, a mere prisoner for Christ. As the bishop of Rome Gregory was obligated to care for the needs of the city in a complementary role with his brother the urban prefect, to orchestrate the feeding of the people, to negotiate with the armies of Lombards and to keep the Roman garrison from robbing the Roman people.<sup>77</sup> Old Rome was visibly rotting, and the economic and security environments seemed beyond repair. Gregory, in his letter to Leander pictured vice in society as the sea waters streaming into the hold of his ship. He is overwhelmed by the task of stopping the

---

<sup>76</sup> Brown, Peter. *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012, 506-7.

<sup>77</sup> Wickham, Chris. *The Inheritance of Rome: a History of Europe from 400 to 1000*. New York: Viking, 2009, 141, 147

influx. In his letter to John the Faster on the other hand he simply says, “Waves pour in from all sides.” War, famine, pestilence and death—all the horsemen of the Apocalypse came in like waves. During these times work of governance often required that bishops, who were often from elite family’s with experience in administration, help at the helm..

### **Gregory’s Theory of Church and State**

David Hipshon writing on Gregory’s political thought concludes that the pope did not confuse temporal and spiritual authority. He was not so busy filling in the gaps of broken down temporal authority to not give time to think about the issue of the relationship between church and state theologically. Rather in his writings he appears committed to the Neo-Platonic and Pseudo-Dionysian view of a hierarchy of being, in which spiritual authority is superior, but bows to temporal authority in temporal things. Gregory regards worldly authority as having its place in God’s positive plans. It is a servant of the process of redemption. In a society consisting mostly of baptized Christians those who wielded temporal authority also have some pastoral responsibility.<sup>78</sup> Gregory took Christian thought forward, argues Hipshon, from the tension between temporal and spiritual authority which Saint Augustine expressed, to a very symbiotic relationship between the two under God’s will. This was a theory that allowed medieval bishops and medieval princes to cooperate in a time of difficult governance.<sup>79</sup> It is not surprising that Gregory’s rotting ship metaphor mixes sources and adds the rotten ship. The Church and the City were in a symbiotic relationship. It is the ship of state that is old and rotten whereas the vicar of Saint Peter is unwillingly at the helm and distressed about it.

---

<sup>78</sup> David Hipshon, “Gregory the Great’s ‘Political Thought.’” *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* null.03 (2002): 439-53.

<sup>79</sup> Hipshon, “Gregory,” 452-3

Julia Hillner uses the *Registrum epistolarum* of Gregory to examine a new form of criminal justice and reform in the Empire and in Gaul which had been encoded in law a half century before Gregory's papacy, by the emperor Justinian. It is an example of the new symbiosis between the Church and the State. Christian judges and convicts were looking for ways to avoid executing the harsh penalties of Roman law. A new set of values had emerged in which preserving the honor of the convicted individuals and preventing cycles of violence became a priority. Judges began experimenting with the alternative sentencing by assigning criminals to do penance in a monastery. The practice spread. Bishops and abbots pre-empted criminal justice by assigning penance in monasteries under their authority. Justinianic law affirmed the practice. Hillner observes that in Gregory's letters concerning monasteries he mentions run-away ascetics (vow-breakers). She identifies them as convicts who committed themselves to the alternative sentence in the monastery. The pope in these letters instructs the recipients of the letters to confine the fugitives and to secure their repentance. Gregory's sense of responsibility to stop the storm waves of vice from entering and sinking the ship included the duty to coerce malefactors. If Hillner is correct, the pope was using monasteries as the first penitentiaries in the original meaning of that word.<sup>80</sup> Monks had left the world to become ascetics, even mystics. Gregory was one of them. Ironically they became responsible for the unenviable task of coercing convicts living among them to fulfill their vows of penance.

The ambiguity of Gregory's ship marks a new relationship between temporal and spiritual authority in the Mediterranean region, especially in the West where temporal power was more fractured. The letters, according to Chris Wickham, do not indicate that Gregory wielded

---

<sup>80</sup> Julia Hillner, "Gregory the Great's 'Prisons': Monastic Confinement in Early Byzantine Italy." *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 19.3 (2011): 433-71.

coherent authority in Gaul or North Africa. Local bishops maintained their autonomy. Gregory had difficulty inserting reform candidates for the episcopate.<sup>81</sup> According to a map of the relative quantities of letters he sent across the Mediterranean his correspondence is weighted heavily toward Byzantine Italy, Sicily, and eastward.<sup>82</sup> His relationship to the rotting ship of the City of Rome and the affairs of empire, measured by the data in the letters, was strong. They reflect a broad range of Gregory's responsibilities and authorities in temporal affairs. The pope had a greater burden than most bishops because of his duties administrating papal estates and feeding the city. Markus' thesis in his book *The End of Ancient Christianity* is that early Christianity lived in a high tension relationship with the world. There was wide latitude for the world to be worldly while the church pursued its ideals. At the dawn of the medieval period the Church seems to him to begin to swallow up the secular realm at the same time the Church comes under the rule of ascetics like Gregory. The room for both the flesh and the world seems to narrow. Markus misconstrues the conflation of secular and spiritual powers and the increase of asceticism when he concludes, "The Devil was close, always ready to swallow up the world and the flesh."<sup>83</sup> The Devil did not get close to swallowing up the secular realm or carnal enjoyments through the cancerous growth of an ascetic Church dominating secular affairs. Rather Gregory's early medieval period is characterized by the Church and the temporal powers in far more cooperation during dangerous times. Gregory's ascetic reform in the church had limited success in the church and none that we know of in the world at large, but his administrative talents and moral authority were needed in the aging city.

---

<sup>81</sup> Wickham, *The Inheritance*, 171-2; Martyn, *Introduction*, 52-7

<sup>82</sup> Markus, *Gregory*, xx-xxi

<sup>83</sup> R. A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, 227.

Constantinople was a world away from Gregory's Rome. It was mature but still young. Hagia Sofia was barely 50 years old. It was Greek with limited Latin. The efforts of Justinian to re-integrate Italy into the empire had, for the most part, failed in the onslaught of the Lombards. Rome was not marginal to the empire. Gregory's beloved Latin had limited currency in the palace in Constantinople. He held on to his loyalty to the empire by corresponding with the palace. This third letter suggests that it was sometimes a strain to manage communications.

### **1.28 Gregory to Aristobulus, ex-prefect and imperial secretary, February 591**

My tongue does not suffice to express my feelings fully, I admit, but whatever I feel about you, your own feelings can describe to you better. Yet I have heard that you labor under some adversities. But I am not all that distressed over this. For very often a ship, able to reach the open sea after a period of good weather, is checked at the very start of its sea-voyage, with the wind against it, and driven back, it is recalled to port.

Furthermore, if it should happen by chance that you receive a prolix letter of mine for translation, I beg you translate it not word for word but following the sense of each passage, because very often the force of the meaning is lost while the correctness of each word is observed.

The ambiguity of Gregory's first statement about mutual feeling is funny, or disturbing. This is the sense of humor that Richards found so devastating, but perhaps we don't need to be too sensitive on behalf of the imperial secretary. It may be that Gregory correctly sensed some malice in his wooden translations of Gregory's correspondence with the palace. His admission that his letters might be long suggests that he has heard that the imperial translator does not like all the work. As a translator Aristobulus had the power to be accurate and to kill the message at the same time.

Gregory's awareness that the imperial secretary's translations of his letters from Latin to Greek were both literally accurate and also woefully clumsy indicates that Martyn's opinion of his Greek skills maybe correct: he was politically Latinate, but as a scholar and a diplomat, he could work with Greek enough to know that a hyper literal translation was damaging. Gregory

would not however enter into technical theological debates in the Greek language. He had his limits and hid far behind them.<sup>84</sup> Joan Petersen however, in her article, “‘Homo omnino Latinus?’”, retracts her earlier assertion that Gregory’s knew Greek well and concludes that he only knew rudimentary Greek.<sup>85</sup> Gregory alludes to Greek books, making it look like he knows Greek. If those works were available to him in Latin however, then we need to take his own claim that he does not know Greek more seriously. Peterson identifies Latin translations of most of the Greek works to which Gregory alludes and demonstrates that these were available to him. She presumes that he had oral sources for the few references that cannot be explained in that manner. It seems to her that the evidence for his ignorance of Greek is stronger than the evidence she once used to assert his knowledge of Greek.<sup>86</sup> Nevertheless, she concludes that he was sufficiently bi-cultural that he stood like a four-handed road sign, pointing not only backward to Late Antiquity and forward to the Medieval world, but also Westward to the Latinate culture, and eastward to the Greek.<sup>87</sup> Whickham might modify that distinctive role, and point out together with Economou, that the popes of this period were taken much more seriously in Byzantine Italy, Sicily and the East than they were in westward regions. Gregory did have the distinction of establishing beachheads of papal authority in Spain, Sardinia and England. In the long run, the Greeks enjoyed a translation of his Dialogues and called him the *Dialogist*, but the Latinate Christians of the western Mediterranean and northwest Europe called him Gregory the

---

<sup>84</sup> Martyn, *Introduction*, 102-3

<sup>85</sup> Joan M. Petersen, “‘Homo omnino Latinus?’ The Theological and Cultural Background of Pope Gregory the Great.” *Speculum* 62.3 (1987): 529-51.

<sup>86</sup> Petersen, “‘Homo omnino, 529-51

<sup>87</sup> Petersen, “‘Homo omnino, 551

Great. His writings, his vision for pastoral care and Christian leadership, and his missionary projects were a major influence until the high middle ages.

In Epistle 1.28 the ship of the imperial secretary has been having Mediterranean problems, with occasional unpredictable wind patterns. They have blown him right back to where he started. That does not surprise Gregory—it happens all the time. It is pleasant to conclude our probe into Gregory’s relationship with the sea at this point. His mind is the sea and yet unperturbed by the wind that blows the secretary back into port. Of course it is not Gregory’s boat, and it is not clear what he thinks of the secretary. The pope’s purpose is to provide at least some comfort to the frustrated secretary. The impression is that even a windy sea is not threatening. Perhaps Gregory has gotten used to the pressures of his office as well. He could point to real accomplishments. There was progress.

Gregory also recognize the dearth of Greek knowledge in Rome and the problems of translating his Latin letters for the imperial palace in Constantinople. It is only in hindsight however that he appears at the historic cross roads of these developments. If he stood between ages and civilizations dealt with the forces that were separating the Greek east from the Latin west. He participated in the act of creating new medieval era. He could not have seen how different it would be from his beloved classical Roman heritage. His sense of the future was very much an eschatological one.<sup>88</sup> Gregory worked and prayed believing the world was ending right before his eyes and yet produced building blocks for something entirely new: a catholic western medieval Europe.

---

<sup>88</sup>Markus, *Gregory*, 51-2

## Bibliography

- Abulafia, David, ed. *The Mediterranean in History*. London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2003.
- Brown, Peter. *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012.
- Dal Santo, Matthew, "The Shadow of a Doubt? A Note on the *Dialogues* and *Registrum Epistolarum* of Pope Gregory the Great (590-604). *The Journal Ecclesiastical History* 61.01 (2010): 3-17
- Ekonomou, Andrew J. *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes*. New York: Lexington Books, 2007.
- Gregory the Great, *Parables of the Gospel*. Trans. Nora Burke. Chicago: Scepter Publishers Limited, 1960.
- Hillner, Julia. "Gregory the Great's 'Prisons': Monastic Confinement in Early Byzantine Italy." *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 19.3 (2011): 433-71.
- Hipshon, David. "Gregory the Great's 'Political Thought.'" *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* null.03 (2002): 439-53.
- Holy Bible. Revised Standard Version. New York: Thomas and Nelson Publishers, 1952.
- Homer, *The Odyssey*. Chicago: William Bentley, 1952, pp 181-322
- Horden, Peregrine and Nicholas Purcell. *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*. Malden MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2000.
- Markus, R. A. *Gregory the Great: and his World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Markus, R. A. *The End of Ancient Christianity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Martyn, John R. C. *Introduction and Notes for The Letters of Gregory the Great*. 3 volumes. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2004.
- McCluhan, Marshall. "The Medium is the Message," *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. 1964. Accessed on December 23, 2014 at <http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/mcluhan.mediummessage.pdf>

Petersen, Joan M. "‘Homo omnino Latinus’? The Theological and Cultural Background of Pope Gregory the Great." *Speculum* 62.3 (1987): 529-51.

Richards, Jeffrey. *Counsel of God: The Life and Times of Gregory the Great*. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980.

Roach, Andrew. Book review of *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400-800* by Chris Wickham. Oxford University Press. *Reviews in History*. Sunday, 31 December, 2006. <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews>.

Squatritit, Paolo. "The Floods of 589 and Climate Change at the Beginning of the Middle Ages: An Italian Microhistory." *Speculum* 85.4 (2010): 799-825.

Suau, Pierre. "St. Leander of Seville." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 9. New York: bert Appleton Company, 1910. 23 Dec. 2014  
<<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09102a.htm>>.

*The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great, By an Anonymous Monk of Whitby*. Trans. Bertram Colgrave. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1968.

*The Letters of Gregory the Great: Translated with Introduction and Notes*. Trans. John R.C. Martyn, 3 volumes. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2004.

"The Physical Background" and "Climate" in "Setting the Scene" introductory class reading on the Mediterranean Sea.

Valantasis, Richard. Book Review of *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great*. by Conrad D. Leyser. Oxford University Press, 2001. 221 pages. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 71.1 (2003): 215-17.

Virgil. *The Aeneid*. Chicago: William Bentley, 1952. pp 101-379

Wickham, Chris. *The Inheritance of Rome: a History of Europe from 400 to 1000*. New York: Viking, 2009.

## **For More Information About *Pithos***

You can find information about submitting to *Pithos* and digital copies of our past volumes online at:

<http://classics.sfsu.edu/classics-students-association>

For further inquiries, please e-mail us at: [pithos.sfsu@gmail.com](mailto:pithos.sfsu@gmail.com)

To be added to the Classics Students Association Mailing List forward the following information: name, address, telephone (optional) and e-mail to the e-mail address:

[csa.sfstate@gmail.com](mailto:csa.sfstate@gmail.com),

All inquiries may also be sent via post to:

Classics Students Association

Care of the Department of Classics

San Francisco State University

1600 Holloway Avenue

San Francisco, CA 94132