

POLITIAN'S TRANSLATION OF CALLIMACHUS'S 'BATH OF PALLAS' IN THE *MISCELLANEA* (1489)

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Chapter 80 of Politian's *Miscellanea* contains the *editio princeps* of Callimachus's 'Bath of Pallas' (Hymn 5), along with a translation of the poem into Latin elegiacs.¹ Politian's first biographer, Friedrich Otto Mencke (171-73), assesses it harshly:² **369**

In translating—that is to say, in finding equivalents for the content and artistic features of a poet, which Politian excelled at—I admit that you will hardly find another version of any Greek poem which, when scrutinised, so precisely conveys every feature of the Greek author's material and diction. Callimachus says nothing that Politian does not in the exact same way. The same meaning, the same precision, the same force of expression is contained in the Latin as in the Greek couplets....One can scarcely deny that, as this translator has bound himself throughout by strict rules, and adhered closely to individual words, he has gone about versifying with some trouble; nor does he compose verse here with the same inspiration to be found in his other compositions—so much so that I miss his attractive knack for expression, which reflects his character, and which is the most important perfection for a translator—and indeed the principal charm of Politian's work. The harsh elisions of words, and the profusion of *hyperbata* (deviations from logical word order), slow down the reader, indeed are virtually countless; there is no inspiration or poetical spark, except perhaps in the beginning; nothing, in fact, pleases the ear here; I found it overall crabbed, as though the Muses were muttering under their breath. In this poem the pentameters, which one should tastefully round off with a disyllable, run on in almost every instance into the next couplet; the extra words cannot be declaimed without inducing a certain amount of yawning. I shall pass over other defects that one would not permit in such a majestic and stately poem, unless one did so in a spirit of indulgence.

Mencke's specific charges are difficult to dispute. He objects to the translator's rigid practice, to elision within the verses, to frequent *hyperbaton*, and to the endings of the elegiac couplets, which do not end invariably in disyllables, and indeed do not end: the sense often spills into the next line. Euphony, whilst slippery to define, is

surely not one of this translation's strong points (for example, 'Pro cervis paucis, dorcadibusque habeas' (line 92)). All these features are self-evident in the poem; yet the critic's taste is not beyond examination. It is hardly fair to expect inventive verbal fecundity in an avowed word-for-word translation; the terms in which Mencke expresses his dismay at this work—no inspiration or poetical spark beyond the opening—raise the question of whether the assertion that Politian had bound himself with strict rules might not be applied more justly to Mencke.

A short extract from the text of Politian's version, 'In Palladis Lavacrum' (lines 21-36), will demonstrate the justice of Mencke's observations, if not his conclusions: the elisions in each couplet average a little under one per line in this passage, for example, 'splendido in' (21), 'eandem iterum' (22), 'verum incita' (23), 'Stellae apud' (24) and so on, with two each ('se ungit', 'quo Amphitryonades'; 'Ferte etiam', 'solido ex') in lines 30 and 31:

370

- 21 Nec Iuno, sed sola Venus, se splendido in aere
Vidit, eandem iterum disposuitque comam.
Bis sexaginta spatiis verum incita cursu,
Stellae apud Eurotan ceu Lacedaemoniae,
25 Perfricuit tantum pingui se diva liquore,
De baccis, arbor quem sua protulerat.
O puerae emicuit rubor illico, matutina
Quem rosa, quem grano punica mala ferunt.
Ergo marem nunc tantum olei quoque ferte liquorem,
30 Quo se ungit Castor, quo Amphitryonades.
Ferte etiam solido ex auro, quo pectine crines
Explicet, et pinguem caesariem dirimat.
Exi age iam o Pallas, praesto tibi virgineus grex,
Natae magnorum carus Acestoridum.
35 O Pallas quin iam clypeus Diomedis et ipse
Fertur, ut Argivum mos vetus obtinuit.

'Nor did Juno; only Venus looked at herself in shining bronze, and rearranged the same lock of hair a second time. Minerva swiftly ran twice sixty lengths, Like the Lacedaemonian stars by the Eurotas; (25) Then the goddess rubbed herself all over with that rich fluid from the fruits which her own tree produced, O girls, at that spot a blush gleamed forth, the same one which the morning rose produces, and the Punic apple also does, in its seed. On that account, bring forth only that manly liquid, olive oil (30) with which Castor anoints himself, and Amphitryonades; also, bring a comb of solid gold, with which she may disentangle her locks, and part her anointed head of hair. Come out now, O Pallas: your beloved maiden flock stands before you, the daughters of the mighty Arestorids. (35) O Pallas, come: now the shield of Diomedes is being brought out, as has been the ancient custom of the Argives.'

'Lacedaemoniae' (24); 'protulerat' (26); 'Amphitryoniades' (30); 'dirimat' (32); 'Acestoridum' (34); 'obtinuit' (36): these pentameters do not frequently close with two-syllable words. Politian's translation conforms little here to Augustan standards of taste, or at least to the norms of elegiac composition presumably drilled into

Mencke as a schoolboy; it will be worthwhile briefly to review some of these.³

The most 'correct' writer of Golden Latin elegy is Ovid, who composed more verses in this metre than any other major poet; the form's general development may be traced between the deaths of Catullus (c. 54 BC) and Ovid (AD 17 or 18).⁴ Greek elegy, with its longer history and more widespread use, naturally involves a looser and more inclusive network of genres than Latin, which is associated mainly with erotic narrative; in terms of prosody, style and arrangement of words, there are fewer hard rules to be transgressed (see West 23-24). The set of practices that rapidly evolved in Rome during the 20s BC with the first books of Propertius (c. 29/28 BC) and Tibullus (c. 26 BC) mean that even a relatively neutral commentator may be severe in noting deviations from accepted standards:

elegiac verse was in fact moulded and formalised to Roman taste rather later than pure hexameter verse: this is well demonstrated by Catullus, whose hexameters...already conform to Augustan restrictions, while his pentameters are as uncouth⁵ as those to be found in Ennius's epitaphs. (Raven, *Latin Metre* 104)

371

Except in long periods and run-on sentences, Latin elegiac couplets tend to be self-contained units; Platnauer notes a chronological progression away from enjambment in the Augustan period, with Tibullus avoiding it 91%, Propertius 93%, and Ovid 95% of the time (27).⁶ This is manifestly not the case in Callimachus's 'Bath of Pallas', at least. In terms of word order, *hyperbaton* is supremely rare in Golden Latin elegy; indeed, there are only a few instances of it in the vast Ovidian corpus, and none in Tibullus or Propertius. The Augustans are scrupulous about rhythm: Catullus's lines in his poems 65-116 are in general heavily spondaic, with less than two-fifths of the feet in his elegiac verses dactylic; Ovid almost reverses this proportion, with dactyls making up 57% of his elegiac feet (Platnauer 37). The most obvious change in taste between the elegiacs of Catullus and Ovid involves elision, a little more than one on average in each Catullan couplet drops to one fifth of that in Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* and *Tristia*; Propertius, somewhat more prone to elision than Ovid, still has less than half as many as Catullus, whom Raven criticises for often allowing it over the word-division after the first half of the pentameter (Platnauer 72-73; Raven, *Latin Metre* 106).

Mencke's censure about the endings of Politian's pentameters is based on another important refinement in Augustan elegy. Roughly two fifths of Catullus's pentameters end in disyllables: there is one monosyllabic ending (76.8: 'dictaque factaque sunt'), one with seven syllables (68.112: 'Amphitryoniades'); the rest have up to five. For an idea of the variety in his couplet-endings, one may examine the pentameter halves of the successive lines between 66.43 and 66.50: 44 'progenies Thiae clara supervehitur'; 46 'per medium classi barbara navit Athon'; 48 'Iuppiter ut Chalybon omne genus pereat'; 50 'institit ac ferri stringere duritiem'. In the first book of Propertius's elegies, 61% of the couplets end in disyllables; 86% in his second; his successive books and Tibullus's end over 90% of their pentameters in two-syllable words; at last, every elegiac couplet in Ovid's *Heroides* I-XV finishes with a disyllable (Wilkinson 119).

Mencke's judgments, whatever their value, are not based on whim: Politian followed Catullan rather than Augustan precedents in the style of his 'In Palladis Lavacrum'. Yet he was entirely capable of producing competent, even brilliant, pastiches of Virgilian and Ovidian hexameters as early as 1469/70, when he produced his Latin rendition of Book II of the *Iliad*, the first of four books he translated from the age of fifteen.⁷ It is hazardous to base an argument on a single judgment of taste, yet the scholarly consensus seems to be that Politian was the most skilled and erudite Latin poet of the Renaissance; no less a critic than Hugh Lloyd-Jones finds 'Politian's elegy on the death of Albiera degli Albizzi challenges and stands up to comparison with the great elegy of Propertius on Cornelia. No poem [in Perosa and Sparrow] is more moving than the same writer's lament for Lorenzo il Magnifico' (34). The elegy for Albiera was produced in 1473, when the poet was nineteen years old, a full decade before he composed the first of his *Sylvae*, the most accomplished of his original Latin verses (see Poliziano, *Due poemetti latini* xi). The majority of Politian's elegiac verses
372 were composed in the 1470s;⁸ the most ambitious of his early original Latin compositions, the *Sylva in scabiem* (in hexameters), seems to have been completed in 1476.⁹ While the artistic merits of these works are beyond the scope of this essay, their technical features are not. All these poems are noticeably heavy on elisions, as a more or less random sample of the elegy *Ad Bartholomaeum Fontium* (1473) will demonstrate (lines 157-70):

Hic docet undeni resecant ut sidera circi,
 Cur nitido tantum lacteus orbe patet;
 Ut cum patre Venus miseris mortalibus aequa est,
 160 Cur saepe obscuris Luna laborat equis;
 Aurea cur celso pendentia vincula mundo
 Maeonii finxit Musa beata senis;
 Cur saepe aerii luctantur in aequore venti,
 Cur glacie et saeva grandine terra riget
 165 Atque eadem Icario cur mox perrumpitur aestu,
 Cur pluvius madidas combibit arcus aquas;
 Quae causa est vernum laxari fulmine coelum,
 An ruat e puro stella serena polo.

(Poliziano, *Due poemetti latini* 26-28)

'He teaches how eleven circles divide up the stars; why the Milky Way extends so far in a glittering ring; that Venus (along with her father) is level with pitiable mortals; why the moon is so often oppressed by dark horses; why the blessed Muse of that old Maeonian bard contrived golden hanging chains for the lofty heavens; why airy winds contend over the sea; why the ground stiffens with ice and fierce hail and soon is broken by Icarian fire; why the rainbow absorbs rainwater; why the spring sky is opened by thunderbolts, or a bright star falls from a clear sky.'

It will be noted that the pentameters here end 'correctly' in disyllables; though lines 163-165 contain 'saepe aerii', 'glacie et' and the particularly egregious 'atque eadem

Icario'; the last of these in particular is a violation of classical convention.

Perhaps it is anachronistic to make too much of this tendency. How uncontroversial is the assumption that elision as a stylistic feature was little scrutinised in Politian's time, given the absence of a single extensive, systematic study of Renaissance Latin prosody and metre?¹⁰ Moreover, the ancient grammarians tend to avoid such matters; the fullest discussion of elision in any of their surviving works, by Marius Plotius Sacerdos, provides a dozen examples from Virgil and Lucretius, roughly three hundred words stating some basic rules, and little else (Keil 448).¹¹ Maximus Victorinus and Marius Victorinus give even less, only the barest definition of the term 'elision'. In the absence of guidance on the technical aspects of Roman elegy, the Renaissance poet was obliged simply to read a great deal of poetry, and hope to notice and absorb enough classical precedents to form a correct style. Elision does not seem to bother Politian or his contemporaries unduly: in his edition of the *Sylva in scabiem*, Alessandro Perosa includes an anonymous elegy 'De scabie' from this period which averages more than one elision per line.¹² This may be an egregious example; but a casual survey of an anthology such as Perosa and Sparrow's *Renaissance Latin Verse* will tend to suggest that Mencke's eighteenth-century scruples about elision in elegy might have surprised most neo-Latin poets before his period. Politian's early verses, including his elegy for Albiera, all feature this tendency to elide syllables, as though the poet were trying to cram as many words into each line as possible. Yet this diminishes over time: the thirty-line 'Praefatio' in elegiacs to the *Manto* (1482) demonstrates that he was capable of producing 'correct' Augustan-style elegies some seven years before the publication of the *Miscellanea* (Poliziano, *Silvae* 4). Why, then, should he conform in his translation of Callimachus to an apparently inferior Catullan model? Pope says in his *Essay on Criticism*: 'Those oft are Stratagems which Errors seem, / Nor is it Homer Nods, but We that Dream.'

373

As a poet, a writer of prose, and a scholar, Politian places supreme importance on tradition, and precise knowledge of classical precedents.¹³ In the case of 'In Palladis Lavacrum', he had no other model available to him for bringing across the effect of Callimachean Greek into classical Latin beyond Catullus 66, which translates the 'Lock of Berenice' poem into elegiacs; once this is understood, then the eccentric features of this translation—the elision, *hyperbaton*, the pentameter-endings—may begin to seem less perverse. Constantino Nigra points out that in Callimachus's Greek hymn, fifty-one out of seventy-six distichs end in polysyllables, fifteen in disyllables; Politian preserves roughly the same proportion in his version (435). Catullus 66 ends fifteen out of forty-seven distichs with disyllables. The coincidence of fifteen disyllable endings in Callimachus's 'Bath of Pallas' and Catullus's 'Rape of the Lock' is of course just that, a coincidence; still, it is clear that Politian may have bound himself by even stricter rules than Mencke imagined; this is no mere word-for-word rendering after all.

Catullus makes further sense as a stylistic model for this translation because the austere Callimachean aesthetic is alien to any taste based on standards established

by classical Latin verse. A reader familiar with the Alexandrian poet only through Catullus, Horace and Propertius, or commentaries to their works, could be forgiven for radically misconceiving the character of his surviving poetry.¹⁴ Or not, as Politian insists, in a characteristic attack on Domizio Calderini:

Iam illud quoque miror, cur et Domitius, et alii quidam post illum, quocumque momento, quacunque occasione, scribere audeant, hoc aut illud imitatione Callimachi dictum fuisse a Propertio, cum praeter hymnos pauculos nihil prorsus extet ad nos poetae illius, nec autem plane quicquam quod amoris argumenta contineat. (*Miscellanorum Centuria Prima*, ch. lxxx)¹⁵

'I find it particularly surprising that Domizio and certain of his followers, for some reason and at some point, should dare to write that this or that was said by Propertius in imitation of Callimachus when, beyond a few hymns, nothing further remains to us of that poet, nor is there anything at all that contains material on love.'

374

The fourth book of Propertius begins with an elegy in which he boasts, not without an opaque ironical intent, to be the Roman Callimachus (4.1.63-64; see Hutchinson 72). But Callimachus, at least in his hymns, has qualities radically different from those of Propertius or the major Latin poets. His verses are sparing in imagery, with little metaphor, simile, or the other standard ornaments and devices of classical Roman literature. This is poetry for the hardened connoisseur: the chief aesthetic pleasures of the 'Bath of Pallas' hymn lie in the clever use of Doric forms, and the subtle responses to Greek classics, not least the Homeric epics, the Homeric Hymns, and Euripides' *Hippolytus*. Characterisation and dramatic technique are muted when compared to those of narratives in Latin elegy and satire. A reader cannot appreciate, or indeed make sense of, this poem, without a thorough understanding of its place in literary tradition. This would have been a particular hurdle for Politian's original audience. Of course Politian recognised this: in chapter 80 of the *Miscellanea* he is inventive, and unusually modest, with pre-emptive excuses for the quality of his rendering. An uncouth Catullan style would grant this translation not only a prestigious ancestor, and an easier, familiar access to the oddities of style in the 'Bath of Pallas' (which a prose paraphrase could not supply), but also a potential excuse for artistic failure.

Politian's 'In Palladis Lavacrum' is the culmination of his efforts as a translator of poetry. As mentioned above, he had first exposed himself to the anxieties involved in turning Greek into readable Latin verse at the age of fifteen, with his renditions of Books II-V of the *Iliad* between 1469 and 1475.¹⁶ The first two to be completed, Books II and III, were presented to Lorenzo de' Medici in 1470 and 1472, and may be considered exercises in paraphrase, attempts to recast Homer in a palatably Augustan idiom. Generic epithets are either ignored or heavily modified; Homeric syntax is not always reproduced; passages are reshaped to conform more closely to the model of the Virgilian scenes that had originally imitated them. Homer's imagery is expanded and recast: Book III in particular is enlivened with Virgilian as well as Ovidian pastiche.

The vocabulary is quite literally more fiery and flashy: the young Politian makes frequent use of words like 'aeratus', 'aureus', 'candidus', 'clarus', 'flavus', 'fulvus', 'nitens' and 'nivens' (to mention only adjectives) to enliven already vivid material. An excerpt from the beginning of Book II illustrates Politian's approach in this paraphrase:

Nox erat, et summo radiabant sidera coelo,
 Divorumque hominumque genus sopor altus habebat;
 Cum pater ipse deum per noctem plurima volvens
 Iupiter arcano versabat pectore curas,
 Qua pereant Danaï et magnum venerentur Achillem.
 Optima cui tandem sedit sententia cordi,
 Magnanimum ad regem fallacem mittere Somnum,
 Quem sic alloquitur paucis ac talia mandat:
 Vade, age, rumpe moras, divum placidissime somne,
 Argivumque ducem, quem nunc fulgentia signis
 Castra tenent molli resolutum membra sopore,
 Alloquere, et celeres defer mea dicta per auras:

375

(1-12, from Poliziano, *Prose volgari* 434-35)

'It was night, and the stars were glittering in the high heavens; deep sleep held the tribes of men and gods alike, as Jupiter himself, the father of the gods meditated upon many things, pondering concerns deep in his mind, about how Greeks might be destroyed and honour great Achilles. At last the soundest decision settled in his heart, to send a deceptive dream to the great-souled king. Briefly he addressed the dream thus and gave these orders: Go forth without delay, o Sleep, mildest of the gods, and address the Argive king, whom the encampment glaring with banners now holds, limbs relaxed in sleep; carry my words through the swift air...

ἄλλοι μὲν ῥα θεοὶ τε καὶ ἄνδρες ἱπποκορυσταὶ
 εὖδον παννύχιοι, Δία δ' οὐκ ἔχε νήδυμος ὕπνος,
 ἀλλ' ὃ γε μερμήριζε κατὰ φρένα ὡς Ἀχιλῆα
 τιμῆσιν, ὀλέσῃ δὲ πολέας ἐπὶ νηυσὶν Ἀχαιῶν.
 ἦδε δὲ οἱ κατὰ θυμὸν ἀρίστη φαίνετο βουλή,
 πέμψαι ἐπ' Ἀτρεΐδῃ Ἀγαμέμνονι οὐλον ὄνειρον·
 καὶ μιν φωνήσας ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα·
 'βάσκει' ἴθι οὐλε ὄνειρε θεὸς ἐπὶ νῆας Ἀχαιῶν·
 ἔλθῶν ἐς κλισίην Ἀγαμέμνονος Ἀτρεΐδαο
 πάντα μάλ' ἀτρεκέως ἀγορεύεμεν ὡς ἐπιτέλλω.

(Homer, *Iliad* 2.1-10)

'Now the gods, and men who fought from chariots, slept through the night; but balmy sleep did not come upon Zeus, who pondered in his heart how he might honour Achilles and destroy many men beside the Achaeans' ships. This appeared in his mind to be the best plan: to send a destructive dream to Agamemnon the son of Atreus; he addressed it and spoke winged words: go forth, destructive Dream, to the swift ships of the Achaeans; when you come to the tent of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, tell him all this precisely as I command you...

This misses nothing in Homer, but precision and accuracy are manifestly a distant second to readability and style.

Politian's 1473 rendition of Moschus's 'Amor Fugitivus' into hexameters was produced between the two halves of his four books of the *Iliad*, and represents an early transitional phase in his translation practice, as he moves from paraphrase towards word-for-word rendering (see Maier 107-112, which includes the text).¹⁸ This is his only other substantial rendering of Greek verse into Latin until 1489.¹⁹ He emended the text in 1494, shortly before his death; thus we have not only an example of an early attempt at 'ad verbum' translation, but also evidence that the poet-philologist was for the most part satisfied with his youthful efforts, whatever he claimed to his correspondent Antonio Zeno. These twelve alterations render the translation more conventionally idiomatic in Latin—closer to the precise meaning of the original, whilst further away from its 'word for word' expression.²⁰ Some of these changes are straightforward improvements in precision:

376

Line 5: οὐ γυμνὸν τὸ φίλαμα, τὸ δ' ὃ ξένε, καὶ πλεον ἔξεις
 '...not a bare kiss; no, you, stranger, will have more'
 1494: Non **simplex** dabo basiolum; plus, hospes, habebis
 1473: Non **tantum** dabo basiolum; plus, hospes, habebis

Others sharpen the diction to something more like that of a Latin epigram:

Line 7: Χρῶτα μὲν οὐ λευκός, πυρὶ δ' εἵκελος ὄμματα δ' αὐτῷ
 'his complexion isn't white, but rather like fire; as for his eyes'
 1494: Non **est candidulus**, verum ignem imitatur: ocelli
 1473: *Corpore non niveus*, verum ignem imitatur: ocelli

Still others are aesthetic, and add harder consonant sounds to the verse:

Line 10: ὡς δὲ χολὰ νόος ἐστὶν, ἀνάμερος, ἡπεροπευτάς,
 'his heart is like gall; cheating, deceitful...'
 1494: Ira inflammatur, tum mens **est aspera**: fallax
 1473: Ira inflammatur, tum mens *illi effera*: fallax

Line 16: καὶ πτερόεις ὡς ὄρνις ἐφίπταται ἄλλον ἐπ' ἄλλῳ
 'he's winged like a bird, and flies from one person to another'
 1494: More **quatit pinnas, et nunc hos nunc petit illos**
 1473: More *citans pennas, nunc hos nunc advolat illos*

In one instance Politian strips away an earlier addition:

Line 23: Βατὰ λαμπὰς ἐοῖσα τὸν Ἄλιον αὐτὸν ἀναίθει.
 'his torch is tiny, but it could light the sun itself on fire'
 1494: Parvula fax olli, **solem tamen urit et ipsum**
 1473: Parvula fax olli, *sed et ipsum Hyperiona vincit*

Far from paraphrasing this work, Politian produces as precise a rendition as possible of the original poem's content, such that in two places, lines 7 and 16, his final version conveys Moschus's imagery more efficiently than Moschus himself did. The tendency

of the 1494 revisions is to reflect the wording of the original more faithfully, at the cost of what had originally seemed striking effects: line 24 in 1473 is the somewhat fey 'Parvula fax olli, sed et ipse Hyperiona vincit' ('His torch is small, but it also overcomes Hyperion'); the later version tones this down to 'Parvula fax olli, solem tamen urit et ipsum' ('His torch is small, though it also burns the sun itself') which removes any illusion of allusive significance. Yet Politian remains guilty of indulging a sweet tooth for diminutives even in 1494: line 7 changes 'corpore non niveus' ('not white of body') to 'non est candidulus' ('he is not dazzling white')—the shift in tone does not quite register in English prose, but 'candidulus' is subtly arch where 'candidus' would be rather less ironic. But such usages are entirely in keeping with the tone and style of Moschus's verses: 'basiolum' ('a little kiss') in 4 and 5, 'ocelli' ('little eyes') in 7, 'flammeoli' ('flame-coloured') in 8, 'crispulus' ('curled') in 12, and 'parvula' ('little') in 24. These diminutives emphasise the urbane, flippant preciousness of a poem that after all treats Eros as a little runaway slave—it is an elegant trifle, and deliberately, self-consciously minor. This Moschus translation, even in its uncorrected 1473 version, retains the same number of lines as the original, and may be adjudged a success on its own modest terms, being faithful to the tone, style and content of the original. The aim here is to *translate* the original, not improve it or render it more palatable to contemporary tastes. The original version was produced around the time that Politian first emended and annotated Catullus, Tibullus and Propertius; he may have fought a temptation to inflate this slight poem with a grander manner and vocabulary than it deserves.²¹

377

At this early stage Politian grappled extensively with the problem of how best to make a Greek poem into a Latin one; his very technical success with the 'Amor Fugitivus' led to an interesting experiment with the next (and final) two books of his Homer translation. Book IV was completed in 1474; the dates remain somewhat uncertain, though it is clear that Politian's ambition to produce a complete Latin *Iliad* had fizzled out by the end of 1475, after Book V was finished.²² These last two books present a startling change of approach: there is no obvious single stylistic model; the vocabulary has become noticeably eclectic. This is by no means a paraphrase, but nor is it *paene ad verbum*: a single line of Homer may be rendered across as many as three expansive Latin verses; *Liber Quintus* runs to 1052 lines, against 908 in the original. The translations of Books II and III by contrast are almost line-for-line. In these later books Politian tries to interpret and elucidate Homer even as he translates, at the cost of concision and elegance. A sample of Book V, meant to translate lines 35–42 in the original, will serve to demonstrate some of the peculiarities of this version:

Talibus increpitat Pallas medioque furem
 Gradivum educit bello, ripisque Scamandri
 Constituit. Mox terga Phryges vertere, suumque
 Quique virum danai straverunt aequore reges.
 Primus Alizonum ductorem magnus Atrides
 Assurgens Odion curru deturbat inert;²³

Intra humeros scapulas tereti transverberat hasta,
 Atque altum tota metitur cuspidē pectus:
 Procumbit lata porrectus in arva ruina,
 Et percussa gemit tellus ingentibus armis.

(lines 42-51; Poliziano, *Prose volgari* 434)

‘With these words, Pallas reproached the raging Marching God and led him out of the middle of battle, then settled him on the banks of Scamander. Soon the Phrygians turned their backs, and each of the Danaan kings threw down his man to the ground over the plain. The great, distinguished, towering son of Atreus cast Odus, chief of the Halizones, out from his motionless chariot; he pierced through the shoulder-blades between his shoulders with a smooth spear, and that great breast was sickled by the entire point: Odus fell forward, stretched out by his fall in a broad field; and the ground, struck by his massive armour, creaked.’

378

ὥς εἰποῦσα μάχης ἐξήγαγε θοῦρον Ἄρηα·
 τὸν μὲν ἔπειτα καθεῖσεν ἐπ’ ἡϊόνεντι Σκαμάνδρῳ,
 Τρῳᾶς δ’ ἔκλιναν Δαναοί· ἔλε δ’ ἄνδρα ἕκαστος
 ἡγεμόνων· πρῶτος δὲ ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων
 ἀρχὸν Ἀλιζώνων Ὀδίων μέγαν ἔκβαλε δίφρου·
 πρῶτῳ γάρ στρεφθέντι μεταφρένῳ ἐν δόρῳ πῆξεν
 ὦμων μεσσηγύς, διὰ δὲ στήθεσφιν ἔλασσε,
 δούπησεν δὲ πεσών, ἀράβησε δὲ τεύχε’ ἐπ’ αὐτῷ.

(Homer, *Iliad* 5.35-42)

‘So she spoke, and led away violent Ares; then she sat him by the banks of the Scamander, whilst the Danaans turned back the Trojans; each of the princes killed a man. First the lord of men Agamemnon hurled tall Odus, prince of the Halizones, from his chariot; even as he was turning, the spear fixed between his shoulders, driven through his chest; he fell loudly, and the armour on him rattled.’

This passage highlights a key difference between the *Iliad* and Books 6 to 12 of the *Aeneid*. Virgil’s fighting scenes are far more tightly focussed as narratives than Homer’s: they tend to centre round the fortunes of major warriors, one at a time.²⁴ Actual combat takes up surprisingly little of the ‘Iliadic’ second half of the *Aeneid*; Virgil carefully orchestrates these scenes to avoid repetition and monotony. Homer’s battle scenes may seem artless by comparison, whatever their effect on the reader. Politian ignores the Roman epic tradition to a surprising degree in the second half of his translation; by avoiding paraphrase and embellishment he misses a recognisably epic tone here, in vocabulary and style. The effect is jarring, because it runs counter to the evident polish of even Silius Italicus and Valerius Flaccus, the least impressive of the Silver Latin epic poets; and Homer is by no means artless in his arrangement of words either. Politian’s experiment here was to translate archaic Greek into classical Latin with as little modification as possible; the result is a crib in metre. From an aesthetic point of view, this is unsatisfying: a central concern of verse translation is to

convey the effect of the original to the Latin readers in their terms.

Politian's 1489 letter to Battista Guarini, in which he discusses the two verse translations of Greek in the *Miscellanea*, comes as close to an explicit articulation of his mature practice as a translator as he will ever provide:

Verum cum mihi de Graeco pene ad verbum forent antiquissima interpretanda carmina (fateor) affectavi equidem ut in verbis obsoletam vetustatem, sic in mensura ipsa et numero gratam quandam, ut speravi, novitatem. (Poliziano, *Letters* 64)

'I admit that, since I was translating ancient verse more or less word-for-word from the Greek, I did indeed intend a certain novelty in syllable-length and rhythm—which I hoped was agreeable—just as I aimed at an archaic vocabulary.'

If he is uncharacteristically candid throughout the letter it is because he is defending himself against the charge of having made two unwitting errors in his verse translations in the *Miscellanea*. These are supposedly witting errors, mistakes only of taste, which led to his apparently scanning 'imolare' with a short first syllable, and 'matutinus' with the two beginning syllables short. What he was really doing, he claims, was experimenting with prosody, deliberately including hypermetric verses in his translations, with the irreproachable precedents of Virgil and Homer for this practice. All the same, he has caved in to public opinion and elected to alter the verses in question, lest he be thought mistaken instead of misguided. Politian has a different, less tortured excuse for translating Callimachus's word ὀρείχαλκον as 'orichalcum' with a short second syllable, successfully claiming Statius as his precedent here. Further on in the letter he defends the unusual spellings 'Boeotiis' (line 125) and 'Boeotum' (line 62) in the 'In Palladis Lavacrum'.

379

Politian's letter to Guarini may be read with some scepticism, though as a statement of how Politian thought Greek verse ought to be translated it at least maintains an appearance of honesty. He emphasises a striving for 'novitas'—a stronger term than the English 'novelty': 'strangeness' or 'rarity' might be closer equivalents. Translation is to be treated as serious literature, and therefore subject to precedent and tradition; thus it is important that 'novitas' be in fact derivative, rooted in the works of intelligent, skilled predecessors like Statius and Virgil—in translations as in original compositions Politian was unusually sensitive to his place in a classical tradition. The implicit point is surely that an allusion in a translation is not merely a means of showing off one's erudition, but an aid to the reader, a means of helping him gauge focal distance (as it were), through implicitly directing his attention to parallels within a more familiar body of literature. Still, a translation for the mature Politian is fundamentally an act of scrupulous interpretation, rather than a stylistic exercise; whence the emphasis on 'ad verbum' renderings in his letter. This is Latin verse, and so Latin antecedents are of course important; but the Greek author being Latinised comes first. All this is surely consistent with the practices evident in Politian's 1494 revisions to the 'Amor Fugitivus' of Moschus, and what is said in chapter 80 itself of the *Miscellanea*: 'Vertimus igitur paene ad verbum, et quod graece dicitur παρα

ποδας, non sensu modo, sed numeris etiam, quod est difficillimum, coloribusque servatis' ('On this account, I have translated the poem virtually word for word (*par pied*, as the Greeks put it), preserving not merely the sense, but the metre as well—with the most difficult element, the stylistic figures, intact').

Now that Politian's aims as a translator are clearer, 'In Palladis Lavacrum' may be examined more closely.²⁵ Certain stylistic features of ΕΙΣ ΛΟΥΤΡΑ ΤΗΣ ΠΑΛΛΑΔΟΣ are carried across for better or for worse. Polysyllabic distichs have already been mentioned; Politian is also scrupulous about maintaining the same number of enjambments in his translation as there are in the original; further, he retains the same approximate number of *homoioтелеυτα* and near-*homoioтелеυτα*, i.e. repetition of word-endings, as Callimachus. When he misses one, as at 36-37, he is almost certain to make it up later, as at 59-60 or 68-69:

Callimachus 35-37:

380

ῶθ' ἄνα, φέρεται δὲ καὶ ἅ Διομήδεος ἄσπ'ις,
ὥς ἔθος Ἀργείως τοῦτο παλαιότερος
Εὐμήδης ἐδίδαξε, τεινὲς κεχαρισμένος ἱεὺς

'The shield of Diomedes is also being carried out, Athena, in accordance with the older Argives' practice, which Eumedes, your favoured priest, taught them.'

Politian 35-37:

O Pallas quin iam clypeus Diomedis et ipse
Fertur, ut Argivum mos vetus obtinuit.
Eumedes docuit, meditans tibi grata sacerdos

Politian 59-60:

Matrem Tiresiae, numquamque fuere seorsum:
Sed sive ad veterum moenia Thespiadum

'She was the mother of Tiresias. They were never apart from one another, whether she made for the walls of the ancient Thespiads...'

Politian 68-69:

Verum et ei multae debitae errant lachrymae,
Quamvis cara comes magnae foret usque Minervae.

'Moreover, many tears fell on her account, however much she remained the dearest constant companion of mighty Minerva.'

This is not at all consistent with the standard practices of Golden Latin versification; yet Politian not only reproduces this feature, he zealously adds a few instances of his own. The criterion of 'novitas' might perhaps have been taken to unfortunate lengths in this case; more likely Politian has settled for exact fidelity of effect—for reproducing every possible effect of the Greek original, at the cost of conventional notions of elegance.

Misjudgements and errors in the translation cannot be ignored. There is at least one surprising howler: line 37 'Εὐμήδης ἐδίδαξε, τὲν κεχαρισμένος ἱρεὺς' ('Eumedes taught [this], a priest who found favour with you'), is unhappily given in Latin as 'Eumedes docuit, meditans tibi grata sacerdos' ('Eumedes taught [this], a/your priest who was thinking of ways to please you'). The passage on Artemis at 110-12 muddies the exact relationship between Artemis and Actaeon: 'concursor' which Politian seems to have invented for the occasion, has a more adversarial edge than the word it is meant to translate; though the parallelism 'cursus'/'concursor' is perhaps less clumsy than Callimachus's δρόμος/σύνδρομος.

Callimachus: καὶ τήνος μεγάλας σύνδρομος Ἀρτέμιδος
ἔσσεται· ἀλλ' οὐκ αὐτὸν ὃ τε δρόμος αἶτ' ἐν ὄρεσσι
ῥυσεύνται ξυναὶ τᾶμος ἐκαβολίαι

'He will hunt along with mighty Artemis; but neither these hunting expeditions nor their archery together in the mountains will avail him'

381

Politian: [...]: namque erit et Triviae
Concursor, sed non cursus, non aemulus illum
Tela arcus iaciens montibus eripiet

'because he will compete together with Diana; but no races, no contests shooting arrows from bows through the mountains will rescue him'

Politian's use of 'Trivia' for 'Diana' seems as gratuitous as 'Hyperion' for 'sol' in the 1473 Moschus translation. Another excessive novelty might be the rendering of 'οὐκ ἐθέλων': this is properly rendered as 'invitus' at line 113; nothing is gained by Latinising this as 'imprudens' at 52: context demands that Tiresias walk in on the divine *grande baigneuse* blindly unaware, not fatuously incautious.

Callimachus 113-14: ὅπποκα κ' οὐκ ἐθέλων περ ἴδῃ χαρίεντα λοετρά / δαίμονος
'when he unwittingly catches sight of the goddess's lovely bath.'

Politian 113-14: Cum divam (licet invitus) se fonte lavantem / Viderit'.

Callimachus 51-52: ἀλλά, Πελασγέ, / φράζεο μὴ οὐκ ἐθέλων τὰν βασιλειαν ἴδῃς
'But, ye Pelasgian men, beware lest you unwittingly see the queen.'

Politian 51-52: Cave tu ergo Pelasge, / Ne nudam imprudens aspicias dominam

A further difficulty will be found at line 7, where the adjective 'horrida' translates nothing in the original: at best redundant, at worst free of meaning, it does little more than fill out a verse.

Callimachus 7-8: οὐδ' ὅκα δὴ λύθρῳ πεπαλαγμένα πάντα φέροισα
τεύχεα τῶν ἀδίκων ἦνθ' ἀπὸ γαγενέων

'not even when she brought back her blood-spattered armour when returning from the lawless Earth-born people'

Politian 7-8: Nec tum quando armis multa iam caede cruentis
Venit ab iniustis horrida terrigenis

The mistakes here are not numerous. In the overwhelming majority of instances Politian succeeds in giving the meaning of Callimachus's original hymn with accuracy and precision; moreover, despite the restraints of 'ad verbum' translation in metre, he finds legitimate opportunities for rare forms entirely in keeping with Callimachus's tone: for example, 'puera' instead of 'puella' at line 27.

Callimachus 27-28: ὦ κῶραι, τὸ δ' ἔρευθος ἀνέδραμε, πρῶιον οἶαν
ἦ ῥόδον ἦ σίβδας κόκκος ἔχει χροιάν.

'O girls, the morning flush sprang up, with the colour that the rose or pomegranate seed has.'

Politian 27-28: O puerae emicuit rubor illico, matutina
Quem rosa, quem grano punica mala ferunt.

382 There may be excessive 'novitas' in a few places: for example, the bizarre word order at line 62 ('Boeotum visens vecta iugis populos'), or grammatical novelties, like the ablative of separation in line 6 ('Ilia quae abstersit pulvere cornipedum'). But Politian is by and large sensitive to nuance: obscure phrases are not generally expanded within lines; instead the ambiguity of the original is faithfully preserved. The most striking example is his version of line 50 'ἡξεῖ φορβαίων Ἴναχος ἐξ ὀρέων' ('Inachus will come from the nourishing mountains'). The Latin gives 'Defluet e laetis Inachus ipse iugis' ('Inachus will flow down from the fruitful mountain ridges')—Politian avoids the temptation to over-interpret the original, a change from his practice in the fourth and fifth books of the *Iliad*. As far as possible the content of the Greek has indeed been conveyed intact into Latin.

Politian's most precarious difficulty in this translation is to carry across the sense of allusiveness in Callimachus without being able to allude to the same range of texts. Neo-Latin compositions are essentially 'intertextual' whether they like it or not. In order to produce a work that would earn appropriate levels of acclaim, the Renaissance-Latin versifier was under pressure to conform to some accepted ancient model in form, style and even material; what looks to a modern reader like intricate intertextual complexity might be the result of a writer sticking close to established precedents lest he be accused of originality. Politian's strategy of sticking close to Catullus has already been discussed here; but this is not the only point of reference for the 'In Palladis Lavacrum'. There are a number of unmistakably Virgilian usages in this translation that in no wise bring across the basic meaning of the Greek. The couplet at lines 9-10, for example—"Tum quoque equum subducta iugis fumantia colla/Perfudit largi fontibus Oceani" ('Even then she showered the reeking necks of her horses just freed from the harness with water from the fountain of great Oceanus')—seems to recall *Georgics* 2.542: 'Iam tempus equum fumantia solvere colla'. The couplet immediately following—"Dum sudor, guttaeque putres, dumque

omnis abiret / Spuma oris circum mansa lupata rigens' ('Until the sweat, and the stinking droplets, until all the congealing spittle-foam remaining round the sharp-toothed curbs of their mouths had vanished')—might allude to a famous, though less graphic, instance of chomping at the bit, *Aeneid* 4.135: 'stat sonipes et frena ferox spumantia mandit'. The most arresting of the gratuitous Virgilisms is at 75-76: 'Tiresias unus canibus comitantibus ibat / Per loca sacra, levi flore genas nitidus' ('Meanwhile, Tiresias went forth on his own, accompanied by his dogs through the sacred region, his cheeks blooming with light down'). This picks up on *Aeneid* 8.160: 'tum mihi prima genas vestibat flore iuventas' ('In those days early youth clothed my cheeks with bloom'). The borrowed expression rings a bell; but it must be little more than an automatic reflex. Any attempt to read deeper significance into how Tiresias's youthful peach fuzz on his last day as a sighted person might relate to Evander's memory of his own peach fuzz on a long-ago visit to King Priam will quickly come to grief. It is impossible to determine whether these particular ornaments were added thoughtlessly, as a further example of Politian indulging his mania for ludic allusiveness, or else as an attempt to add resonance to Greek verses that are troublesome to evaluate for anyone whose tastes have been shaped by Augustan Latin literature. Politian could have easily recast this hymn in a more digestible manner, highlighting every possible parallel to Ovidian and Propertian elegy, and introducing fresh ones; but part of the point of chapter 80 of the *Miscellanea* is to demonstrate how facile, superficial and few such parallels are, as part of Politian's attack on Domizio Calderini (who by 1489 had been dead for two decades).

383

A single Latin epithet in Politian's translation commands special attention. Callimachus's line 30 mentions Ἡρακλῆης. The obvious equivalent, Hercules, would not scan here in the nominative; but if Politian could give 'Boeotiis' and 'Boeotum' then surely 'Heraclees' would be possible; instead, Politian uses 'Amphitryonades'. This is how Hesiod tends to refer to Heracles; in Latin this epithet shows up twice in the *Metamorphoses*, and once in the *Aeneid*; more importantly it is found in the first line of the ninth elegy of Propertius's fourth book—the very poem which this chapter of the *Miscellanea* purports to illuminate. It will also be seen in Catullus 68. 'Amphitryoniades' is no mere coincidence, or space-filling metrical convenience: it wittily draws attention to Politian's command of literary tradition—a more appropriate instance of his saying 'Hyperion' for 'sol'. More to the point, it conveys tone, at least for an informed reader, which is precisely how Callimachus's poem operates.

It should be clearer now that Mencke's censures of the 'In Palladis Lavacrum' are fundamentally misguided. Except for a few slips, inconsistencies, and the odd fault of self-indulgence, Politian succeeds in this translation on his own terms, even if the end result may be far from conventionally attractive. The *Miscellanea* was produced for an audience confident enough in Latin to be able to appreciate the breadth and sensitivity of his command of the language, and to tolerate his more flamboyant displays of learning. This audience was, on the other hand, not quite so accomplished in Greek, with a small number of exceptions. The translation was important simply as a

‘crib’, though it also had to function as an introduction to Callimachus for a discerning and fastidious readership. This hymn had to be made familiar somehow, if not necessarily overtly appealing. A minority of accomplished Hellenist readers would not have allowed Politian freely to adapt this work to suit local fashions, and instead were interested in scrutinising his interpretation of a difficult text. Had he stumbled or blundered seriously, some of them would have enjoyed making the fact public. This translation was thus far more than a simple literary or didactic exercise: it had to satisfy multiple demanding components of a critical (if enthusiastic) public. Politian’s immediate task was to make a forbiddingly austere poet intelligible in a context where the language, imagery and rhetoric of verse tended not to be so reserved or insistently subtle—certainly his own verse, that of Lorenzo de’ Medici and Luigi Pulci, and the vernacular poetry collected in the ‘Raccolta Aragonese’, all existed within a tradition considerably less delicate in its effects. The Catullan parallels of the ‘In Palladis Lavacrum’ make clear just how alien Callimachus’s Alexandrian aesthetics were even

384 from ancient Roman norms, never mind contemporary ones. Politian used a familiar style and idiom in order to bring across the strangeness of an author whom Catullus, Propertius and Ovid in particular all explicitly claimed as a model; this translation demonstrates the danger in blithely assuming Callimachus to be as vivid and colourful a poet as those who said they found inspiration in him. ‘In Palladis Lavacrum’ is translated closely and cautiously in order to bring out just how enigmatic and foreign it is, and how distant from anything conventional in Latin. In *Miscellanea* 1. 58, on his version of *De ludis saecularibus* Politian asserts to have translated the work ‘non eleganter, ex fide tamen, servato etiam, quantum liceat, incomptae illius, sed venerandae vetustatis colere nonnullo, aut squalore potius’ (‘if not elegantly, then faithfully, at least, preserving as far I could not just the vibrancy, but also the crudeness, of that artless, though still venerable, antiquity’). In other words, don’t blame me if it’s ugly, I’m only the midwife; an excuse which may be taken to apply to ‘In Palladis Lavacrum’ as well.

NOTES

1. The best available text is Ritoók, a critical edition with extensive commentary. All quotations from ‘In Lavacrum Palladis’ are taken from this edition.
2. Mencke 1736, 171-73: ‘In interpretando, hoc est, assequendis Poetae sententiis et gratiis, si quaeras, quid praestiterit Politianus, fateor, vix talem reperiri carminis ullius Graeci versionem, quae, si ad examen revocetur, Autoris Graeci omnia tam exacte referat non rerum minus, quam verborum, lineamenta. Nihil dictum Callimacho, quod non itidem Politiano. Eadem sententia, idem aculeus, idem dictionis nervus Latino, qui Graeco, clauditur disticho.... Id vero minime negandum, dum arctis nimis se ipse legibus circumscripsit interpret noster, strictimque singulis inhaesit verbis, factum hinc esse ut difficilior ipse procederet cantandi negotium, nec tam favente hic Apolline caneret, quam in carminibus, quae composuit, reliquis. Adeoque pulchram, quae naturam imitatur, dictionis indolem, maximam interpretis virtutem, praecipuumque decus, hic desidero. Asperae vocum, quas dicunt, elisiones et implicationes legentem remorantur fere innumerabiles; nihil hic spiritus aut ignis

poëtici, nisi pauculum forte in principio; nihil, quod auribus placeat; omnia quae sibi contorta, quasi murmurantibus Musis. Pentametri, quos eleganter dissillabis claudimus, hic fere singuli verba post se trahunt non sine oscitatione eloquenda. Taceo alia, quae non nisi in augusto et magni spiritus carmine cum venia admittas'.

3. This discussion relies on Platnauer, Raven, *Latin Metre* 103-107, and Soubiran.
4. The term 'development' is used neutrally here: Soubiran (604) cautions one not to assume a straight-forward linear progress to perfection in Latin verse over a period of time, in the use of elision, or in any other element of composition.
5. Wilkinson also uses the term 'uncouth' to describe Catullan rhythms (130).
6. See also the tables of elisions in Soubiran 81, 602, 604 in particular, which are more detailed and broader in scope.
7. For a text, see Poliziano, *Prose volgari* 431-523, with Rubinstein, "The Notes to Poliziano's *Iliad*" and Megna for notes; Rubinstein, "Imitation and Style" remains the best concise introduction to the translation and its stylistic features, supplemented by Sowerby, Saverio and Toppani 1975. For closer examinations of language see especially Baffi, Cerri, "La traduzione" and "Filologi del Quattrocento".
8. At Maier 136 and 419-38 there are detailed, generally reliable chronologies of Politian's work and other activities; of the elegies collected by Del Lungo (Poliziano, *Prose volgari*), the latest dates to 1476.
9. There remains some dispute over the precise date of this work; for a full discussion see Paolo Orvieto's introductory essay in Poliziano, *Sylva in scabiem* (1989) 1-64, which diverges from the accounts of Maier 133-39 and 191-210, and of Perosa in the *editio princeps* (Poliziano, *Sylva in scabiem* (1954)).
10. Ford, *George Buchanan* contains valuable discussion of neo-Latin prosody and metre, especially at 12-16; see also Ford, "Alexandre de Villedieu" on the *Doctrinale puerorum*, a mediaeval textbook on verse still influential in the Renaissance.
11. See Keil for the best collection of ancient grammarians' work on poetry; Kaster provides useful data on the scholars included in Keil.
12. Poliziano, *Sylva in scabiem* (1954) 55-57.
13. This has become a scholarly commonplace in the literature on Politian at least since Grafton; for the most recent (re-)articulation see Mengelkoch 86 *et passim*.
14. See Hunter for a concise introduction to some of the ways in which Callimachus was used in classical Latin literature; for Callimachean style, see Bulloch 1985 *passim*.
15. This is an unpaginated photographic reprint taken from the Basel 1553 edition of Politian's *Opera Omnia*. For Politian's rebuttal, see Grafton 179-81.
16. In the absence of a critical edition, *Prose volgare inedite e poesie latine e greche edite e inedite* remains the best available text. Megna is indispensable for the study of this work.
17. See Rubinstein 1983 generally for an overview of these features; Cerri 1978 and 1979 are particularly revealing on the details of Politian's use of epithets in this work without explicitly commenting on the implications of how these affect the general style.
18. For the alterations made to these verses in 1494 (*Epistolae* VII.14), see Poliziano, *Prose volgari* 525-27.
19. *Miscellanea* chap. lviii includes a translation of Sybilline verses, 'De ludis saecularibus', taken from Zosimus's *Historia Nova*. See Poliziano, *Prose volgari* 539-41 for text and commentary.
20. Taken from Maier 1966: 107-112; text of Moschus (*Palatine Anthology* IX.440) checked against LeGrand 1927.
21. For Politian's marginal notes on Catullus see Maier 125, and Gaisser, particularly the list of emenda-

tions (300).

22. See Megna ix-xxx for the translation's historical context; for the accepted chronology of composition and publication (or presentation), see Maier 136.
23. A gratuitous Virgilism: cf. *Aeneid* 1.535: 'cum subito adsurgens fluctu nimbosus Orion' ('Orion stormily rising with sudden high waves'). There is no connection between Orion (Ὠρίων), the famous hunter, and Odios ('Οδῖος), the obscure chief of the Halizones.
24. For a concise discussion see Harrison xxxi-xxxiii.
25. Ritoók 2006 is essential for this discussion.

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