



DIURNA

NEWSPAPER OF THE 30TH LATIN SUMMER SCHOOL: DIES MERCURII JANUARIUS XVII

As mentioned earlier, the Abbey's Bookstore website has been set up to give a 10% discount on all Latin titles that are in stock and not already discounted. The code that needs to be used is NUNCESTLEGENDUM (all caps, no gaps).

Here is the link to the Latin books on their website:

<https://www.abbey.com.au/category/latin.do?>

The discount is also valid in-store (again, in-stock items only that are not already discounted). The discount (online and in-store) is available from 16 January to 31 January 2023 inclusive. In-store customers just need to mention they attended the Latin Summer School to receive the discount.

The intriguing Bowdlerism of Latin by Lisa Creffield:

There's a reason Catullus XVI doesn't appear in many old school textbooks... or at least in its full glory. The Classical Latin hendecasyllabic *Pedicabo ego vos et irrumabo* doesn't translate very comfortably to modern English, at least according to more delicate sensibilities.

Over the centuries Latin has suffered extensive censorship, from outright Bowdlerism to euphemistic mistranslations and even "corrections" of the original text. The 1921 Loeb prints just the first six lines of Catullus XVI:

*Pedicabo ego vos et irrumabo,
Aureli pathice et cinaede Furi,
qui me ex versiculis meis putastis,
quod sunt molliculi, parum pudicum.
nam castum esse decet pium poetam
ipsum, versiculos nihil necessest.*

With the facing page English translation headlined as "XVI (a fragment)" and comprising:

...who have supposed me to be immodest, on account of my verses, because these are rather voluptuous. For the sacred poet ought to be chaste himself, his verses need not be so.

Sir Richard Francis Burton's 1894 translation, via Perseus, manages:

I'll . . . you twain and . . .

while Leonard C Smithers, translating in the same year, offers:

I will make you my boys and bone you

GHR Horsley, in "One hundred years of the Loeb Classical Library", describes various creative attempts to gloss over the less glossy parts of Latin texts.

"Obscene passages were handled in various ways: sometimes they were simply omitted or translated into another language. Greek was usually translated into Latin on the facing-page English text; and in the first edition of Martial putatively offensive Latin was translated into Italian, whereas in the case of Petronius the Latin was simply repeated on the right-hand page."

Our Latin reading group recently studied Propertius I:III in which the poet has arrived drunk at his mistress's house. He gazes upon the form of the sleeping Cynthia, giving her kisses, *arma manu*.

Given that Propertius wasn't anticipating a duel at that moment in time, it's rather apparent that *arma* refers to the poet's *membrum virile* (or *gladius porcus* for a more modern colloquialism). Many translations simply skip this phase altogether, perhaps fearing that even the literal "weapon in hand" is beyond the pale.

But some Latin texts excise it altogether, replacing *arma manu* with *tarda manu*. I found one suggestion that this is to correct the scansion issue of *arma* but it seems more likely that a transcriber simply flailed at Propertius's flailing flail.

It's not just the Anglosphere that shrinks from the obscenities in Latin texts. Scholars have dug up examples of textbooks in other languages that find ways to suppress them. In one Catalan text book,

Martial's Epigram I:XLVI is printed in Latin, with the Catalan translation simply given as three asterisks.

A Spanish edition of Catullus translates the infamous opener to XVI as *Os demostraré mi hombría* - "I will show you my manhood", while a French translation from the 1940s offers: *Je vous donnerai des preuves de ma virilité* - "I will show you proof of my virility".

Today it's impossible to shield the "dirty bits" in ancient texts from inquisitive eyes. If it exists, it's online, and usually pretty easy to find.

[PoetryInTranslation](#) is a good source for fairly literal, honest translations of Latin texts.

Editorial by Robert Forgács:

Comments on Matthias Depoorter's *Flemish Masters From Van Eyck to Bruegel (2023) II*

A point not mentioned in Part I of this review in yesterday's Diurna is the fact that many of the paintings, both portraits and those with religious subject matter, show figures with books in their hands, often Books of Hours (prayer books), whose texts are in Latin. However, the artist has usually not depicted the text in a legible form – rather the text shown is meant to represent a Latin text. Some of the illustrations do, however, show various legible initials painted in red, while the illegible text is painted in black. One of the most memorable and beautiful such paintings is Quentin Massys's *The Moneylender and his wife* of 1514, now in the Louvre. The intention of Massys in this double portrait was clearly satirical and moral. For while the Moneylender's wife has a Book of Hours in her hands, and is shown turning the page to one on which a lovely painting of the Virgin (dressed in pink) and Child can be seen, her eyes and mind are focussed on the coins being weighed by her husband, who is busy determining their gold content. The verse from St Luke's Gospel (12.34) 'ubi enim thesaurus vester est ibi et cor vestrum erit' (where your treasure is, there will your heart be also), although not shown, is strongly implied.



Massys, *The Moneylender and his wife*, c. 1514

The largest amount of Latin text illustrated in Depoorter's book is in the picture frame of Van Eyck's so-called 'Dresden Triptych' of 1437. But it is very challenging for a viewer to read the whole text, as it is presented both horizontally and vertically, in an intriguing wrap-around fashion. Each section of the triptych identifies textually the sacred figures depicted, while the one secular figure is the donor, shown on the left with his patron saint, St Michael. This donor was probably a member of the Genoese Giustiniani family of merchants resident in Bruges. Interestingly, the figure of St Catherine in the right-hand panel is also shown with a prayer book in her hand, However while the text of her book is once again illegible, her downcast eyes and her concentrated expression indicate unequivocally that she is absorbed in her reading, as befits a saint.



Van Eyck, *The Dresden Triptych*, 1437