

Lesson 4: Comparing texts and translations: Poetry (a)

Catullus 61: 1-15

Collis o Heliconii
cultor, Vraniae genus,
qui rapis teneram ad uirum
uirginem, o Hymenae Hymen,
5 o Hymen Hymenae,
cinge tempora floribus
suaue olentis amaraci,
flammeum cape laetus, huc
huc ueni, niueo gerens
10 luteum pede soccum;
excitusque hilari die,
nuptialia concinens
uoce carmina tinnula,
pelle humum pedibus, manu
15 pineam quate taedam.

Translation A Guy Lee, Catullus: The Complete Poems (Oxford University Press) 1998

O you dweller on the hill
Of Helicon, Urania's breed,
You who kidnap tender bride
For groom, O Hymeneal Hymen,
O Hymen Hymeneal,
Wreath your temples with the flower
Of sweet-smelling marjoram;
Take the flame-hued veil and gladly
Hither come, on snow-white foot
Wearing yellow sandal.
Excited by the merry day,
With ringing tenor voice join in
The wedding chorus, beat the ground
With dancing feet and in your hand
Shake the torch of pinewood.

Translation B James Michie, The Poems of Catullus (Hart-Davis) 1969

Son of Urania,
Haunter of Helicon's side,
Who to the bridegroom hales
The tender virgin bride
(Sing 'Hymen, Hymen', sing
The god of marrying!),
Garland your brows with sweet-
Smelling amaracus,
Put on the flame-red veil
And come and visit us
Joyfully, white feet shod
With yellow shoes, great god.
Stirred by this happy day,
Sing out the nuptial chants
In a clear, ringing voice,
Stamp the time of the dance
Upon the ground and make
The flaming pine-torch shake.

Translation C P. Whigham, The Poems of Catullus (Penguin) 1966

Hill (breeder) of Helicon,
sun's seed of Urania,
magnet a man is
for a maiden,
Hymenaeus Hymen Io!
Io! Hymen Hymenaeus.
Soft smell of marjoram
melt on your forehead,
cast the flame veil
come, joyfully:
upon a white foot
the saffron shoe.
Gaiety of daybreak!
ringing voices
shake out the bride-song!
dance-throb in the fields,
tossing the pine torch,

arms, waving.

Translation D L. R. Lind (Oxford University Press) 1967

You who dwell upon Helicon,
You the son of Urania,
Who snatch for her husband the tender girl,
O Hyménaean Hymen,
O Hymen Hymenaéan!
Bind your temples with marjoram,
With the flower that smells so sweet,
Take your torch and, delighted, come
Here with slippers upon your feet,
Yellow slippers on white feet.
Roused up now for the happy day,
Singing loudly the marriage hymns,
Singing the songs with a silvery voice,
Strike the ground with your feet and shake
The pine torch high in your handclasp

Questions

1. Find any three imperatives in lines 6-15 (there are 5 in total) and their meanings. Give their dictionary form (1st person).

How are these imperatives translated in version A? Are there any differences between the Latin and the way version A translates these words, and what effect (if any) do you think these differences may have?

2. What person is *rapis* (l.3)? Find its dictionary form and meanings. Give 2 literal and 2 transferred meanings. Which translation, A,B,C, or D, do you prefer and why?

3. Identify the cases of the following nouns in their context here; say what function they have in the sentence; and give their meaning:

1. virginem (line 4)
2. amaraci (line 7)
3. tempora (line 6)
4. collis (line 1)

Match each noun up with its equivalent in translation A.

5. "Collis o Heliconii cultor"(line1)

Translate, noting any words for which the dictionary gives more than one meaning which would make sense here.

Comment on any points you notice about the style in the Latin.

Find the equivalents in translations A, B, C, D. Compare the translations with the original and with each other,

1. in terms of meaning
2. in terms of how effective they make this opening to the poem

6. "Take the flame-hued veil and gladly/Hither come"

Find the equivalent section in the Latin.

Which word is the direct object of the first verb form? Give the dictionary form and look this word up; note its basic range of meanings and its meaning here. In what case is the other word in this part of the sentence? What does it mean?

Look up the words that go with the second verb form. Then give a translation of this whole Latin section, saying as close as possible to the Latin while still making sense! Find the translation of this in B, C, D. Compare these with the Latin.

What are the differences & what effect might the differences have? Which translation do you prefer and why?