

## **On translating into Latin:**

### **The poet:**

In their quest for the divine, concepts based on vedanta, etc. some of my poems' themes seem to belong an earlier era, if in today's clothes. In that sense there was a symmetry between them and the renewal of the classical poetry Adrienne's translation work strives for. And Latin's formality and stiffness matched well with the ritual quality the dense sound of my poems means to evoke.

"Chorus" directly addresses the divine; "Ebri" is about mediation. Choosing these fitted in with Latin, because of the idea that Latin was once the language of mediation - uttered by priests and heard by gods. I thought the poems could only be closer to their truth in Latin.

MR

### **The translator:**

David Damrosch notes that Goethe "actually prefers a Latin translation of one of his own works to the original: 'there it seems to me nobler, and as if it had returned to its original form!'" (*What is World Literature* 12).

Meanwhile, in his *Translation and Translations* J.P. Postgate, an avid Latinist of the early 20<sup>th</sup> c. characterizes Latin-English translations as "retrospective" and English-Latin as "prospective." When translating English to Latin, he writes, the translator should "put safety first and to aim not at the nearest idiomatic translation but at the most idiomatic that he can find. For his object is to write in Latin, not to render English, and to him the borderland of doubt and possible error is much larger in the use of Latin than in that of English expression" (24). This outlines a quite distinct trajectory when translating out of one's native language into a so-call extinguished one.

On a more personal note, my translations of 1st c. BCE Sulpicia into contemporary English poetry, and translating Mani into Latin complement one another in an almost symbiotic way across time and languages.

AH

**12.**  
**CHORUS**

You are the spheres  
Atmosphere

We know the nip  
Your sniffer dogs

You have us hemmed in breath stitch

**CHORUS**

sphaeras es  
aërem

morsum noscemus  
canes tui venantes

tenes nos sutos aura

**13.**  
**EBRI**

Up on the water, lake of oil –  
Up on the lake, waiting painting –  
A canvas lowered from the sky  
To take it away in mortal colors  
To air in the celestial pictures  
Between eyebrows

**EBRI**

super undam, lacus olei –  
in lacu, exspectans pictura –  
velum demissum de caelo  
ut id adimeret mortalibus coloribus  
siccaret caelestibus picturis  
inter supercilium

**28.**

**CATCHING UP**

The orphan and the alien met. One adopted the other.

How did they meet?

Oh! In exaggerated stories always ending with a rescue and two foundlings.

Did you tell them they would have to forsake to save each other?

No.

**ADSEQUENS**

Orbusque alienigena obveniunt. Altera adoptavit altera.

Quomodo obvenerint?

Heu! Fabulis exaggeris semper desiniens cum recuperatione et duobis  
expositiciis.

Dixistine eos deserendos esse ut servarent uterosque?

Nullus.