

Lauri Malmi

**‘LET THE NYMPHS BE THE JUDGES OF
OUR POETRY SLAM’**

Modernisation in Charles Martin’s English (re)translation
of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*

ABSTRACT

Lauri Malmi: 'Let the nymphs be the judges of our poetry slam': Modernisation in Charles Martin's English (re)translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

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This BA thesis analyses how the tone and meaning of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are conveyed to modern English in Charles Martin's translation (2004) and how this translation has brought the ancient world closer to the modern-day reader. Retranslation of literary fiction is often based on the perceived linguistic or stylistic ageing of the existing translations, and retranslating is a way to preserve the relevance and value of literary works to new generations. Classical source texts may also include references and meanings that are not automatically recognised today and need to be considered when translating to ensure the information of the original text is conveyed in a way that is understandable to the target audience.

The data used in the analysis is a section of Martin's translation of *Metamorphoses* describing a poem singing competition between the Muses and the Pierides. The characters in this part have distinct personal voices and the text features a variety of intertextual and cultural references in both the source text and the translation. The analysis was carried out by comparing Martin's translation to the Latin original utilising commentaries and an earlier, more word-for-word translation to evaluate how the voices and personalities of the characters were constructed and how the intertextual and cultural references of the source text were expressed in the translation.

Based on the analysis, Martin's translation is faithful to the original and conveys its tone and meaning accurately using modernisation techniques, free translation and distinctive stylistic means to portray the voices of the characters and the references of the ancient world along with their associated meanings in a manner that is relevant today. The style and tone of contemporary rap that is given to the sisters in the translation connects the text to today's context and serves as recognisable opposite to what classical poetical tone is thought to be like.

Keywords: retranslation, classical literature, Ovid, *Metamorphoses*

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TIIVISTELMÄ

Lauri Malmi: 'Let the nymphs be the judges of our poetry slam': Modernisation in Charles Martin's English (re)translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

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Tässä kandidaatintutkielmassa tarkastellaan, miten Ovidiuksen *Metamorphoses*-teoksen sävyt ja merkitykset välittyvät nykyenglanniksi Charles Martinin vuonna 2004 julkaistussa käännöksessä, ja miten käännös avaa antiikinaikaisen tekstin maailmaa nykylukijalle. Kaunokirjallisuuden uudelleenikäntämisen pohjalla on usein ajatus teosten kielellisestä tai tyyllisestä vanhentumisesta, ja uudelleenikäntäminen on tapa välittää tekstin merkityksellisyys ja arvo kaunokirjallisena teoksena uusille sukupolville. Antiikinaikaisessa alkuperäistekstissä voi lisäksi olla viittauksia ja merkitystasoja, jotka eivät avaudu nykylukijalle suoraan, mikä on huomioitava käännöksessä, jotta alkutekstin välittämä informaatio säilyy ymmärrettävänä.

Tarkasteltavana aineistona on Martinin *Metamorphoses*-käännöksen katkelma, joka kuvaa muusien ja kuolevaisten sisarten runonlaulukilpailua. Katkelmassa esiintyvillä hahmoilla on sekä alkutekstissä että käännöksessä toisistaan poikkeava ääni ja tekstissä on runsaasti intertekstuaalisia ja kulttuurisia viittauksia. Analyysissa käännöstä ja alkutekstiä verrattiin keskenään kommentaarien ja varhaisemman sanasanaisen englanninkielisen käännöksen avulla pyrkimyksenä eritellä hahmojen ääneen ja persoonaan vaikuttavia tekijöitä ja niiden roolia tekstiin sisältyvien merkitystasojen välittäjinä, sekä tarkastella sitä, millä tavoin alkutekstin intertekstuaaliset ja kulttuuriset viittaukset välittyvät käännöksessä.

Analyysi osoittaa, että Martinin käännös on alkutekstiä kunnioittava ja välittää sen sisältämät sävyt uskollisesti hyödyntäen modernisointia, vapaata käntämistä ja selkeästi erottuvia tyyllisiä keinoja ilmaistakseen hahmojen ääntä ja antiikin maailmaa sekä niihin assosioituvia merkityksiä nykylukijalle tunnistettavalla tavalla. Sisaruksille annettu moderni rap-lyriikan tyyliin perustuva ääni kytkee käännöksen nykypäivän kontekstiin ja toimii tunnistettavana vastaparina oletuksille siitä, millaista on arvokas ja hyvä klassinen runokieli.

Avainsanat: uudelleenikäntäminen, klassinen kirjallisuus, Ovidius, *Metamorphoses*

Tämän julkaisun alkuperäisyys on tarkastettu Turnitin Originality Check -ohjelmalla.

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1 Introduction

Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, originally written in Latin over 2000 years ago, has inspired writers and artists during the centuries and is established as part of the classical literary canon. The English translation of *Metamorphoses* by Charles Martin, published in 2004, has been praised for how it captures the tone and skill of the original (Ormsby 2004; Ovid 2004, XXIV). Martin's translation also stands out from many other retranslations of this source text in how it utilises contemporary American vernacular and other modern-day references to convey some of the layers of meaning that would otherwise be lost or difficult to understand to a modern-day reader.

Retranslation is often motivated by the perceived linguistic and stylistic ageing of previous translations (Van Poucke 2017) and the desire to maintain the relevance of a text that is valued as culturally significant in the translation's target culture by creating a new translation that is perceived to convey the qualities of the source text more accurately (Venuti 2004). Since retranslation is closely linked with the formation of literary canon (ibid.) and typically takes place over a long period of time, the study of retranslations enables the observation of changing translation strategies and provides ample material for evaluating the possible methods to preserve the original meaning of the text in translation when the connotations, associations and references of the source text are no longer known or relevant in the target culture.

The goal of this thesis is to compare a specific section of Martin's translation of *Metamorphoses* to Ovid's Latin original to analyse how the intertextual and cultural references that comprise the tone of the poem and its world and the voices of character within it are adapted to make them comprehensible and relevant to the translation's contemporary target audience. In particular, I focus on how the individual voices of the characters are constructed, how the possible additions, adaptations and omissions of intertextual and cultural references impact the translation, and what modernising techniques are used in the translation. For the analysis, I chose a section from Martin's translation that tells the story of a poetry singing competition between the Muses and nine mortal sisters, the Pierides. The characters in this part have distinct personal voices and the text features a variety of intertextual and cultural references in both the source text and the translation. To aid in the analysis, I used a commentary by William S. Anderson (1997) and an earlier translation by Frank Justus Miller (Ovid 1916) to help compare Martin's translation to the Latin original.

For theoretical background, I examine the phenomenon of retranslation and features that concern the retranslation of classical literature in particular, how voice is constructed in literature and translation, and how the different translation strategies can influence voice and its impact on the translation of literary works overall. I will look at how the individual voices of the Muse and the Sisters are expressed in the Latin original and Martin's translation, and what modernisation techniques have been used overall and especially to translate the intertextual and cultural references found in the source text. Finally, I discuss the role of the modernisation strategies of Martin's translation in how the text translates not only the source text, but the source culture to modern day.

2 Retranslation and classical texts

2.1 Retranslation

Retranslation can refer to a process of creating a retranslation of a text as well as a product that results from the retranslation process. On a very basic level, retranslation as a product can be defined as a translation of a specific text of which one or more translations in the same language already exist. (Koskinen & Paloposki 2010, 294). Retranslations may relate to the source text and the previous existing (re)translations in the same language – and others – to different extent depending on what sources have been used (or ignored) during the retranslation process and be '*assimilative* or *confrontational*, that is, ... assimilate the profile of a pre-existing translated source text (or texts) or confront it (them) by pursuing different overall translational goals and applying different translation procedures' (Alvstad & Rosa 2015, 9–10).

There are various reasons and motives for retranslating. A commonly speculated motive focuses on ageing and the idea that translations become outdated and need to be revised or modernised in some way to maintain relevance (Koskinen & Paloposki 2010, 296). As observed by Piet Van Poucke, the perceived 'aging character of translations includes not only the linguistic and idiomatic aspects, but also translational and cultural ones' (Van Poucke 2017, 92). Often the motivation behind new retranslations is the belief that the existing translations fail to convey the qualities of source text accurately (Venuti 2004), and the aim of retranslation is to achieve a translation that better meets the needs and ideals of its contemporary audience.

Retranslation is closely linked with translation of literary works, especially those regarded as ‘classics’. According to Lawrence Venuti (2004), retranslation and the creation of literary canon are closely connected phenomena. A typical reason for retranslation is that a text has a canonical status in the target culture and is seen as culturally significant, which is why it is thought to be important to preserve the text for new generations of readers. The linguistic, translational and cultural updates that take place during the retranslation process help keep the text relevant in the translation’s target culture while simultaneously reinforcing its status as a classic (Venuti 2004).

As observed by Lawrence Venuti (2004), intertextuality plays a key role in translation. With retranslations especially, the intertextuality is influenced not only by ‘the historical moment in which the translator works, but the literary and cultural histories on which the translator draws to bring the foreign text into the translating language’ (Venuti 2004, 28). The translation is never an exact reproduction of the source text, but ‘[establishes] a ratio of loss and gain’ (Venuti 2004, 31) as the translator works with the intertextual relations of both the source and target culture to produce a translation that conveys the meaning of the original in another language and time (Venuti 2004).

2.2 Retranslation of classical texts

Classical texts, in the context of the topic of this thesis, refers to the ancient Greek and Roman literature that has survived to our time and been established as literary and cultural canon. The texts that have survived from the classical era did so because of copying and translation as the manuscripts were copied by hand repeatedly over the centuries and translations to new languages ensured the texts remained accessible to new generations of readers as languages like Latin became ‘dead’ with an increasingly diminishing number of speakers – the continuous process of retranslation helped to create the literary canon and kept the texts alive, as discussed above. The status of these texts as highly valued and respected ‘classics’ has also inevitably affected the way their translation has been approached, the idea being that literary works that are seen as part of some idealised ‘glorious past’ would need to be treated with certain respect. Sometimes the primary purpose of the translations of classical texts was to assist the reader understand the source text rather than function as aesthetical and enjoyable literature in their own right, although the latter has also been pursued with English translations at least from Early Modern era onwards (Hopkins 2019).

The temporal distance between the creation of the original text and its translations poses a specific issue to translating classical literature and poetry. The issues are not only linguistic, but also cultural: with a gap of possibly over two thousand years separating the source text and its translation, much of the connotations, intertextual and cultural references and other layers of meaning and significance of the original have been lost or become obscure. The translator can choose to handle these issues with different translational approaches, which James S. Holmes calls 'historicising' or 'retentive' and 'modernising' or 're-creative'; the first seeks to 'retain the specific aspect of the original poem' (Holmes 1972, 105), whether linguistic or socio-cultural, even if it is not directly relevant at the time of producing the translation, while the latter may seek 'equivalents' (which are always 'equivalent' only to a certain degree) in modern references and idioms to make the text more relevant to contemporary readers. The 'historicising' and 'modernising' approaches are not mutually exclusive, but rather they can be used to describe a wide range of possible choices available to the translator, who might decide 'historicising' some aspects while 'modernising' others. (Holmes 1972).

Essentially, the source texts are set in a world that no longer exists. The texts often refer to events, beliefs, people, world views, customs, or practices and various types of associated meaning, significance and beliefs that were relevant and commonly known when the texts originally were produced but would be unfamiliar and unrecognisable to most readers today. Since many of these references are essential to understanding the meaning of these texts, or at least the text would be lacking something significant without them, the translator is faced with the challenge of translating the associated contextual meanings and references that would not be automatically understood today in addition to translating the text itself. Many translations of classical texts explain these references using numerous footnotes instead of attempting to convey the meaning directly in the translation (McKinney 2019), which is an understandable decision with word-for-word translations that are meant to give the reader an impression of what the source text is like 'as is'. With translations that are intended to be read as fluent literature on their own, footnotes could easily be more distracting than helpful.

The perceived ageing of existing translations of classical texts is frequently the motive for new retranslations. Any 'modernised' references as well as the style and language of older translations will eventually become less relevant over time, similar to those of the original source text. The style of earlier translations may not convey an accurate impression of the texts and its literary merits to readers today but may sound 'forced and antiquated' (McKinney 2019,

121). A style and tone that would have been lofty, dramatic and touching in some earlier eras may not have the same effect today.

3 Voice in (re)translations

In translation studies, the term 'voice' has various different meanings and uses; it can refer to agency as well as a textually manifested style and has been used both metaphorically and non-metaphorically to discuss the voice(s) of authors, translators, characters and interpreters, among others (Alvstad 2013). As defined by Kristiina Taivalkoski-Shilov (2015), voices can be extra- or intratextual. Extratextual voices are part of the context of the text and may involve 'the author, translator, or other agents commenting on or influencing the text from the outside', whereas intratextual voices are part of the text itself and include the voices of the 'narrator, literary characters and other voices echoed by them'. (Taivalkoski-Shilov 2015, 60.)

In this thesis, voice refers to the textual features that are used in literary texts to construct and display the distinctive voices of different characters. Voice is a term used metaphorically to describe the 'distinctive features of a written work in terms of spoken utterance' (Baldick 2015b); a character's voice reflects the character's personality, social status and background, among other traits, and positions the character in a specific way in relation to other characters and the world depicted in the text using different kinds of textual cues, such as distinctive vocabulary, dialects or sociolects that carry specific connotations and meanings. These vary from culture to culture and making any kind of attempt at finding a 'perfect equivalence' in translation is a futile errand. Dialects are an often-used example of this; while regional dialects connected to different urban and rural areas associated with a variety of beliefs and perceptions related to the speakers of each dialect exist everywhere, none have an exact equivalent in any other language or culture.

According to Cecilia Alvstad (2013), using a dialect that is recognisable in the target culture of the translation may produce unintended associations and 'dialectal traits are ... often standardized in translation' as the result, which 'nullifies the literary function of the dialects in [a] particular text'. Since dialects convey specific kinds of associations and are deliberately used by the writer of the literary work to achieve some desired narrative effect, a translation that uses a standard language variant instead will unavoidably miss some of the depth and

meaning of the source text. Using a sociolect or an invented dialect are one of the ways to work around this problem. (Alvstad 2013.)

4 Data and method

4.1 Ovid and the (re)translation of *Metamorphoses*

Publius Ovidius Naso (43 BC – 17 AD) – or Ovid, as he is known in English – is one of the most highly regarded classical Roman poets whose works have inspired artists and writers for centuries. *Metamorphoses*, a narrative poem written in Latin hexameter and consisting of over 12,000 lines, narrates stories stemming from the Greco-Roman mythology and carries various types of transformations as a leitmotif throughout the text. This poetical work showcases Ovid's skill as a talented writer. It features samples of several poetical genres, including comedy, elegy, tragedy, pastoral, and epic, and displays the poet's skill and 'linguistic wit', creating a 'poem ... of incessant variety, of change ... and of pleasure springing from the unexpected' (Kenney 1982, 432). Besides the stories themselves and the use of varying poetical styles, the titular theme of metamorphoses is also present in how the text itself is often open to interpretation – there are layers to the text that seem to contradict the initial impressions, constantly inviting the reader to view the story from a new, changing perspective.

Metamorphoses has been translated into English multiple times over several hundred years. Charles Martin's translation, published in 2004, has been praised for its skilfulness and the way it captures the tone of the original (Ormsby 2004; Ovid 2004, XXIV). Martin's translation is different from many other translations of this source text for example in how it utilises contemporary American vernacular to bring the ancient Roman references closer to the translation's target audience. This translatory approach differs from what is often seen as the conventional or 'proper' way of translating classical texts, as discussed earlier.

In the preface of his translation, Martin briefly touches upon this topic and writes about the goals he had in mind during the translation process. Much of what Martin writes echoes the observations made in academic research on retranslation of literary works (e.g. Venuti 2004), especially the idea that translations are a way of keeping the texts alive in different eras and for new generations of readers. Martin also acknowledges the fact that much of the connotations and associations within the Latin original are lost to the modern-day reader or untranslatable

because of the linguistic differences between Latin and English. To overcome some of the untranslatability, he suggests the translator ‘may perhaps substitute one of his own [jokes] ... to give a sense of Ovid’s playfulness’ (Ovid 2004, 7). Martin also addresses making small additions to the text to make it easier to understand for modern readers when the references that would have been clear to the audience in Ovid’s time would be lost for the readers today, explaining that he believes having to ‘[send the reader] back to the notes at a crucial moment in the story’ to be obstructive (Ovid 2004, 11). Although it is not explicitly said, Martin’s reasonings clearly imply that his goal was to create a translation that is faithful to the original while also having literary merit and being understandable and enjoyable for a contemporary reader.

4.2 *Metamorphoses*, Book 5 – Contest in song

The data I have chosen for analysis is a section of Charles Martin’s English translation of Book 5 of *Metamorphoses* (Ovid 2004, 171–185, ll. 428–506; 846–871). This chosen section narrates a story of the goddess Minerva visiting the Muses and hearing about a poem singing competition the Muses recently won against nine mortal sisters, the Pierides, who had been foolish enough to believe they could defeat the Muses in their own craft. As punishment for their lack of respect and for daring to challenge the Muses, the sisters are transformed into magpies. The tale, told by one of the Muses, includes the retelling of the two songs that were performed during the competition, one of which is intentionally offensive and lacking in quality, while the other, sung by one of the Muses, is a long epic poem about how Proserpina was stolen by the god of death into the underworld. This specific section was chosen for the analysis because it features characters with clearly defined roles, personalities, and voices, which are portrayed both in the original text and the translation with a wide range of different stylistic and linguistic choices. The analysis focuses on the discussion between the Muse and Minerva and the songs of the nine sisters, which the Muse provides as direct and indirect quotations while retelling the events. The song about Proserpina is not included in the analysis as the content of this part is less relevant to the topic.

In the story, the Muses and the mortal sisters have specific roles and personalities that are reflected in the voices of these characters. Additionally, these characters are regarded differently by default; the Muses, as minor deities representing the arts, are by default assumed to be invincible in their skills with poetry, whereas the nine sisters are presented as falsely

confident, ignorant of their lack of talent, and foolish for daring to challenge the Muses. In addition to their presupposed superiority in the art of poetry, the Muses, especially the one narrating the events to Minerva, are implied to be proud, easily offended and even vengeful – it is likely the poet intentionally suggests the reader should question if the Muses actually are as talented as expected (Anderson 1997, 525).

Four different voices are present in the analysed data. These belong to the goddess Minerva, the Muse, the nine sisters (as quoted by the Muse), and the subtle and almost invisible extradiegetic narrator (or poetical speaker). It could also be rightfully argued that the translator constitutes a fifth intratextual voice. However, the translator's voice is not relevant to the topic of this thesis and will not be analysed further. It is important to notice that from the narrative point of view, the nine sisters only have a voice via the Muse who is recounting the recent events and whose accuracy or truthfulness may well be doubted; the sisters are unable to speak for themselves, having already been transformed into magpies when the conversation between the Muse and Minerva takes place. Regardless of whether or not the Muse is quoting the sisters word for word, the roles – and consequently, the voice and personalities – of the sisters in this story are those of boastful, foolish mortals with unfounded pride for what they falsely believe to be true skill. The Muse, who is not identified by name in this section, is the character who speaks the most, but much of what she says is quoted from others, since both the voices of the sisters and the epic poem sung by another one of the Muses during the competition are presented through this character. The Muse comes across as proud and eager to flatter Minerva while simultaneously positioning herself to the same level of importance as the goddess. Minerva is featured in a minor role, and the voice of this character is shown only in few comments or reactions in response to the Muse's retelling of the events.

Ovid presents the personalities, roles and talents of the Muses and the sisters with different intertextual references, changes in poetical form, and stylistic choices (Anderson 1997). It would not be possible to replicate the same exact methods Ovid used and still convey the same effect to the audience of a (re)translation of *Metamorphoses* today. To achieve this, these layers of meaning within the narration and the personal voices of the characters must be adapted for the modern-day world.

4.3 Method

In the analysis, the selected section of Martin's translation of Book 5 of *Metamorphoses* is compared with the original Latin text using an earlier translation by Frank Justus Miller and a commentary by William S. Anderson to facilitate my own interpretations of the Latin original, especially in relation to any significance resulting from specific word choices or stylistic elements and intertextual or cultural references. Charles Martin also mentions having used Anderson's commentary on *Metamorphoses* as his 'constant companion' during the translation process (Ovid 2004, XXVI).

The main focus of the analysis is on Martin's English translation and its modernising translation strategies, which I approached following the idea of historicising and modernising translation as defined by James S. Holmes (1972), and Lawrence Venuti's (2004) description on how translations construct a network of intertextual references from both the source and target cultures. Specifically, I am looking at how the individual intratextual voices are constructed in the Latin original and Martin's translation and how the translation has been adapted to our time in terms of vocabulary and intertextual and cultural references.

The purpose of the analysis is to answer the following research questions:

1. How are the individual voices of the Muse and the Sisters constructed in the source text and Martin's translation?
2. How have the intertextual and cultural references of the source text been conveyed in the translation? Are there any references that have been added or omitted?
3. How has the translation been modernised?

The findings of the analysis have been organised in three sections, the first of which focuses on the voices of the Muse and the Sisters; the other intratextual voices are less relevant for the purpose of this thesis. The second section discusses the intertextual and cultural references and the translational choices that have been made to address them. The third section looks at the textual and poetical features of the translation and how these have been used to modernise the text.

5 Modernisation in Martin's translation of *Metamorphoses*

5.1 Voices

5.1.1 The Muse

In Martin's translation, the Muse does not stand out from the general tone and style of the text in terms of vocabulary or poetical metre. The translation of the Muse's lines follows the source text faithfully, matching the Muse's tone and delivering an impression of a haughty and proud character who also wants to impress the goddess Minerva. The Muse does not hide her disdain towards the sisters in either Martin's translation (where the Muse refers to the sisters as 'simpleminded sisters' (Ovid 2004, l. 446)) or Ovid's original ('stolidarum sororum'¹) (Ovid 1916, l. 305)), although Martin's translation seems to emphasise the Muses' anger and cruelty more than the source text: 'our wise forbearance / is not without its limits, as you'll learn / when we get to the penalties, and vent / our righteous anger on your worthless selves' (Ovid 2004, ll. 853–856); the forbearance being 'wise', the anger 'righteous' and the Sisters 'worthless' are all implied in the source text, but not explicitly spelled out.

The Muse's personality – and to some extent, her voice – are also constructed by the intratextual voice of the narrator. In Martin's translation, the discussion between Minerva and the Muse is described as 'some goddess-chat' (Ovid 2004, l. 438). This expression is humorous and distinctly modern and seems to capture the impression given in the source text with the expression 'deae dea'² (Ovid 1916, l. 300), which, according to Anderson, 'wittily epitomizes this female conversation' (Anderson 1997, 528); the Muse positions herself on the same level of importance with the goddess and the two enjoy a chat about matters that are outside the realm of mere mortals.

¹ 'senseless sisters' (Ovid 1916, 259)

² 'goddess to goddess' (Ovid 1916, 259)

5.1.2 The Sisters

The modernisation used in Martin's translation is the most apparent in the voice given for the nine sisters for a very clear reason: in the notes about his translation, Martin writes how he realised that 'the contest might be represented as one between the voices of Poesy and those of the Downtown Scene' and so 'the Pierides became the P-Airides, and their song is presented in the diction and meter of contemporary rap.' (Ovid 2004, 9). The result is strikingly different from what is typically thought of as classical poetical style:

Nothin's gonna save you 'cuz your songs are lame
And the way you sing 'em is really a shame
So stop with, "Well I *never!*" and "This *can't* be real!"
We're the newest New Thing and here is our deal

(Ovid 2004, ll. 455–458)

The vocabulary and expressions are distinctly modern and imitate the contemporary American vernacular using non-standard spelling, such as contractions like *'em* or *'cuz* and reduced forms like *gonna*, *gimme* and *fuggedabout*. The modern vocabulary used by the Sisters include expressions like 'classy haunts' (l. 460), 'poetry slam' (l. 464), 'boss god' (l. 483), 'Delius his homey' (l. 485), and 'get down and jam' (l. 463), none of which, obviously, exist in Ovid's original. However, the overall effect and impression of the Sisters' song is apparently not too dissimilar in the Latin source text. According to Anderson, Ovid uses a different poetical metre for the Sisters and 'series of unusual words' among other features to produce a tone that is arrogant, pretentious and flamboyant (Anderson 1997, 528–529); the Sisters are overtly confident and offensive, and it is not left unclear that the Sisters cannot possibly be a match for the muses even if they falsely believe so.

5.2 Intertextuality and cultural references

5.2.1 Additions, adaptations and omissions

Martin's translation adapts many of the intertextual and cultural references to convey them more clearly to a modern audience. The modernising techniques used in the translation include the use of contemporary vocabulary and replacing some references with more familiar ones or supplementing information in places where it might be needed for clarity. This is evident especially in how the translation handles references to places and locations. Where the Latin

original refers to mythological or geographical details that the readers in ancient Rome would presumably have recognised, Martin's translation refers to a specific place directly: 'fonte Medusaeo et Hyantea Aganippe'³ (Ovid 1916, l. 312) has been replaced with 'Mount Helicon' (l. 460) and 'Emathiis [campis] ad Paeonas ... nivosos'⁴ (Ovid 1916, l. 313) simply with 'Macedonia' (l. 461), possibly because these mentions are part of the Sisters' songs that are translated in a very different style compared to the source text, but perhaps also because the references would potentially not be recognised by the target audience.

The translation also tends to use the most commonly known names for mythical figures today even if the source text uses some other name or frame of reference. The Greco-Roman mythical figures and gods had a variety of names and epithets that people recognised at the time the Latin original was written but that are no longer common knowledge. The goddess Minerva, for example, is always called Minerva in Martin's translation, but Pallas in this section of the source text, except when she is referred to as 'Iove nata'⁵ (Ovid 1916, l. 297). Minerva is also mentioned in the translation by name in some places where the source text does not mention the goddess directly. This is not necessarily done because the text would be incomprehensible without this added information, but rather to differentiate between the two 'hers' participating in the discussion; the translator may simply have decided that referring to Minerva and the Muse by name instead of pronoun is a better choice. References to the Muses are also simplified in Martin's translation when the source text uses a less familiar expression: 'deas Heliconas'⁶ (Ovid 1916, l. 342) has been translated as 'the Muses' (l. 848), and when the Muse refers to herself and her sisters as 'Aonides'⁷ (Ovid 1916, l. 333) in Latin, in Martin's translation she uses the pronoun 'our' (l. 488).

Similar changes have been made in one of the Sisters' songs that names several deities. The Latin original uses circumlocutions to refer to most of the gods (Anderson 1997, 531), but Martin's translation gives them contemporary familiar names: Ovid's Ammon, Iuppiter, Delius, Semeleia, 'soror Phoebi'⁸, Saturnia, Venus and Cyllenius are translated as 'the boss god they

³ 'Medusa's spring and Boeotian Aganippe' (Ovid 1916, 261)

⁴ 'Emythian (sic) plains ... to snow-clad Paeonia' (Ovid 1916, 261)

⁵ 'Jove's daughter' (Ovid 1916, 259)

⁶ 'goddesses of Helicon' (Ovid 1916, 285)

⁷ 'Aeonian sisters' (Ovid 1916, 261)

⁸ 'sister of Phoebus' (Ovid 1916, 261)

worship there', Jupiter, Delius/Apollo, Bacchus, Phoebe, Juno, 'Venus the queen of the downtown scene' and Mercury. The decisions may be made partially due to the poetical rhythm, such as in case of Ammon and Venus. Apollo/Delius is mentioned with two different names in Martin's translation, and the connection of Apollo to the less well known 'Delius' is provided in the context (ll. 485-487). The translation of 'soror Phoebi' as 'Phoebus' is slightly confusing not only because it does not match the source text, but because in Greco-Roman mythology, Apollo's twin sister is Artemis/Diana and Phoebe is their grandmother, a different deity altogether. Perhaps this could be interpreted as part of how the Sisters are ridiculing the gods.

The Latin source text depicts the sisters expressing their feelings with gestures in two instances: the Sisters make some kind of inappropriate hand gestures and 'beat their breasts' (Ovid 1916, 285) in sorrow. In Martin's translation, the hand gestures have been translated as 'giving [the Muses] the finger' (l. 859), which may well be the exact gesture Ovid had in mind; showing the middle finger was a gesture that was also used in ancient Rome to offend others (Vuolanto 2021). The very direct expression used in Martin's translation matches the attitude of the Sisters while also sounding modern. However, the Sisters express their sorrow by '[trying] to beat upon their breasts' (l. 860) in Martin's translation as well. With this distinctly archaic expression, the tone shifts back closer to what a classical poetry translation is often expected to be like.

The style of contemporary rap lyrics given to the Sisters in Martin's translation is markedly different from the source text in all respects, and obviously none of the socio-cultural connotations we associate with rap music or the modern vocabulary used in the translation existed in Ovid's time. The contemporary elitist conceptions of what is regarded as high culture typically positions classical poetry in this category, and contemporary rap and other popular music genres outside of it, which offers a recognisable comparison to modern-day readers.

Perhaps surprisingly, Martin's translation choice may be closer to the impression conveyed in the source text than would be initially assumed. According to Anderson, the Sisters are presented as having 'low state of culture'; their poetical structure is unusual and their approach offensive (Anderson 1997, 528–529). Whether or not the contemporary reader agrees with the idea of rap music being any of these things, the association is recognisable – Martin's atypical translation choice conveys the meaning of the Latin original in a manner that is relevant today. Anderson explains that 'the Gigantomachy of myth symbolized the struggle of Civilization against Barbarism, of Order against Disorder; and this struggle could be more specifically defined ... in Ovid's time, as Augustan Rome vs. its selfish and self-destructive past. When,

then, the Pierid ennobles the Giants and sneers at the gods, she inverts a theme of high contemporary significance for Ovid's audience' (ibid.). This implication provides an interesting additional layer of meaning for the decision to portray contemporary rap as the opposite of what is generally valued as the style of classical poetry. While the symbolic meaning of a battle between gods and giants is not relevant today, the obvious battle between the 'superior' Muses and 'simpleminded' (Ovid 2004, l. 446) Sisters, with all the modern connotations and associations offered by Martin's translation, echoes the ambiguity of the Latin original. Despite their arrogance and foolishness, the Sisters are ultimately tragic characters that fall victim to the whims of gods.

Based on what could be gathered from Anderson's commentary and Miller's earlier translation, Martin's translation does not omit intertextual or cultural references as such. However, the intertextual and socio-cultural references are often untranslatable at least to some extent because the connotations and associations of the various mythical figures and gods, true and fictional locations, and the general worldview of Ovid's time are so different and distant to us today, and the translator must decide what is important for the overall core meaning of the text and would benefit from being adapted to modern readers.

5.2.2 Unchanged references

It may be erroneous to say that any of the intertextual and cultural references of the original have truly remained unchanged in the translation since the associations and connotations of each reference are different now than they were at the time the source text was written. In this case, 'unchanged' simply means references that have not been adapted or modernised. If the references are not recognisable today, this would practically mean the references have been omitted even if they, in principle, are included in the translation. One example of such a case is how Ovid has specified the Sisters are from Macedonia, a detail that is unchanged in Martin's translation. According to Anderson's commentary, 'the subtle implication behind placing these rivals to Macedonia is that since they are barely Greeks, they could hardly presume to superiority over the Muses' (Anderson 1997, 528). This detail might have been clear in Ovid's time, but perhaps not as much so to the target audience of Martin's translation. The references to specific animal forms that the gods take in the Sisters' mocking song are another such instance; they had significance to the Roman audience that would have understood the

intertextual references to other mythical stories that further emphasise the ridiculing tone (Anderson 1997, 531), whereas in our time the animals have no similar associations.

Although many of the references to specific places and mythical figures have been slightly adapted, as noted earlier, some of these references appear in Martin's translation the same as they do in Ovid's original. This is the case especially if the place names are easily recognisable today (such as Egypt, Nile and Libya) and if the mythical figures are mentioned briefly in context that makes their significance clear; the Muse, while summarising the content of the Sisters' competition entry, explains who Typhoeus the giant is, and when the goddess Lucina is mentioned, it is clear the deity is connected to childbirth ('their mother was Evippe of Peonia; / nine times she called upon Lucina's aid / and nine times she delivered' (Ovid 2004, ll. 442–444)). It should also be noted that while some of the place names and references to locations have been changed to forms that are more easily recognisable today, Martin's translation never removes the narration away from the time and place Ovid set it in; despite the rapping Pierides and other modern references, Martin's translation is not an adaptation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* set in modern times.

5.3 Textual and poetical features

5.3.1 Free translation

The Sisters' songs are an example of free translation that reproduces the meaning of the original but differs significantly from its form. In the analysed data, there are two separate parts where the Muse directly quotes the Sisters: in the first song (Ovid 2004, ll. 449–454), the Sisters challenge the Muses to a competition, and the second song (Ovid 2004, ll. 482–494) is what one of the Sisters performs in hopes of defeating their opponents. For clarity, I will now refer to these songs as Song 1 and Song 2, respectively.

Besides being written in the style of contemporary rap, both songs are longer than in the Latin original. In Martin's translation, Song 1 has sixteen lines and Song 2 thirteen lines, while in the original, Song 1 has seven lines and song 2 only five. In the original as well as in Martin's translation, the vastly unequal space provided for the contestants by the Muse who is retelling the events is a clear way to underline the bias the Muse has for herself and her sisters; while the Sisters are only afforded a few lines, the Muse's song goes on for over 320 lines. This difference

is still prominent even if Martin allows the Muses to continue for a few lines more than in the Latin original.

Essentially, Martin's translation of Songs 1 and 2 reproduces the same message as the original, but in more words to create the tone and rhythm of contemporary rap. At times, the Latin original translates into this modern vernacular quite seamlessly, like in Song 1, where 'desinite indoctum vana dulcedine vulgus / fallere'⁹ (Ovid 1916, ll. 308–09) fits in among Martin's additions almost word for word, modern register aside:

We'll show you girls just what real class is
Give up tryin' to deceive the masses
Your rhymes are fake: accept our wager
Learn which of us is minor and which is major

(Ovid 2004, ll. 455–458; emphasis added)

Everything that has been added to these two songs in translation is in line with the original message and supports it and the impression that the arrogant Sisters are mocking their opponents, like in Song 2, which includes a mocking imitation of what Apollo says as he is portrayed changing his form to make a cowardly escape: '*Fuggedabout Apollo—Make me a crow!*' (Ovid 2004, l. 487). Overall, the free translation makes the Sisters' songs stand out and conveys the implied meanings of the Latin original more efficiently than if they had been translated in same style as the rest of the text.

5.3.2 Poetic metre

Whereas Ovid's Latin original uses hexameter and varies the metre and style to achieve a variety of effects, Martin's translation uses blank verse as its basis. Blank verse is an unrhymed poetic metre that is similar to the natural rhythm of speech and has been widely used in English poetry (Baldick 2015a). The analysed section of *Metamorphoses* includes a change in poetic style in both the original and the translation; the sudden switch to the style of rhyming contemporary rap in Martin's translation is obvious, and according to Anderson's commentary, there is a noticeable change in the source text as well, when the 'Alexandrizing Pierides produce a flamboyant hexameter, with hiatus here at the central caesura, a series of unusual words, and more hiatus at the end' (Anderson 1997, 529).

⁹ 'Cease to deceive the unsophisticated rabble with your pretence of song.' (Ovid 1916, 259)

5.3.3 Punctuation and typography

Classical Latin typically used no punctuation or even spaces to separate words or sentences from one another, let alone typographic features, such as bold or italic typefaces that are used today. Martin's translation, however, utilises punctuation and typographic features to set the Sisters' songs apart from the Muse's and the general narration. Throughout Martin's translation, new lines only begin with a capital letter if they begin a sentence (or start with the pronoun 'I'), but in the Sisters' songs, the first word of every new line is capitalised, marking a visual difference between these sections and the rest.

Martin also uses bold and italic typeface in the Sisters' songs in a markedly different way than elsewhere. For example:

Venus the queen of the downtown scene, yuh know what her wish is? "*Gimme a body just like a fish's*"
Mercury takes on an ibis's shape
And that's how the mighty (**cheep cheep**) gods escape

(Ovid 2004, ll. 492–494)

The typographic formatting emphasises these sections, as if these parts have some special significance in the performance – perhaps the Sister imitates Venus in a funny voice or gestures in some way while 'cheeping'. Additionally, the bolded 'cheeps' ensure the reader will not fail to notice that the Sister calls the gods 'mighty' sarcastically; the sounds that could be made by a featherless young bird are about as far from 'mighty gods' as possible. It could also be reasoned that if a writer must resort to using bold or italicised text to emphasise their message, perhaps they are not very talented in their craft. These visual cues in Martin's translation support the impression of the Sisters as self-confident but ultimately talentless poets.

6 Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to analyse the modernisation used in Charles Martin's English retranslation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and how the modernising techniques and translatory choices convey the meaning of the Latin original to contemporary readers. The temporal distance of classical source texts and their contemporary translations means that many of the connotations, associations and references of the original are no longer recognisable and may need to be adapted in some way in order for the translation to convey the meaning of the original

in a way that is both accurate and relevant. Besides the distance of the time of the writing of the source text and its translations, the perceived stylistic ageing of previous translations often motivates new retranslations (Van Poucke 2017) as the earlier translations may fail to convey an accurate impression of the text's qualities (McKinney 2019). New retranslations that better suit the current needs of their target culture are a way to maintain the status and relevance of classical texts (Venuti 2004).

I used the concepts of modernising and historicising translation (Holmes 1972) and the combination of intertextual references from the source and target cultures (Venuti 2004) as the basis for my analysis. The analysis could have benefitted from a clearer definition and categorisation of the possible types of linguistic, idiomatic, cultural and intertextual translation strategies and their execution.

The analysis showed that Martin's translation uses a variety of linguistic and stylistic modernising techniques that translate the tone and layers of the Latin original accurately and with contemporary relevance. The characters of the Muse and the Sisters in the analysed section have distinctive intratextual voices that portray their personalities, and Martin's translation matches the impressions provided in the Latin original. The Sisters are voiced in the style of contemporary rap lyrics, and this free translation and adapted portrayal of the Sisters' voice with its modern vocabulary and expressions accurately captures the tone of the original while also connecting the text to modern-day context. Martin's translation handles intertextual and cultural references mainly by adapting them to modern 'equivalents' or using references and naming conventions that are more familiar today. There are no clear omissions of references¹⁰, although the retainment of some of the original references may in practice mean the references are lost in translation because they are no longer familiar in today's world. This is inevitable because of the untranslatability arising from linguistic and socio-cultural differences between the target and source language and culture, and the translator must decide what is essential to retain. Martin's translation uses modern vocabulary, free translation, contemporary references,

¹⁰ However, Martin's translation is missing a line ('Pallas ait nemorisque levi consedit in umbra' (Ovid 1916, l. 336). In the Latin original, Minerva sits down in the shade of the forest to listen to the Muses recital after responding to her, but in Martin's translation, this line has clearly been omitted. There is no apparent reason for this and omitting the line seems quite clearly to be a mistake.

changes in poetical metre and even typography to modernise the translation. The adaptations are faithful to the Latin original and help to convey its meaning.

In conclusion, Martin's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is a good example on how modernisation helps maintain the relevance of a classical text. Free translation and the use of the style of contemporary rap convey the voice and personalities of the Pierides in a way that would not have been possible with using standardised language with no clear difference to the general style used in the translation. Style is always also a matter of preference, but Martin's translation illustrates how modernisation can be used to make a translation of a classical literary work connect to its modern context and maintain its value as a relevant and culturally significant item, not just a relic from the past.

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