Translation and the Limits of Greek-Latin Bilingualism

in Late Antiquity (AD 300 – 600)

**Friday, 8th July 2022 – All Souls College (Wharton Room)**

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9:30 – 10:30 Welcome and Opening Address (**Alison John** and **Alan Ross**)

10:30 – 11:30 **Katherine Krauss**, “Biculturalism and literary authority in Macrobius’

*Saturnalia*”

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11:30 – 12:00 Coffee break

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12:00 – 13:00 **Gavin Kelly**, “Greek Accents in Latin Poetry and Rhythmical Prose of Late

Antiquity”

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13:00 – 14:00 Lunch (Hall / Colonnades)

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14:15 – 15:15 **Filomena Giannotti**, “Challenging Decadence Through Translation. A Literary

Example from Sidonius Apollinaris (*Ep*. 8.3) and his work on Philostratus’ *Vita*

*Apollonii*”

15:15 – 15:25 Short break

15:25 – 16:25 **Adam Trettel**, “Greek expressions in Augustine’s sermons”

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16:25 – 16:50 Coffee break

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16:50 – 17:50 **Eleni Leontidou**, “Gregory of Nazianzus’ and Prudentius’ Portraits of Cyprian

of Carthage: Saints’ Lives between the East and the West”

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18:00 – 19:00 Reception (Colonnades)

19:00 Conference Dinner (Hall)

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**Saturday, 9th July 2022 – Wolfson College (Buttery)**

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9:30 – 10:30 **Christa Gray**, “Beyond Equivalence? Contested Principles of Translation in the

Jerome-Rufinus Controversy”

10:30 – 11:30 **Bruno Rochette**, “The Preface to the Translation of Eusebius’s *Chronicon* by

Jerome: What Translation Theory?”

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11:30 – 12:00 Coffee break

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12:00 – 13:00 **Adam Gitner**, “Foreign Idioms in Late Antique Biblical Exegesis”

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13:00 – 14:00 Lunch (Haldane Room)

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14:15 – 15:15 **Alessia Pezella**, “Late-Antique Documentary Translations on Papyrus: Evidence

from the Bilingual Reports of Court-Proceedings”

15:15 – 16:15 **Eleanor Dickey**, “The Latin of Theophilus Antecessor and the Formation of

Byzantine Legal Terminology”

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16:15 – 16:45 Coffee break

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16:45 – 17:00 Concluding remarks

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Practical Information

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**Directions to Wolfson.** There is a frequent bus service along the Banbury Road to and from the City Centre. All number 2 buses and the 500 Water Eaton Park & Ride travel close to Wolfson, departing from their respective signed bus stops on Magdalen Street, as does the 14/14A departing from the Rail Station and stopping in Magdalen Street. When travelling to Wolfson ask for the St. Margaret’s Road stop.

**Internet at Wolfson.** Eduroam is available throughout the college for use with the credentials from your home institution. Otherwise please use the guest network:

Network name: BT Openzone

Password: leonard

Abstracts

Day 1 – Friday, 8th July 2022

**Katherine Krauss**

**Biculturalism and literary authority in Macrobius’ *Saturnalia***

The biculturalism of Macrobius’ *Saturnalia* has traditionally yielded pride of place to attempts to pin down the linguistic skills of its author. Looking to find clues to the elusive identity and date of Macrobius, scholars since the nineteenth century have turned to his ability (or lack thereof) to translate Greek sources as a potential piece of evidence for his place of origin. This paper, by contrast, will offer a literary-critical reading of the ways in which Macrobius embeds the *Saturnalia* in both Greek and Latin literary traditions. This multifaceted heritage, it will argue, plays a prominent role in defining the dialogue’s relationship to two of its primary literary interlocutors—Aulus Gellius and Cicero.

From the opening pages of his Preface, Macrobius emphasises a principle of variety, positioning his text as the offspring of both a typically ‘Greek’ parent, the literary symposium, as well as typically ‘Roman’ ones, the didactic work dedicated by a father to his son, and the Ciceronian dialogue. He reinforces his claim to a bicultural intellectual ancestry by likening his choice to write in Latin to an anecdote from Gellius’ *Noctes Atticae* about the decision of Aulus Albinus to write a history in Greek.

The *Saturnalia*’s self-consciousness about its own hybridity in the Preface lays the foundations for a larger series of reflections about the relationship between Greek and Latin intellectual life. Throughout his work, Macrobius presents his text as a much-needed update to previous ‘translations’ of Greek philosophy and learning by invoking two literary precedents who featured prominently in the Preface—the *Noctes Atticae* and Cicero’s philosophical dialogues. The *Noctes Atticae* model a fluency in both Greek and Latin culture which the *Saturnalia* simultaneously strives to attain and surpass. Allusions to Cicero’s dialogues, on the other hand, frame the centrepiece of the *Saturnalia*, the conversations on Virgil. Just as Cicero transposed Greek philosophy into a Roman key through literary dialogues, so too does Macrobius view his fictive gathering as introducing an innovative, Neoplatonic reading of Virgil to late Roman literary critics.

In the works of both Cicero and Gellius, Macrobius recognises projects similar to his own, equally conversant in their different ways in both Greek and Latin literary spheres. This aesthetic of biculturalism is crucial not only to our understanding of the *Saturnalia*, but also to shedding light on the varied modes of reception of Greek literature in the late antique Latin west.

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**Gavin Kelly**

**Greek accents in Latin poetry and rhythmical prose of late antiquity**

With the Greek accent becoming decisively a stress accent in the imperial period, the pronunciation of Greek words diverges comprehensively from their scansion in poetry. Greek metrical poetry continued to be written following traditional prosody (though the influential metrical practices of Nonnus are surely linked to stress accents). I want to look at the use of Greek words and names in Latin poetry of late antiquity: except in poets who know Greek very well like Claudian, there is a tendency to infer the prosody of Greek words from their accents, and I think this tells us interesting things about western knowledge of Greek both as a living and as a literary language.

**Filomena Giannotti**

**Challenging Decadence Through Translation. A Literary Example from Sidonius Apollinaris (*Ep.* 8.3) and his work on Philostratus’ *Vita Apollonii***

This contribution analyzes the letter 8.3 by Sidonius Apollinaris, a key figure in Late Antiquity, who is considered to have knowledge of Greek. It is a covering letter of a work that Sidonius had prepared for Leo, a learned orator, jurist and poet, who was also a minister of king Euricus of the Visigoths, on *Vita Apollonii* by Philostratus, telling the story of the wandering Pythagorean philosopher Apollonius of Tyana (ca. 3 B.C.-97 A.D.) and of his travels.

It is not clear if Sidonius’ work is a Greek transcription, a Latin transcription or a Latin translation. My paper reinvestigates this very tricky question, in the light of the studies of the last two years, and tries to offer a new argument in support of the hypothesis that Sidonius did not make a mere mechanical transcription, but a creative one, of a former Latin translation.

But apart from the way of interpreting the letter, it might be interesting to approach the topic from a historical-literary point of view. In this perspective, a possible reduced direct access to Greek books does not necessarily mean a decline of Greek literature. On the contrary, it might show the importance of gaining access to a culturally relevant text through translation. So a leading intellectual figure of the Greek pagan world even becomes the model and the mirror of the Roman-Visighotic official Leo. Evoking a Greek work is for Sidonius a way to defend culture and avoid, or at least delay, the loss of Greek literature, and what is more, the loss of a book which praises a pagan philosopher, *fidei catholicae pace praefata* (8.3,5).

Finally, the letter is also a brilliant literary document displaying, among other things, a certain number of Grecisms related to Apollonius’ scruffy and wild aspect in comparison to elegant Oriental people.

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**Adam Trettel**

**Greek expressions in Augustine’s sermons**

This paper utilizes word searches in the *Corpus Augustinianum Gissense* 3 and consultation of the *Augustinus Lexiko*n to isolate places where Augustine uttered Greek words or phrases when he was preaching and it was recorded live by stenographers. In a first section, I explore previous scholarship on Augustine's general knowledge of Greek. Second, I explain my methodology and why I stick to the *Sermones, Enarrationes in Psalmos*, and *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus CXXIV.* Finally, I analyze the results, showing that Augustine gives 1:1 and 1:2 Greek-Latin translations, and brings in Greek to show the power of custom or make reference to his audience's background knowledge of Greek. In highlighting some inconsistencies in his statements, I show Augustine has an ability to improvise and be flexible with his translations. Complementing studies by Altaner and others, the corpus of preached sermons testifies to a Greek ability that goes beyond a mere familiarity with technical terms

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**Eleni Leontidou**

**Gregory of Nazianzus’ and Prudentius’ portraits of Cyprian of Carthage: saints’ lives between the East and the West**

Two fourth-century texts, the 24th Oration of Gregory of Nazianzus, written in Greek, and Poem 13 from Prudentius’ *Peristephanon,* written in Latin, were dedicated to the Carthaginian bishop and martyr St Cyprian of Carthage. Both writers, without being aware of each others’ work, made the same mistake: they combined elements of the life of the historical Cyprian of Carthage with details from the Eastern popular legend of Cyprian of Antioch, a pagan sorcerer who converted to Christianity. The conflation of the two Cyprians can simply be attributed to synonymity. However, it is a phenomenon worth investigating further, since it can tell us a lot about the reception of Greek and Latin saints’ lives across the perceived linguistic borders of the late antique Roman empire.

Little is known about Gregory’s knowledge of Latin and Prudentius’ knowledge of Greek. I will attempt to establish the limits of the two writers’ knowledge of the biography of the historical Cyprian, for which all sources are written in Latin, and of the Greek *Vitae* of Cyprian of Antioch. Other questions also arise: for example, is there a possibility that translations of the Greek and Latin sources had been made available before the composition of Prudentius’ and Gregory’s works? If not, how can we trace the influence that oral tradition may have played in the dissemination of the lives and legends of the saints across linguistic barriers? The possible mediating role that the court of emperor Theodosius in Milan may have played between Greek and Latin speakers will also be discussed. In addition to engaging with what has been a long-standing hagiographical enigma, I hope that this paper will contribute to the general discussion regarding cultural communication between the East and the West in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages.

Day 2 – Saturday, 9th July 2022

**Christa Gray**

**Beyond equivalence? Contested principles of translation in the Jerome-Rufinus controversy**

My paper will revisit the controversy between Jerome and Rufinus in the 390s-400s AD, which motivated the formulation and contestation of translation principles that are still prominently quoted in translation studies today. The tension between the two former classmates escalated in their fight about Origen’s *On first principles*, which led to rival translations buttressed by lengthy argumentative tracts from both men. I will note the impact of this controversy on the transmission of the text of *On first principles* and raise the question of the significance of translations from Greek into Latin for the establishment and maintenance of patronage networks amid the fierce theological debates of the time. In the final part of my paper I will consider to what extent recent developments in translation studies may (or may not) help us re-evaluate the methods and principles disputed by Rufinus and Jerome.

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**Bruno Rochette**

**The Preface to the Translation of Eusebius’s *Chronicon* by Jerome: What Translation Theory?**

Eusebius’ Chronicle by Jerome is a summary of the history of the Greeks and Barbarians from Abraham’s birth (placed in 2016 BCE) until Diocletian’s reign (303 CE: beginning of the great persecution) in its first version, the second one going up to the twentieth year of Constantine’s reign (325 CE). Jerome’s Chronicle is the translation (almost faithful) of that of Eusebius for the part which extends from Abraham’s birth to the capture of Troy. In the second part, which goes until 325 CE, the chronicle is largely enriched with notes composed by Jerome himself, most of which concern Roman history. Jerome is largely inspired by Suetonius. A third part is entirely specific to Jerome: it prolongs Eusebius’ work until 378 CE, providing numerous data on secular history as well as on ecclesiastical history. The chronicle belongs to a specific genre: the informative text, of historical nature, which the translator considers himself authorized to rectify, “improve”, or update. We are at the border between translation work, compilation, research, synthesis, and personal elaboration. In such conditions, it is interesting to study the *praefatio* of the *Chronicon*, probably the first of Jerome's translation works (c. 380-381 CE), roughly contemporary with the translation of Origen's Homilies on Jeremiah and Ezekiel. In this preface, Jerome explains the difficulties of a good translation. He begins with a school memory, then immediately takes as his first example that of Cicero, which he analyzes critically. Strictly literal translation is impossible. He gives examples of difficulty, in particular what he calls *suum et uernaculum linguae genus*. We can compare translation theory that emerges in this text with that expressed in other passages, especially some prefaces and the letter 57 to Pammachius *De optimo genere interpretandi*. There are differences and similarities interesting to highlight between those texts of Jerome about translation theory.

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**Adam Gitner**

**Foreign Idioms in Late Antique Biblical Exegesis**

Late antique readers confronted a biblical text in Greek and Latin translation that was often marked by its foreign origin: difficult to understand, awkwardly literal, and sometimes far beneath the standards of literary prose. However, instead of finding fault with these features as barbarisms or solecisms, as they had been taught to do, educated readers developed a new method of reading to extract deeper meaning from these peculiarities. Even monolingual readers, without access to the original biblical languages, were forced to confront the nature and limits of translation and to engage imaginatively with a foreign-language original beyond their reach.

We can see this development in the rise of the concept of the ἰδίωμα or *proprietas linguae* as a way to describe traces of a foreign original perceptible in a translated text. Sparsely present in pre-Christian hermeneutics (e.g. Zenodotus at Schol. bTT *Il*. 1.198b2 Ariston.; Julius Romanus test. Char. gramm. p. 332.21), the concept seems to have been popularized by Antiochene commentators on the Septuagint (e.g. Adrian’s *Introduction to the Divine Scriptures*) and was picked up by Latin church fathers, including Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, and Cassiodorus. Notably it becomes central even to the monolingual experience of reading Scripture: Augustine’s *Locutiones in Heptateuchem* catalogs such biblical “idioms,” and Cassiodorus even includes them in his system of marginal signs (; cf. *inst.* 1.26.2)––despite the fact that neither author boasted great knowledge of Greek, let alone Hebrew. Surveying the origin and development of the concept, I argue that the ἰδίωμα was a site of innovative reflection about language contact and linked to new multilingual modes of reading.

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**Alessia Pezella**

**Late-Antique Documentary Translations on Papyrus: Evidence from the Bilingual Reports of Court-Proceedings**

Translating involves diverse set of forms of bilingual behaviour. The papyrological evidence from Egypt witnessing or implying linguistic mediation (from Demotic to Greek, from Latin to Greek and vice versa) is quite meagre and sparse, for in a multilingual environment interpreting should be somewhat ordinary (on this aspect, see recently Mairs 2019). As for translations from Latin, direct and indirect papyrological evidence becomes less numerous after the fourth century, when according to the *communis* *opinio* a Latinisation of the bureaucracy would take place (Rochette 1997: 116; *contra* Adams 2003: 636–8).

The present paper, supported by the ERC-project PLATINUM, will address some historical and sociolinguistic issues of documentary translations in Late Antiquity by focusing on two partial renderings into Greek of reports of court-proceedings before the same *praeses Aegypti Herculiae* (*P. Sakaon* 33, 34) with a methodology that integrates sociolinguistics with other disciplines (for this approach cf. e.g., Mullen 2013; McDonald 2015; Estarán Tolosa 2016). Both papyri come from Theadelphia, date to the early years of the fourth century and have the same bilingual format, since Latin is employed in the heading, in the formulae describing the trial and for the judicial sentence, whereas Greek is used by the advocates and in the translations of the judicial sentence. These translations are some of the latest known from Greek-Latin papyrus documents.

The paper will be composed of two parts. In part one attention will be paid to the format of both reports and the Greek translation of the judicial decisions as well as the eventual connection of documentary translations with the bilingual textbooks for learning Latin as L2 (glossaries, *hermeneumata*). The aim is to understand how palaeography and visual aspects can support a sociolinguistic analysis and if there is a connection between texts of different type. What are the editorial strategies and what scope do they serve? Are they text-specific? How do they interact with the linguistic data? Is the vocabulary of these sources comparable? In part two these data will help us addressing the motivations for translating and the sociolinguistic issues concerning code-switching in late antique Greek–Latin transcripts of hearings on papyrus and the language for the judicial sentence. Furthermore, one will seek to understand what the results tells us about the use of Latin for bureaucracy in Late Antiquity.

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**Eleanor Dickey**

**The Latin of Theophilus Antecessor and the formation of Byzantine legal terminology**  
  
Byzantine legal Greek is full of Latin loanwords, some so heavily adapted that their originals are almost unrecognisable and others displaying conspicuously Latinate features. Investigation of how that situation arose immediately points to Theophilus Antecessor’s Greek translation of Justinian’s *Institutes*, which was published at a crucial moment in the shift from Latin to Greek as the language of Roman law, had immense influence as the introductory textbook used by Byzantine law students for the next several centuries, and provides the first surviving attestations of many legal loanwords. Theophilus could have made linguistic choices that created later legal Greek -- but if that is what happened, why were his choices so bizarre? To what extent were what appear to be Theophilus’ terminological decisions actually his own, and to what extent was he following a tradition of Greek legal exegesis that remained largely oral and thus invisible to us until he put it into writing? If the latter, when and how was legal Greek actually created?