

STUDIES
OF
TIMOTHY HULL'S
PUBLIC EXHIBITION
'PASTICHE
CICERO'
A FLORILEGIUM

An Edited Volume by **J.B. Doolittle**, M.A., Provisional
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Above: *Pastiche Cicero* (2014)

REGARDING THE “PASTICHE CICERO”

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AN OBLIGATION to the truth has inspired me to comment on the upcoming exhibition by Timothy Hull entitled “Pastiche Cicero,” opening in New York City at Fitzroy Gallery. Although I am utterly unlettered and perhaps someone with more skill may see reason to pick up what I have completed here, throw it away and start afresh, I feel an urgency to put my thoughts down in writing for later generations. Having fancied myself as something of a “Pastiche Cicero” for some time (even having gone so far as to fashion a toga in the hopes of publicly delivering an abridged version of the oration against Catiline), I could not allow this show to occur without some scholarly nod toward the twin impulses of charlatanry and academia of which I am so fond. Without much delay (indeed, almost immediately), I have assembled a panel of scholars and neo-non-interpretationists to comment not only on the material in Hull’s show, but also some of the Greco-Roman antiquities that Hull references in his *oeuvre*. As Nennius did, I have indeed “made a pile of all that I found.” The essays I have chosen for this printed *florilegium*, I hope, will illustrate the wide range of scholarly opinion on the themes of ruin, graffiti and artifact upon which Hull focuses.

If the reader might indulge me before I turn the pages of this volume over to my erudite contributors, Hull’s themes of ruin, graffiti and artifact are critically relevant to our own times. First, ruins are never all that far from our everyday experiences. The

structures that we build not only replace but also reuse the structures that were there before. In constructing the Forum, the ancient Romans both demolished and recycled half-remembered structures from their past, just as medieval and Renaissance popes would do to the ancient Roman cityscape as they rebuilt and enlarged their own palaces and basilicas. Even today, successful urban redevelopment projects in American post-industrial cities both construct anew while incorporating surviving elements of the built landscape.

Graffiti, past and present served as a means of expression for those outside of the halls of power. Whereas Roman emperors had stone carvers immortalize their names at the tops of buildings or in mile-markers, the common people with the capacity for letters scribbled curses on crumbling walls. Astonishingly, after two millennia, emperor and urban commoner stand equal in edited volumes of Roman epigraphy.¹

Finally, what is an artifact, if not a relic? In the modern era, we are so insulated from artifacts, the collected heritage of our species. The items of a museum collection are kept behind glass, or locked in storerooms, far from the touch and perhaps even far from the view of all except the most trusted specialists or the wealthiest collectors. Is this all merely for preservation? No, I say it is also part veneration, much like reliquaries of the middle ages which housed the bones of a saint. The items of a museum collection seem to take on an otherworldly quality by their very inaccessibility: objects of power, symbols of ancient as well as

modern political and economic might, but also objects for contemplation and reflection.

We seek a sort of contradiction when we gaze upon an artifact, a sense of connection with the past as well as a reassurance that things are much different now.² We latch onto the familiar and recognizable, yet are intrigued by the foreign and the experience of alterity. We seek a mystical experience in their presence: the haunting eyes of the figures in funerary portraits from Roman Egypt, the careless footprint of a child on a Roman roof tile, the simple drawing of a pet on a wall from Pompeii: these are the things that resonate. But at the same time, the carved phalluses, the many-breasted goddess figures and the grotesque demons are the things that challenge us.

Our experience of artifacts has another dimension, however, and that is through reproduction, and I believe it is here that Hull's work provides the most profound commentary. Since the direct tactile experience with objects of antiquity has become something only the extremely educated or extremely wealthy can enjoy, an industry has emerged that repackages these objects for mass consumption. Like badges that were collected by pilgrims at holy sites across medieval Europe, these votive objects are symbolic of our longing for a sustained, direct experience of the ancient. Hull clearly addresses that sense of longing, while simultaneously exploring the interstice between what constitutes a scholarly-recognized antiquity and what makes a souvenir.

¹ Clovis Zinna Berninger, *Roman Road Markers*, (London: Philberg, 1922).

² Of course, the definition of an artifact changes, and what is kept in a storeroom safe from the eyes and hands of the public in New York may simply lie strewn about in piles of rubble in places such as Italy, Greece or Egypt. And in the United States, our own more recent artifacts, objects as well as buildings from the Industrial Age lie scattered, crumbling and uncared for, as yet too numerous to be special.

I would suggest that the works in Hull's new exhibition also push us to interrogate the appropriation of Greco-Roman aesthetics. To take one example of this, let us explore perhaps the most iconic image of the show, *Pastiche Cicero*, a reinterpretation of a Pompeiian graffito of a man's head with an enormous nose and the word "PEREGRINUS" scribbled above (see the plate at the beginning of the chapter). The original context and meaning, obviously obscured by two thousand years, is difficult to ascertain. Was this a man named Peregrinus who became the butt of a city-wide joke when some rival drew his portrait with an outsized nose, bald head and ironic wreath of victory? Was this a harsh caricature of foreigners or travelers (*peregrini*) to the city? Whatever the original contexts, Hull gives the image and message a new one. What will modern viewers think as they gaze upon this odd image? Will they recognize its Pompeiian provenance and try to understand its context? Will they decipher the Latin script? Or, perhaps more creatively, will they simply abandon the search for Truth, and create a new meaning for themselves right on the spot.

Hull reminds us that classical allusions are everywhere, some cheap, some profound, but all have undergone a staggering process of refashioning. One need only think of the Roman eagle atop the legionary standard for a particularly powerful example. Think of all the places that eagle has appeared and all the ways that eagle has been transformed. However, as society loses the everyday familiarity with the context of the classics, these allusions in all their guises will appear both more and more mundane in one sense, but also with just a little bit of reflection, much more inscrutable and exotic.

But let me cease this discussion, and allow my esteemed contributors their space, and please forgive my rambling words. Like the Late Romano-British historian Gildas, "my style may be worthless, but my intentions are kindly."

ON THE USES AND ABUSES OF "NATURAL PHILOLOGY"

Martin Holmberg-Depardieu, Ph.D.
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Ey often seke the dark wode
To brave the cuzeyn and the code
Til taketh the sede, the farmer hake
Whan that hie shode freez and bake.
So ey maken maste to save myne ryme,
And thrust meself into Olden Tyme.

--Eadwulf of Gillingham, *Chronicle of Metonymy*

WHAT CAN WE DO when confronted with something that we do not understand? Sadly, the once-vaunted skill of what might be called "natural," "intuitive" or "creative philology" has been all but abandoned within scholarly circles. Practiced by eminent figures such as Isidore of Seville in sixth-century Spain, or Joseph Smith in nineteenth-century New York, it was once highly fashionable or perhaps even desirable to take a text or word in an unknown language and impute it with a new meaning based on random and completely unfounded associations, usually cloaked in an air of religious mysticism or unwieldy scholarly apparatus.

The most successful of these specious etymologies or translations could influence the thinking on a given subject for millennia. But today, an era that can easily support countless pseudo-sciences from Druidic stone healing to vibrational metaphysics to intelligent design, seems to have no room for natural philology.

Barry Singer and Victor A. Benassi, in a 1981 study on Americans' credulity in occult beliefs, declared that the proliferation of pseudo-sciences was due to four main factors: (1) simple cognitive errors based on misinterpretation of personal experiences; (2) sensational or unrealistic mass media coverage; (3) sociocultural factors; (4) deficient education in the sciences.³ Subsequent studies, such as one in 1990, by Raymond Eve and Dana Dunn, have tended to confirm these findings, and in some cases have said that they are getting worse.⁴ In the internet era, anyone with a blog or Facebook account can begin to spread information about the dangers of "dihydrogen monoxide." My argument, however, is that if this is all true, and simple credulity, dissemination of false information and sense of hysteria are increasing, causing a veritable "golden age of nonsense" as

President Lyndon B. Johnson once feared, why has the ancient and wonderful discipline of natural philology been left out?

In my honest estimation, natural philology, if used properly (*id est*, with a sensible level of clarity and sophistication), can provide modern societies with many wonderful benefits.⁵ First, natural philology is radically democratic. Unlike other avenues of knowledge, which have become the exclusive domain of "ivory tower" academics, the creative interpretations of natural philology do not normally require specialized training. So in that sense, the practice is equal parts explanatory and revelatory, but also populist. Second, natural philology provides answers to things we cannot currently understand. Rather than stare at an indecipherable inscription like a dumb beast, natural philology gives us the tools to understand anything that comes into our purview. Finally, natural philology exercises the creative faculties of the human intellect. Recent studies by Marziano DeNoblis and Rachel Burnside have shown if we are not given a chance to make up our own interpretations for the inscrutable world around us, we may suffer from any number of physical or psychosomatic illnesses.⁶ As the esteemed Anglo-Norman medieval theologian

³ Barry Singer and Victor A. Benassi. "Occult Beliefs: Media Distortions, Social Uncertainty, and Deficiencies of Human Reasoning Seem to be at the Basis of Occult Beliefs." *American Scientist*, Vol. 69, No. 1 (January–February 1981), pp. 49–55.

⁴ Raymond A. Eve and Dana Dunn. "Psychic Powers, Astrology & Creationism in the Classroom? Evidence of Pseudoscientific Beliefs among High School Biology & Life Science Teachers". *The American Biology Teacher*, Vol. 52, No. 1 (Jan., 1990), pp. 10–21.

⁵ William Upton, *The Japetic Philosophy: and Physioglyphics; or Natural Philology* (London: Elliott's, 1861).

⁶ Marziano DeNoblis and Rachel Burnside, "Applying Modern Liberal Natural Philology Theory to the Preschool Experiences of Children in Westindale, Illinois (Chicago, 2011), pp. 20-27.

Ignatius of Canterbury (d. 1125) once said, “Sometimes in the most elaborate lie, one can find the most exquisite truth.”⁷

“Letters are a window through which you may see my mind.”
--Flavius Curtius Maro, *Letters to Parullus*

SO MUCH INK has already been spilled on the subject of the famous graffiti so famously, (albeit erroneously) entitled the *Pompeiiian Gladiators* by Francesco Petrarca, that I almost feel embarrassed putting pen to paper yet again. But recent research on some of the figures in the exceptional tableau has thrown much of the traditional understanding into serious doubt.



Plate 1. *The Pompeiiian Gladiators*

CHAOS AND THE CRITICS: A HILARIAN INTERPRETATION OF THE *POMPEIIAN GLADIATORS*

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Early observers, including such eminent theologians as Desiderius Erasmus and Martin Luther, believed that this set of images and text captured players, gamblers and spectators of the ancient Roman game of *callidus*. Historians of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as the eminent Howard Darling-Whittington

⁷ Ignatius of Canterbury, *Commentary on Hrabanus Maurus' Commentary of Bede's Commentary of Augustine of Hippo's Diatribe Against the Donatist Heresy*, L.31.xxi, tr. Melissa Parker (Boston, 1999).

Clovis Zinna Berninger, and Arthur Caravaggio, however, tended to see instead a representation of the famous gladiatorial games.⁸ Under this now-standard interpretation, two gladiators at the center (Hilarus the Neronian, on the left, who fought fourteen matches, and Creunus, who fought seven) square off, while a trio of flautists plays on the right and several spectators watch on from the left.

But does this make any sense? At the time that Darling-Whittington, et al. wrote, very little was actually known about the gladiatorial contests, as most post-Enlightenment historians had shunned the “dark streak of virtual human sacrifice at the heart of the Golden Roman past.” So the two “fighters” at the center may have been originally misidentified, and the error has reified into truth in the intervening century and a half.

But what of the other figures in the graffiti? Are the figures on the right playing flutes? If so, then why are there absolutely no references to the vaunted flute players of the gladiatorial games in any other source? And are the “spectators” to the left in fact spectators? How then to understand the obvious nimbus shapes around their heads? Are they merely “Victorian parasols,” as Caravaggio once suggested, hopefully with his tongue planted firmly in cheek? Certainly not.

If I may humbly suggest a new interpretation: this cycle of images and the associated inscriptions all seem to relate to an even lesser-known phenomenon, the Campanian hen-dance, part of the ancient Roman festival of Hilaria as celebrated in southern Italy,

especially Greek-influenced areas. This two-week festival, celebrated around the vernal equinox, was in honor of the mother goddess Kybele and marked the death and happy resurrection of her consort, Attis. The festival was marked by a clear duality: the mournfulness of the early days as the god “died,” with rituals of scourging, castration and whipping, was matched by the exuberant joy of the final days, as the god miraculously came back to life to rejoin Kybele.

Polybius is the only Greco-Roman author to describe the festival in any detail. His description of the hen-dance is particularly illuminating:

“And thus the Campanians, covered in blood, pair off, with their legs bound with a rustic bit of twine, holding clubs fashioned from the sacred tree that is to be buried. The men, for indeed it is only a man who can properly be a hen during this time of mournfulness, spread feathers over their bodies and square off in a ritual hen-dance, to determine who will have the honor of presiding over the funeral for the tree. It appears that they must dance until one of them collapses. The man who lands on top is the funeral master.” (*Histories*, IX, 32. 29-34).

So how does this change the meaning of the image above? The men in the middle, are clearly engaged in the hen-dance, which Polybius says formed part of the rituals of the mournful period of the festival. Looking closely at the headgear of the two central figures reveals what appear to be feathers. Additionally, as seen in other examples of graffiti from southern Italy, the pattern of

⁸ Howard Darling-Whittington, 4th Earl of Tyndale, *A Sweeping Account of the Grand Roman Imperium: Being a Brief Narrative of the History of the Roman Republic and Empire*, 26 volumes (London, 1795); Arthur Caravaggio, *Why I Should Never Have Been Born: A Sober History of the Greek Poleis*. Tr. Philip Managerial (Roma: Adalberto Ognibene, 1878).

striations as seen on the body of the man on the left was a typical way to depict feathers. The men on the right, holding the long “instruments” are in fact holding reeds, which as Polybius points out elsewhere, were carried during the early days of the festival to mark the commencement of the ritual fast. Alternatively, they could also be eating celery stalks, which were seen as symbolic of fertility and eaten during the festival as a representation of the dying Attis’ own castration. The people on the left also seem to be involved with rituals of these early days. They are perhaps scourgers, with the flails and whips they are using flying around their heads as they shed their blood for the dying god.

Turning then to the inscriptions, which seem to confirm this interpretation, I will mention several points. The first is the word HILARUS, which has always been interpreted as a name, but could in fact be a noun for a male celebrant of the Hilaria festival. The numbers, especially the VII could indicate the fact that the scourging/hen-dance rituals of the festival usually took place on the seventh Kalends of April (March 22). Finally, the Neronian who is called PRINCEPS (i.e., the one on the left) may have been the winner of the hen-dance, as *princeps* was occasionally used in other sources (albeit from faraway Britain) to denote the master of a funeral.

**A GRAFFITO
OF THE ROMAN FIREFIGHTERS
AND THE “YELLOW PLAGUE”
OF THE *WELSH ANNALS***

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HOW OFTEN do we place two seemingly unrelated things side-by-side and discover numerous fascinating connections between them? This methodology of inquiry by dialectic, proposed by Ethel Wesserman in the 1920s and itself based on the methods of the scholastics in thirteenth-century universities, has recently come back into vogue, as seen in the works by Duderovsky, Manteau and Platte.⁹ By considering a painting by Timothy Hull believed by Fillet and others to be based on a graffito of a cohort of Roman firefighters from what is now Trastevere together with passages from the ninth-century *Annales Cambriae* or *Welsh Annals*, some dramatic deeper truths begin to emerge. Namely, the prominence of the number seven and a crude drawing of a horseman in the graffito seems to have prefigured the outbreak of

⁹ See the discussion in Francine Delbruner. *A Guide to Late Roman Script*. New York: Ontogeny Recapitulates Phylogeny, 2005.

the so-called “Yellow Plague” in the British Isles by some several centuries.

Timothy Hull’s painting *From a Basement Wall in Ancient Rome* (see Figure A) seems to mention several things. First, the “VII” of the cohort is quite pronounced. This seems to echo another Hull painting of a Roman mile marker (*hic situs est one*, see Figure B), which prominently announces that the stone was placed VII miles from Rome. Second, there is a reference to the month of July as well as the pictorial representation of a horseman. The horseman, if indeed he is one, seems to be missing a head and legs, but carrying a spear. In fact, the horseman may be lacking a body entirely.¹⁰ Regardless, both the horseman and the July reference are oddly missing from the mile marker, but fortunately do no harm to the argument here.

Now, if we turn to the historical information provided by the *Annales Cambriae*, I hope that the connections between that document and the Roman graffito are soon made obvious. If we focus in on the events specifically during the 111-year period from 447 to 558, the nature of the events that fall on the years ending in “7”, which the graffito seems to be urging, are curious.¹¹

447. Day is dark as night.

457. St. Patrick goes to the Lord.

537. The battle of Camlann, in which Arthur and Medraut fell: and there was a plague in Ireland.

547. A great death (plague) in which Maelgwn, king

of Gwynedd died. Thus they say “The long sleep of Maelgwn in the court of Rhos.” Then was the yellow plague. (*Annales Cambriae*)

Obviously, these are all quite significant events, perhaps even the most significant in all the *Welsh Annals*. The annalist tells us about an unending night, the death of St. Patrick, the death of King Arthur, and two references to outbreaks of disease. This is an astonishing track record of prophecy for a cohort of firefighters from Rome.

Digging a little deeper, we might speculate on the meaning of the text at the beginning of the graffito, which may in fact confirm this connection to the *Welsh Annals*. As Phineas Baronek has argued, the text reads: KETENI SPAKTOR TLL.

“KETENI” is perhaps the hardest of the three elements, so we shall deal with it first. Although Martin and Turndale seem to think this refers to a kind of leopard, or perhaps even a seal (cf. *centenius*), I would suggest that the term instead refers to a group of British bandits that had settled in the outskirts of Rome during the fourth century. Ammianus Marcellinus refers to this particular band of knaves as the Quatteni, and strongly derides their harsh Celtic accent, as well as their role in upsetting the moral order.

“SPAKTOR” is obviously a name, likely the leader of the Quatteni faction in Rome.¹² Maggie O’Connor has suggested BAKTTOR instead, linking it to the archaic Latin *bactorius*, a

¹⁰ Roger Stevenson has proposed that this “horseman” is in fact the *agrius*, an ancient Roman symbol of election and luck. See *Twisting the Dagger: 101 Roman Knock Knock Jokes* (Philadelphia, 2003), p. 34.

¹¹ Melissa Grundberg also reminds us that 111 was an auspicious number in the Celtic tradition in the early middle ages; a number that is 7 multiplied by 11, with 34 (7+7+7+7+6) added.

¹² Maggie O’Connor has suggested BAKTTOR as the second element, but was at a loss regarding the third, which I have said is “TLL.”

wooden washbasin for completing a ritual handwashing. But I point again to Ammianus who mentions a certain Spactorix as among the members of the Quatteni band. Intriguingly, if we look at the sixth-century Welsh poem *Y Gododdin*, we see a variation of the name, “Spectoris,” as one of the captains of the northern Welsh troops.

Finally, the “TLL” element: While I am sure that some will find fault with this reasoning, I believe that this is the piece of evidence that can tie the graffiti to *Welsh Annals* closest of all. The famous “yellow plague” of 547, which also appears in the chronicles of Procopius and much later, in Paul the Deacon, seems to have wreaked particular devastation in Britain. Although from a much later context, the abbreviation “TLL” has been found in various Latin plague charters from England of the fourteenth century to mean “Terribilis Lues Loegriae,” the “terrible pestilence of lowland Britain.” The interesting thing here is that a Latinized Welsh word for “lowland Britain” is used in these charters, and not “Britannia” or especially “Anglia” which would be expected.

Could this TLL abbreviation have originated in some ancient graffiti from Trastevere? And the bigger question, could a band of Welsh bandits who settled in Rome under their leader Spactorix in the fourth century have accurately predicted events in their homeland two hundred years later? The implications, in terms of the possible new directions of research this could produce, are considerable.

Figure A: *From a Basement Wall in Ancient Rome (2013)*

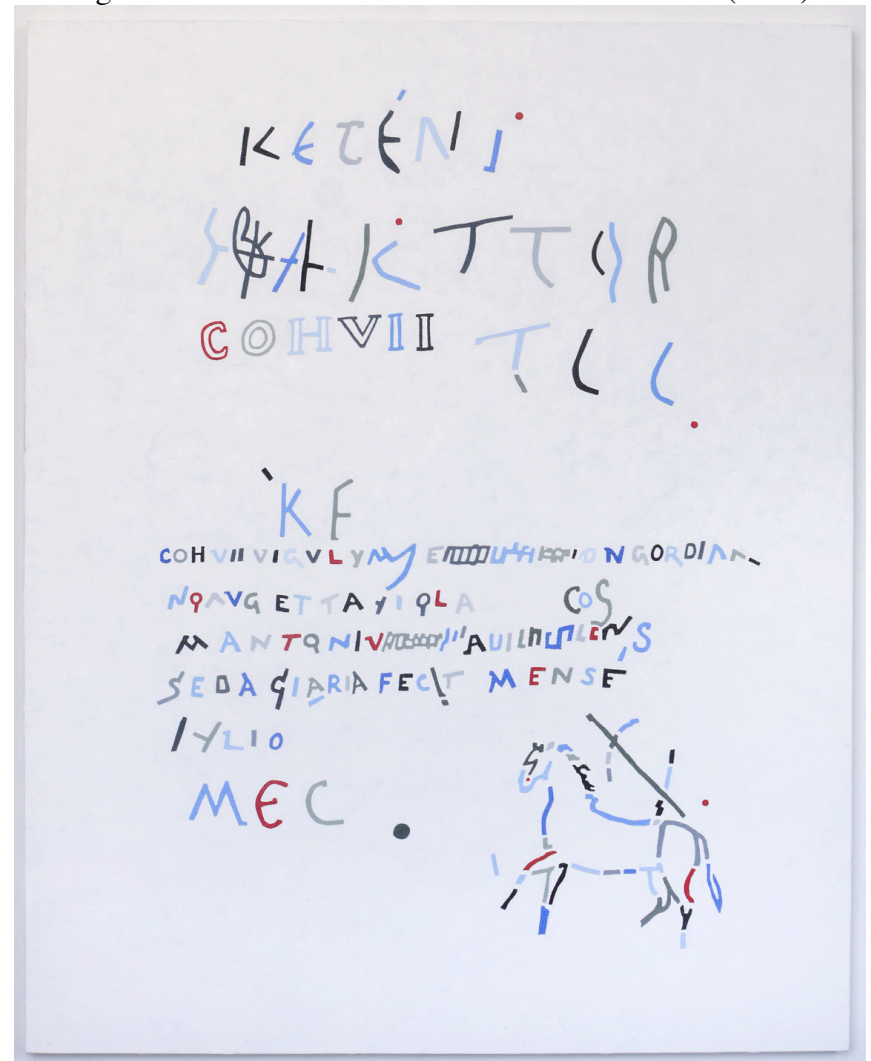


Figure B: *hic situs est one* (2014)



THE (RE)DISCOVERY OF THE “DYTHEROUS STONE” OF PROCOPIUS OF CAESAREA

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SOMETIMES the most fragmentary ostrakon provides the most exceptional opportunities for scholars. The particular fragment known as Oxford Bodleian 23.4 H(5) (illustrated below) has perplexed historians for centuries. The sixth-century imperial Byzantine historian Procopius first mentioned that the general Belisarius unearthed this fragment during the Gothic Wars in southern Italy. Procopius said that the fragment, which he called the “Dytherous Stone” was “more ancient than could be believed” and was reputed to have healing properties. The fragment was then brought to Constantinople with a series of other short

epigraphic inscriptions and assorted spoils (including shattered amphorae, iron tongs and goats' teeth) from the Byzantine reconquest of Italy.

From there, the fragment remained part of a reliquary in the Basilica of St. Simeon in Constantinople until 1204. At that time, as reported by Geoffrey de Villehardouin, the warriors of the Fourth Crusade sacked the city and sent the reliquary, which contained part of the femur of St. Anastasius, to Venice, where it was placed in the Church of San Gordiano, near Santo Stefano. From there intriguingly, during the French invasion of the Veneto (1509), the reliquary was stolen and sold to an Albanian mercenary captain named Fatmir Afrim Baris, who brought the piece back east.

From there, like the lost the fate of the Dytherous stone remained a mystery until very recently. In 2004, after nearly five hundred years, the stone turned up within the base of a statue of the Virgin Mary, which had been placed outside the Church of the Holy Name of Innocents/Gethsemene Mount Zion Congregation of Christ, located in Cold Spring, New York. Father Maurice O'Callaghan, who made the alarming discovery, decided to learn the missing history of the stone by holding it against his head for six days straight. Sadly, since accomplishing this feat, Father O'Callaghan has never spoken another word.

Anyway, this fragment fell to me after the Rector of the church, Pietros Madrigalis, contacted me to try and interpret the inscription. While I would not say I have "pulled the feathers off of the dodo bird" as King Edward IV might have said, I do feel that this is almost as perfect as human reasoning can be.

To begin, the Greek transcription is:

DUQEROUC D

KAI MINI
OUQ Q

The transliteration into Latin letters is:

Dytherous d...
Kai mini
Outh th...

"Dytherous" could be related to **Dethero-*, an Indo-European root meaning "to hedge one's bets" which survives in the modern English word "dithering" and perhaps also reflected in the ancient Gaulish "*Drutheron*," a name for a 1st century BCE Arvenian chieftain who was well-known for his delaying tactics during the Gallic Wars with Caesar. The -us suffix of course, gives the verb a reflexive meaning, perhaps "to dither oneself," or it may, again like the Gaulish example, signify a name. Unfortunately, I cannot recall a "Dytherous" in the annals of Greek or Coptic history, but interestingly enough, there is a Detherous, who lived in Heliopolis in the 2nd century BCE, as evidenced by a series of surviving papyrus account rolls now kept in the British Library. He was apparently a dentist.

The next element in the inscription, a lone delta, seems to be the first letter of a now-missing word. That means this could be anything. My assumption is "dramatourgos," meaning "dramatist." However, if Dytherous/Detherous is not a name, then the subsequent D may simply be emphatic, drawing us to some inside joke (now lost to us) of the spelling or pronunciation of the first word. Could this simply be a foul joke on some poor Ythero (itself a common name of the Boethian highlands in the 2nd century BCE), who with the cruel addition of a mere delta and enclitic -us to his name, goes from "Proud Shepherd" (cf. *Yedderri* in Late Tocharian, around the same time) to a name meaning "one who

dithers himself." Tragic in all ways imaginable. And sadly, we will never know.

'Kai' simply enough means 'and' in Greek, ancient and modern. The next word, "mini" is a little more difficult, but please bear with me. Of course, the natural inclination (at least for modern speakers of Indo-European languages) would be to read something along the lines of "small" for this, but this is of course confusing our Latin and Greek! In Latin, the *min-* stem (reflected in words like "minus," "minimum" and "minute") means "small" or "diminutive," but the equivalent in Greek is *mikr-* (as in "microscope", "microphone" and "micron". So we can dismiss this as a false assumption out of hand. This may, however be a form of the word "*minon*" meaning "months" or a corrupted plural form of "*mina*," meaning a "talent of silver." But it just as easily could be a genitive form of the name *Minos*, who of course was most famous for constructing the mythical labyrinth on the island of Crete. However, this last possibility is no more than a flight of the most ridiculous fancy, since the genitive form would *never* immediately follow the conjunction 'kai'.

Finally, the "outh" seems to be fairly straightforward. The similarities with the proto-Celtic *Uth-* (also reflected in the Germanic languages and perhaps even the Iberian tongues) are unmistakable. The obvious connection seems to be with the Welsh "*Ythr*" which means "terrible." This eventually makes its way into the name *Yther*, or "Uther," the legendary father of King Arthur.

However, the emphatic theta on the last line poses problems of its own. Is this a clever parallel to the "Dytherous D" of the first line? It probably should be mentioned that the Aeolians maintained an archaic poetic tradition of taking the first and last letters of significant words and names, in alternating sequence, and using them in the subsequent word in a line of verse. For example, the

famous Aeolian poet Aschylychus (Askilikos to the Mysians) once mused:

Moletikos murodin
Spoletiki isnire
Torenemos tundonin
Ieretiko ondire

The walls of Moletikos
[Upon which] I once gazed
Remain foremost in my mind
Until the end of my days. (*Elegies* 23. 17-20)

As you can see, each line consisting of two words alternates between repeating the initial letter and the final letter of the first word in the second.

So, my feeling is that this is a fragmentary poem, in a modified Aeolian tradition (in that only the first and third lines reflect the Aschylychan alternating alliteration). This may give us the following possible original form:

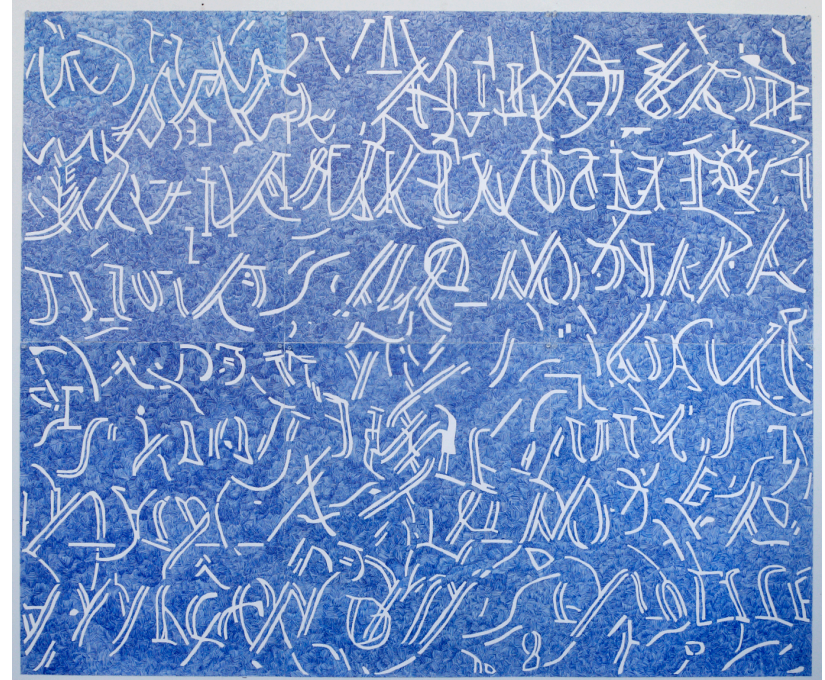
Dytherous d[ramatourgos]
kai mini
Outh th[aumatourgos]
*[ei fini]**

*This final line is a typical ending for many colonial Greek upper-class funerary epitaphs, with "delicate" in the sense of "so incredibly wealthy that his muscles have atrophied from never having to move".

If I may attempt a loose translation:

Detherous the dramatist,
And his mina of silver,

The terrible worker of miracles,
He is very delicate.



Above: *For Amonis who died at 29, in 610* (2014)

**SPELLS FROM ROMAN-ERA PAPYRUS FOUND
IN EGYPTIAN POTTERY:
A TRANSLATION**

Lou “Toro” Tintarello, Ph.D.
National Board of Landfill Ecology

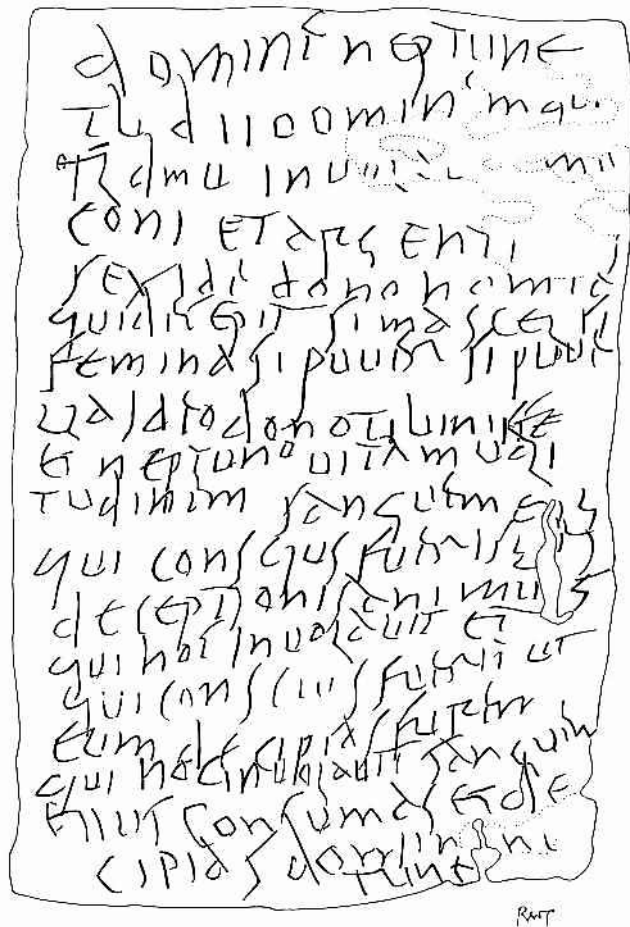
WHEN JEFFREY DOOLITTLE first approached me about this upcoming *florilegium* relating to the American artist Timothy Hull’s dabbling in the antiquities, at first I thought I had nothing worthwhile to add. Although I did get a Ph.D. in metaphysical philosophy from Georgetown, as everyone knows, most of my own life has been spent far from the rarefied air of the ivory tower. Certainly I had no interest in classical Greece and Rome or their reinterpretation.

But when I looked at a piece from Hull’s exhibition, *For Amonis, who died at 29, in 610* (see opposite), which appeared to be ancient writing of some sort on a sea of undulating blue, my curiosity was piqued. This was no mere “M. Agrippa. L. F. Cos. Tertium. Fecit” nonsense, or a silly coin with an emperor on it, but a genuine and earnest plea for understanding.

Almost without thinking, the story of the piece, as well as the translation of the words, came to me. I knew, or rather remembered, because as Plato long ago proved, all knowledge is simply recollection, that the document that inspired Hull had

originally come from a papyrus collection stuffed into a Greek amphora that had been left in a cave in Egypt by some of Emperor Hadrian’s soldiers from the nearby fortress of Babylon-in-Egypt. The papyrus leaves are identified now with the shelf mark “Redden H.C.23” and “Redden H.C.24” and are probably stored in the Bibliotheque National in Paris. The cave in Egypt was near Abydos, this much is certain.

This revelation, in turn, inspired me to clarify what Hull was trying to relate. I struggled to understand why Hull would leave the text in its original garbled form, when he had a perfect opportunity to “set the record straight” once and for all. Here is my own transcription for those who have enough Latin:



And suddenly, as I wrote those words this past January, the verses of the Poet finally made sense to me, when he said:

In winter's stillness lies the perfect time for reflection and

¹³ Some may be disturbed by my methodology in translation, but as Quinn (1988) and Del Vecchio (2010) have shown, intuition is a surprisingly large part of any academic process. I find what is most effective is not translating “word-for-word” and thereby losing the sense of the big picture, but rather staring at an inscrutable text for hours, even days or weeks, until I remember what it says. I can honestly say that I have never been wrong.

memory

The stark silence of a chill night reveals the pattern of the universe.

Crisp, the words of the ages glance upon the pages,
Dancing like snowflakes, my thoughts become history,
Passing through my mind, unhesitant,
And out to the cosmos for eternal judgment.

In writing, I thwart the will of nature,
And pieces of me survive my death.

(Pharactates of Trametes, *Cataphracts* II,

15)

Finally, here is my translation of the contents of these interesting papyri, and hopefully, in a small way, I will be able to finish the story that Hull started, or rather, reintroduced.¹³ From my best judgment, the contents appear to be mystical in nature, specifically two magic spells. As there are still many questions surrounding the meaning of these particular texts, I hope to publish a more in-depth study of the two spells in the near future. Watch this space.

Archaic papyrus scroll: Two Spells from the Papyrus Redden H.C.23 and Redden H.C.24

To Not Walk Upside Down

Take into thy hand a bundle of reeds, tied together with a dried but pliable stalk of fennel. Take this bundle, dripping in olive oil and perfumes and various incenses, and circle it over thy head in a protective stance. Tap the bundle on the ground, and circle it around the head once more. Say this incantation once: “O mystical Nut, comest thou with no mischievous surprise.” Then say this incantation five times aloud while walking backward with

the bundle held out in front of thyself: “Mamasei mamasa mamakusa.” Drop to thy knees, swishing the bundle on the ground in front of thee, while chanting: “Element lying against written never surely imagine quietly.” This charm will protect thee and keep thee balanced with thy feet on the ground, and thy head in the air, thus avoiding what the Philosopher warns against when he says “Floating upside down is a danger for three reasons: the blood collects in the head, the feet become weak and pale, and it is impossible to ride a horse.”

To Avoid Turning Into a Snake

Take into thy hand a bit of parchment or a scrap of papyrus. Breathe on both sides of thy writing surface, and take a writing implement in hand. Draw, sketch or devise an icon or emblem of a snake on one side of the page. Take the image and douse it with some highly combustible liquid or substance, such as the fruit of the Oak tree or the Interior of some stone commonly called a Geode. Further, it is important to either add a derivative of tallow or oil of any variety to the page. Keeping the page a fair distance away from thyself, as with a stick or some other instrument, light thy torch and say this incantation: “From the East, I greet the Sun; From the West, I greet my death; North winds carry the seeds of civilization, yet the south grows more powerful with each passing breath.” Make thence a circle in the air and jump to the side once, then twice; and jump again the other way. Take the torch and ignite the page, and chant thus, while continuing to leap: “Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, no snake nor serpent will I become.” The jumping doth symbolize the triumph of light over the forces of evil, and thus, much as the rabbit avoids the fox, so might thou escape the Clutches of Darkness, and avoid turning into a snake. For, as the Philosopher says, “There are three things which harm a marriage: a lazy man, a headstrong woman and one partner turning into a snake.”

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