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MARY P. CHATFIELD, ed. and trans. Pietro Bembo, *Lyric Poetry / Etna*. I Tatti Renaissance Library 18. Cambridge MA/London: Harvard University Press, 2005. Pp. xxi + 278. ISBN 0-674-01712-9.

Pietro Bembo (1470–1547) is best known to classicists as the owner of the famous codex Bembinus of Terence and the author of a dialogue dealing with the text of the plays of that author and of the *Culex*. In Italy, however, his reputation rested primarily on his having played a leading role in promoting and fashioning a form of the Italian language as a worthy medium for serious literature. Still, in his early years it looked as if he were set for a scholarly career in the classical languages, and, like most humanists, he was himself a Latin poet. Most of his poetry dates from his younger years, but he continued to write verse throughout his life. During and immediately after his own lifetime his Latin poems enjoyed a high reputation; in 1548 eleven of them were published in *Carmina quinque illustrium poetarum* (V. Valgrisius: Venice) and *Carminum libellus*, devoted solely to Bembo's Latin verse, appeared in 1552 (G. Scottus: Venice). It is gratifying, therefore, that the editorial board of the I Tatti Renaissance Library decided to include in its series a volume containing all of the known poems of Bembo (including some whose attribution to Bembo is not beyond doubt).

This volume contains the *Carminum libellus* (41 poems), Appendix A (8 poems that were not included in the *Carminum libellus* of 1552), and Appendix B (9 poems attributed to Bembo). It is rounded out by the prose dialogue *Etna*. As is usual in this series, in addition to the Latin text and the accompanying English translation, the volume has a general introduction (here a good treatment of Bembo's life and of the organization of the poems in the *Carminum libellus*, with some helpful discussion of particular poems in the whole collection), a note on the sources of the text, notes on the poems, a brief bibliography, and an index.

The corpus of Bembo's Latin verse is fairly modest in size, and the nature of the poems is in keeping with the output of many other humanists: pastoral, love elegy, *Priapea*, panegyric, and epitaphs. More distinctive is the poem *Sarca* (A.VIII), an ambitious epyllion 619 lines in length, the subject being the wedding of the river deities Sarca and Garda, and their offspring. The similarities with Catullus 64 are obvious and extensive.

The Latin text is basically drawn from the *editio princeps* of the *Carminum libellus* and the 1990 edition of Bembo's poems by Rosanna Sodano (Turin, Edizioni RES). An exception is the text of *Sarca*, which is taken from Otto Schönberger's edition of the poem, based on a Vienna

manuscript. Unfortunately the text of the poems is marred by several typographical errors. Those that caught my eye occur at II.5 *villa* for *villas*, II.31 *mea* for *meo*, IX.5 *valente* for *volente*, XV.10 *vito* for *viro*, XVIII.20 *aura* for *auro*, XVIII.70 *plena* for *pleno*, XXXV.3 *canas* for *canos*, XL.1 *sacra* for *sacro*, A.VII.43 *ventura* for *venturo*. In *Sarca* (A.VIII) we find *alia* for *alta* (47), *tibet* for *libet* (84), *figens* for *figens* (123), *commista* for *commissa* (279), and *comprestae* for *compressae* (280). The last three of these also appear in Schönberger's text and have been taken over uncritically.

What of the translation? It flows very smoothly and rhythmically for the most part. But oh dear! Inaccuracies abound, and not just where Bembo's Latin gets complicated, as sometimes happens. The translator does not recognize, for example, that the stock phrase *quod amat* (XIII.80; cf. XIV.3) means "the object of his love," not "because he loves," and she translates *me functo* (B.V.115) as "with me discharging the office" rather than "when I am dead." I give a list of passages (by no means complete) where correction in a later edition is needed.

I.38: *Fida non egeant oves canum vi*, "Let the sheep not lack a trusty pack of dogs." The sentiment relates to a return to the golden age, where "the lion will lie down with the kids" (see line 40). The sense of line 38 must be "Let the sheep not need a trusty pack of dogs" (to protect them).

II.20: *Crissat ab imposito fixa puella mare*, "A girl, held in one spot by the weight of the sea, gyrates her hips." Faunus is describing the sexual activity that is going on in the river Nympeus. What has the sea to do with this? The sense is that the girl is moving her hips as she is being penetrated by a male (*mas, maris*) on top of her.

II.22: *Surgit et in cornu spina recurva suum*, "And my spine, curved back, rises towards my horn." Faunus is describing the erection he gets from seeing the orgy in the river. I think *spina*, "thorn," here must refer to the penis (cf. English "prick"), hence the reflexive *suum* in the phrase *in cornu suum*. For *recurva* one may compare VIII.19 where Priapus' phallus is described as *resupinaque tota*.

II.31: *Non tu parva mea (sic) praebes alimenta furori*, "You offer not the smallest nourishment to my madness." The sense is rather that Faunus' desire is being greatly increased/fed by what is happening in the river, without, of course, its being satisfied.

VII.7: *Qui flavum avulsis iaculatus rupibus Acin*, "After he had hurled golden Acis down the twisted crags." Literally "after he had struck golden Acis with rocks torn [from the hillside]"; cf. Ov., *Met.* 13.882–3 *partemque e monte revulsam / mittit*.

VIII.26: *Foecundum, subigas tu modo, semen habet*, "It is teeming with seed, restrain it how you will." This describes the phallus of Priapus. The verb *subigo* does not mean "restrain." The sense is "It is teeming with seed if only you rub it" (see *OLD* s.v. 8b), or possibly "if only you 'plant' it somewhere."

XI.11–12: *Altero uti superem laetus, dum te mea vita / Placata potior, altero uti moriar*, "When you use me the one way, I excel in happiness, for while I possess

you / My life is delightful, but if you use me the other way, I am like to die." *Altero ... altero* picks up the preceding clause where the lover is said sometimes to be *bona* and sometimes *mala*. The verb *supero* here means "to live on, keep on living," not "excel," and in the *dum*-clause *mea vita* must be vocative, literally "my life" (playing on the idea of "living on"), that is, my darling, and *placata* (ablative) agrees with *te*, something like "content, in a good mood." The form *uti* is of course the archaic form of *ut*.

XII.22: *Nec sinis ingenium splendida forma premat*, "And you do not allow your gleaming beauty to surpass your intellect." The verb *premat* means "conceal" here (or "suppress"). (Bembo is here addressing Lucrezia Borgia, with whom he was enamoured, though the relationship seems to have been Platonic.)

XIII.38–9: *Meque animo nimium perpetiente feras; / Quaelibet et praesto venias in iussa*, "And beguile me when I am in great suffering; / But I grant indulgence to whatever you command." These are examples of the addressee's behaviour that (according to the speaker) prompt him to believe that he may be the object of malicious gossip. But the Latin means "And you put up with me with a too long-suffering disposition, / And you attend readily to whatever I bid you do." *Praesto* is an adverb, not a verb, and *venias* here has nothing to do with the noun *venia*, but is part of the verb *venire*. In the next four lines the point of the construction *quo plures ... quo plus / hoc magis indignum* is ignored in the translation.

XIII.87–8: *Quemque videt non insidiis, non artibus uti, / 'Hic bonus est,' inquit, 'miles critque mihi'*, "He does not notice anyone using treachery or artifice, / Rather, he says 'this one is a good soldier and he shall be mine.'" The poet has just been describing Cupid as a god whose absence of dissembling and duplicity matches his nude body, free of any covering. The sense is therefore "When he sees a man refraining from treachery or artifice, / 'This man,' he says ..."

XV.157–8: The translator does not understand the construction *promere opem egregios*, "outstanding in giving help," and mistranslates *vincam*, here "I shall prove," not "I will surpass."

XXVII.9–10: *Cui lex et bene suadus honos, rectique cupido, / Et probitas cordi simplicitasque fuit*, "He possessed restraint and most persuasive grace, and zeal for the right, / And honesty of heart and candor." All of the nouns connect with the predicative dative *cordi*, "He held dear the law ..."

A.VII.55: *cui neque Erithreos possis conferre lapillos*, "It [virtue] may not be decked out with the pearls of Erithrea." Here *conferre* has its common meaning "compare."

A.VII.141–2: *Quid te parva iuvat mora temporis, Icarione? / Ad tibi fallendos nil facit illa dies*, "Of what advantage is brief mourning to you, Icarius? / You are not being deceived by this interval of time." One of the themes of this poem (*Ad Lycorim*) is that virtue is more lasting and more important than beauty. Penelope is adduced as an example. Bembo introduces a conversation between Penelope and her father Icarius in which Penelope is urged to forget Odysseus and immediately marry one of the suitors. Here, in an apostrophe of the poet, *Icarione* refers to Penelope, "daughter of Icarius," not to Icarius. The second line is not easy, but the sense is far removed from what is offered; *dies* must contrast with *parva ... mora temporis*. Perhaps something like "That [a short time] is of no use to you *ad fallendos dies* ['for whiling away many days in deception']." Because of the mistaken interpretation of *Icarione* the translation

goes awry in line 146 (*Iniice tu longas officiosa moras*, "Be dutiful and hurl away these long delays"). These are words addressed by Penelope to her loom, not, as in the translation, spoken by Icarius to his daughter. The meaning of the verb *iniice* (not "hurl away") should have shown that Icarius cannot be speaking these words.

Sarca 58–9: *Tunc omnem—domini quis credere possit ab igne?— / Fervere vicini fluvium stupuere coloni*, "Then the neighbouring farmers were astounded that the whole river boiled—/ For who could believe it to be mastered by fire?" The river is boiling because the river god (its *dominus*) is afire with love (cf. *ardet amans* in 55): "Who could believe that the cause was the fiery passion of its lord?"

The Latin text seems to have been beyond the linguistic competence of the translator. Consequently, the translation, smooth and rhythmical though it may be, needed the careful scrutiny of a professional Latinist for accuracy.

The notes are very sparse, even though Bembo displays a considerable amount of erudition. Even an educated reader will often be stretching for a mythological handbook or other help. In Poem III, for example, we have a catalogue of heroines. Will a general reader readily identify *Cressa puella* ("the Cretan maid," not "the maiden Cressa") in line 4, or even *Ilia* in line 10? The same question may be asked about *Asia ... apella* (sic) "Asian Apelles," not "Apellan Asia" in A.II.1. In Poem XXI, which begins *Dypsas eram* ("I was Dypsas"), a reader may wonder who Dypsas was. In fact the word is not a proper noun, but a transliterated form of the Greek word *δῖψας*, the name of a venomous snake. A large number of the poems have no notes, only the metre being identified, not always correctly. The three-line poem *Epitaph for Longolius* (XXXV) is in dactylic hexameters, not in elegiac distichs, and the first five verses of *On the Marble Christ of Pyrgoteles* (A.II) are Phalaecian hendecasyllabics, not iambic lines.

Perhaps the notes are sparse because of the inclusion in the volume of the *Etna*, a prose dialogue, the participants of whom are Pietro Bembo and his father Bernardo. The subject matter springs from Pietro's climb to the summit of the volcano during his stay in Sicily when he was studying Greek (1491–93). The translation, by Betty Radice, appeared in a bibliophilic edition of the work published in 1969 (only 125 copies). This seems like an odd companion for the poems, although it is a very interesting example of a dialogue and well illustrates Bembo's erudition. A translation of Bembo's *De imitatione*, even though it deals more with prose than poetry, might have been considered.

This addition to the I Tatti Renaissance Library proves to be a disappointment for reasons that have been made clear. However, one can be grateful that, despite its shortcomings, it at least now makes Bembo's Latin verse readily available to Latinists and Neo-Latinists. One hopes

that the volume will stimulate them to engage in a badly-needed literary study of the corpus.

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